

Word barrages

A truce might help meetings

Oh, and we thought we could go at least a month without having to write another editorial on the development wars in Farmington Hills. But (sigh) then Gary Jonna telephoned.

Yes, developer Gary Jonna called the other day and the ear piece on our receiver is still smoking.

So, we guess it's time for yet another development editorial. And, folks, the message in this one is that the baloney is getting sliced so thick that no one can swallow it.

Jonna, you may recall, is the man with the plan for that wooded area on the southeast corner of 12 Mile and Middlebelt. His vision calls for the commercial and residential development of that property, and most of the people in the subdivisions to the east don't care for the idea one bit.

Now, as is usually the case, one front of this development war is being waged in the opinion pages of the Farmington Observer.

Someone will fire a shot in the form of a letter or guest column about the proposed development and Jonna. Someone else will answer with a word barrage of his/her own. Back and forth it goes.

Jonna himself even got into the act recently with a guest column of his own. In that missive, he reminded folks that he's a Farmington Hills resident who has the best interests of his community at heart.

He was, we felt, just trying to indicate that he's a human being and that he didn't just slither up from the bottom of the bog.

Still, the anti-Jonna and anti-development letters and faxes keep coming.

It was resident Anthony Wayne Kahn's statement in the Aug. 25 Observer - "Gary Jonna is concerned and responsive to his own bank account and stock portfolio" - that really

ticked off the developer.

Jonna telephoned about that letter, and it was a one-way (his way) conversation.

"It stops here! It stops right here!" he shouted, objecting to Kahn's crack about bank accounts and stock portfolios. That was getting downright personal, he said. It was (gasp) "defamation of character."

Now, Gary... now, anti-development people, let's just back off and chill out here, shall we.

Gary, it's time to thicken up the old skin a little and not go blooey every time someone states an opinion contrary to yours. Developers need thick skins. You'd better grow yours in a hurry.

Of course you're concerned about turning a profit with your developments. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that. You wouldn't be a developer long if you didn't make money.

And you, members of Voters' Voice who claim you hate this development so, are you any less concerned with the almighty dollar? Isn't your whole anti-development spiel based on the notion that the development will somehow reduce your property values? Wow, if that happens you might not be able to sell your houses for lots more than they're worth.

Jonna and Voters' Voice have agreed to meet on a regular basis in an attempt to produce the kind of development that would satisfy everyone. This is really how development squabbles should be settled: People from both (or all) sides talking it over and hashing it out.

Meetings are still being held, but no one seems to hold out much hope. It's no wonder with all these hostile words flying around.

Let's call a truce - hold the word barrages, please! - and see if that doesn't help.

Death penalty is bad idea

Crime being the fad issue of 1994, our state senators next week will revive a bad old idea called the death penalty.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will visit Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills for a public hearing at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8. The sole agenda topic is Senate Joint Resolution F, which would put the question of allowing the death penalty before voters in 1996.

The chair and the committee majority are Republicans, but the death penalty is popular in both parties. It's puzzling, however, that Republicans want to give government such irreversible power.

At their convention last week, the Grand Old Party's orators condemned regulatory agencies ("get the government off our backs") and applauded the notion of downsizing government, equating regulation with bureaucratic dictatorship. It's odd that conservatives would lead a serious discussion of the death penalty.

Death penalty supporters seem to have a child-like faith that government will kill only the right people. We don't share their blind trust in government.

Just last week, for example, the Otsego County courthouse in Gaylord was the scene of a hearing on whether two men convicted of a 1986 murder should get new trials. A State Police lieutenant testified that he warned the prosecutor that a key witness was unreliable because she (the witness) had lied about other

crimes. The prosecutor admittedly would have been bound to tell defense lawyers about his star witness' illicit activities.

Thank God Michigan didn't have the death penalty then. Witnesses aren't always believable. Even the government's prosecutor, itching for higher office, may have cut a corner.

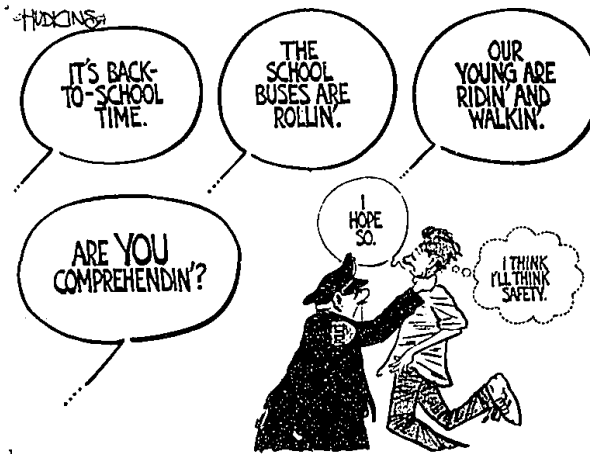
Each year we read several stories about judges who are disciplined for drunkenness, improper treatment of litigants, financial sins and so on. Some are removed from the bench and disbarred. A few judges become so arrogant that they think they know the law and refuse to look at a book. A few disregard sentencing guidelines and mete out "basketball score" sentences.

We don't mean to cast a cloud over the entire judiciary. We only warn that the power to decree the end of a human life is too much power to give a government official.

In England in 1750, some 200 crimes were punishable by the death penalty. The trend has been to whittle down the list. Michigan in 1847 was the first jurisdiction in the English-speaking world to abolish the death penalty entirely - after an innocent man was wrongly hanged in Windsor.

In ancient Rome, a father had the power of life and death over his wife and children. Society took away that power and gave it to government. We say it's still too much power to give government. The whole death penalty idea should be shunned.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

Supplement, please

Assuming that you keep circulation records, you'll note that we've been subscribers for a very long time.

Due to the quirkiness of your "home delivery," we opted to have the paper delivered by the post office, gambling that most of the time we'd get the paper, albeit a day late.

Little did we know that, in addition to getting yesterday's news, we'd also be dealt out of the coupon insert as well.

Perhaps you could tell us why you feel that we would not be interested in this supplement? I truly hope that you're not going to claim that it does not lend itself to mailing.

If that's your excuse (oops, your reason), then the Willie Clinton/Democrat syndrome has even longer tentacles than I had imagined.

No, I'm not going to threaten to drop my subscription, not yet. With the November elections coming up, I wouldn't miss your pompous deflection of and fawning over of every Democrat, regardless of their strangeness or lack of merit, for anything!

We would like the supplement furnished us, OK?

F.M. Seibert, Farmington

Fairness, please

Find it interesting, in light of your extensive coverage against the 12 Mile-

Middlebelt project, that for the sake of fairness you have printed nothing supporting council's courageous decision.

I know you have received some letters of support.

Jeri Van Houten, Farmington Hills

About that 'pork'

Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss said that he smelled "pork" in the proposed crime bill.

This citizen/taxpayer smells pork when police persons retire after 20 years, when public employees are granted many workdays off because of "holiday," when cattlemen use federal land to graze cattle, and when lumber people destroy our forests all at practically no cost, when citizens move far away from the central city and then demand that "government" build the Hagerty Connector, when fines and penalties are built into the budgets of the various municipalities (of course, we know that police do not have quotas for writing traffic violations).

Mr. Goss speaks about knee-jerk reactions

to gun control. I suppose he believes that there is empirical evidence that citizens are protected against crime if they carry guns.

How about his knee-jerk reaction to the social crime-prevention programs such as midnight basketball. Mr. Goss, what we have here is politics, plain and simple.

There is a constituency in the inner city who have elected representatives. These inner-city people want the same "pork" as the National Rifle Association gets when they persuade their elected representatives to vote against the gun-control aspects of the crime bill.

Everybody has an agenda. You have the agenda of a person on the civil service; you have a nice, secure position which will last until you retire, regardless of performance.

Richard F. Krandle, Farmington Hills

About Bill Bonds

I am responding to the very capable and talented columnist, Judith Doner Berne, in regards to her opinion on Bill Bonds.

Mr. Bonds is probably one of the best anchor people we have watched on TV in a long time. His talents and charm are self-explanatory plus his reporting is admired by all, even out of town.

But his physical troubles and the horrible loss of a daughter do not excuse his behavior in public.

The best thing that could (and should) happen to him is to be cured of his alcoholism and then retired on a nice pension.

This would allow him to work when he so desires, to be interviewed on any of a number of talk shows (who wouldn't want him?) and to express his ideas and relevant opinions, and valuable commentary. His presence would liven any talk show, and increase its ratings.

I believe Bill Bonds is missing the boat if he doesn't make use of his abilities in this manner, and we all are the losers.

Speedy recovery, Bill, and the best of luck to you.

Leon L. Schoelch, Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To ensure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's on your mind these days?



'Going back to work. I'm a bus driver for the Plymouth-Canton schools.'

Elizabeth Blackburn
Farmington Hills



'Golf. I love to play... being outdoors, the exercise. It's just me against the game.'

Tom Lager
Redford Township



'I worried about my girl going out on me. I'm afraid I'm losing her.'

Craig Smith
Taylor



'Losing my house... gotta make the payments.'

Greg Williamson
Taylor

We asked this question at the Crossroads A&W restaurant in Farmington.

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