

## It's about time Support OCC millage request

It's about time Oakland Community College put a money request on the ballot. Our two-year college has been underfunded for some years. You can see it on almost any of the five sites, including the Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

And when you visualize the high-tech economy of the future, you can see that underfunding is a perilous road.

Today, OCC's property tax rate is about 0.85 of a mill (85 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation). That's half the 1.7 mills it collected at its peak in 1979.

What happened? One mill voted for operations was whittled by the Headlee amendment to 0.85. Bond issues for bricks and mortar were paid off, and the non-voted 0.7 mill for debt retirement expired. That's how OCC's local tax rate shrank to today's low point.

In Michigan's long recession followed by a glut of prison construction, state aid shrank from 41 percent of the 1975 operating budget to today's 23 percent. The governor's budget for fiscal 1996 calls for a trivial increase in state aid of 1.1 percent — less than the rate of inflation. In Lansing, both parties think Oakland is populated by a million millionaires.

So we say a self-help millage is both necessary and overdue. On Thursday, March 16, voters in the OCC district will decide on a 1-mill request. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. in your school district precincts. We urge a yes vote.

Why did the board of trustees wait so long to ask? The last decade has been one of constant crisis for K-12 school districts, so the OCC board continually backed off. That situation has been remedied with the passage of Proposal A, making the state largely responsible for K-12 school funding. In the same decade, homeowners were agitated over rising property assessments. That agitation has been cooled by Proposal A's capping of assessment hikes at 5.5 percent or less. Finally, OCC has a chance to do what needs to be done.

In broad brush strokes, the March 16 proposal would raise OCC's total budget from \$71 million to \$100 million. The new \$29 million will be used:

1. To keep down tuition. No one has to bang this board over the head about the tuition issue. It has pledged to keep rates flat (\$46 per credit hour for in-district students, more for others) for five years — through the terms of present trustees. After that, it will be up to students, voters, and the press to quiz candidates on the tuition issue.

2. For capital improvement. For the first two years, \$19 million will go for major maintenance, and \$11 million for new equipment and technology. In the following five years, \$11 million annually will go for major maintenance and most of the rest for programs.

What programs? First, keep in mind that 22 percent of public high school graduates enroll directly at OCC — some for career programs, some for transfer credits toward a university degree. A second group is people planning to re-enter the job market or start a business; many already have B.A. degrees; many wear bifocals. A third group is workers upgrading their job skills.

An emerging market is health and safety — physical therapy, gerontology, home health care. To work in manufacturing, one needs to know computers and statistics, not wrenches. Digital imaging has replaced the artist's pencil in design and technical illustration.

Since man does not live by bread alone, the arts aren't being neglected — more theater faculty, dance, music. Foreign language offerings need to be beefed up. To import, you need only English; to export, you need to know the other fellow's language — especially now that North America is one big trade zone that is likely to be expanded southward.

And so on. With more than 30,000 students (versus 3,860 when the doors opened 30 years ago) and 93 vocational-technical programs, OCC has a complex role in our complex economy. Put simply, its millage request has earned the support of a county executive whose chief goal is business expansion, of leaders in both parties, of conservatives and liberals, of business executives and labor.

We add our voice to those urging a yes vote on the OCC proposal March 16 with one further comment: It's about time.

## Keep up efforts to improve air

Now we know it can be done. And we also know we've got to keep doing it. The air is cleaner in southeastern Michigan, according to a federal directive, and the region can drop plans for stricter vehicle tailpipe pollution testing.

The full seven-county region, which includes Oakland and western Wayne counties, was redesignated recently to "attainment" status, which means it has not exceeded federal limits for ozone (smog) levels four or more times in any single year for the past three years.

That's wonderful news. After almost 17 years of effort by business, government and the citizenry, southeastern Michigan has been officially designated as being in compliance with clean-air standards for ground-level ozone, the primary component of smog.

This success is why we're urging the continuation — and possibly even the expansion — of the current vehicle emission inspection program. Most southeast Michigan drivers are required to have their emissions tested yearly.

Currently, the test is waived for new vehicles and old ones over a certain age. Older cars should be tested too, we think.

Yes, we know that many residents, and even some auto industry insiders, consider this test to

be ineffective as well as a hopeless bureaucratic boondoggle. But it's better than nothing. It is, we believe, one of the factors that brought "attainment" status.

Certainly, the simple, inexpensive emissions test is better than what the feds had in mind for us if the region remained in non-compliance.

Overall, area industry will save about \$55 million a year in additional controls, according to press reports.

Stricter tailpipe testing won't have to be implemented, and gas stations will not have to install equipment on nozzles to prevent the escape of vapors.

Businesses now will be able to move into the Detroit area without being subjected to pollution abatement requirements of "non-attainment" areas, a spokeswoman for the federal Environmental Protection Agency has said.

Millions of dollars in federal road funding could have been suspended if the area did not enact the programs when it was not in compliance.

But southeast Michigan could quickly slide back into trouble with the EPA if the air quality is allowed to deteriorate. So let's keep testing and working for a better economic and environmental future for southeast Michigan.

ARKIE HUDKINS



### LETTERS

#### A good show!

Bravo! Congratulations to all those involved in the production of Harrison High School's "Little Shop of Horrors" musical. The opening performance was spectacular.

It has been great to see so many different people work together over the past three months to return the tradition of a musical play to Harrison.

Thank you to Joe Grignatis, our lighting and scenic designer, and to all the parent and student artists, builders, and technicians who spent countless evenings, Saturdays, and even full days during Winter Break putting together our amazing movable set.

Thanks also to the custodial staff who helped clean up our nightly piles of sawdust. Congratulations to the superbly talented cast, directed by Michelle Harris, Sheryl Perlmutter and Lucy Koviak, and to the technical crew for giving up their other lives for months and giving this community three evenings of pure joy.

Bravos also go to Mr. Mark Phillips and Mr. Tom Schroder for the depth and diversity of talent in their music departments and their support of this effort.

Thank you to the community businesses who helped us with financial support, props, and food to keep us going.

Finally, this wonderful event would never have happened without the help of principal Rande Horn and the persistence, support and hours of work given by the parent boosters, headed by Mr. Howard Gutman, Mrs. Susan Katz and Mrs. Kay Curren.

I want to encourage the entire community to attend the musicals and concerts held at all three high schools during the year. You'll be entertained and also have a chance to applaud kids who are devoting their time and efforts to constructive choices.

Patricia Newcombe, HHS Parent Forum, president

My first experience with this "global disaster" theory was in a conversation with the former head of Oceans & Atmosphere, John Knauss, a former Detroit and fellow Cooley alumni.

Knauss claimed the oceans would rise 15 feet. I have since seen this ridiculous theory expanded to 50 feet in the National Geographic, and 200 feet in Popular Science.

I had a letter published in Popular Science complaining of the poor physics, but shortly thereafter got my answer: Popular Science is first "Popular." If the popular belief is that global warming will cause a rise in the oceans, that is the way it will be treated in the Science magazine.

I canceled my subscriptions to both publications.

Hank Borgman, Farmington

#### A hearty thanks

The World War II 50th Commemorative Committee wishes to take this opportunity to thank the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce; its director, Jody Soronen; and staff members Cheryl Zaydel, Diana Lis and Chrystyna Nykorak for their help and support through this commemorative year.

They have been our eyes, our ears and the focal point for the outpouring of WW II veterans who have registered and submitted their personal experiences.

The chamber office has passed on this era of history, 50 years ago, to the local papers, the library system, and the schools.

We are very fortunate to have a Chamber of Commerce so dedicated to our community.

We salute you.

Jack (Uncle Jack) Curd, chairman, WW II 50th Commemorative Committee

#### Simple physics

Mr. Brozovich states very well a simple principle of physics (Letters, March 2) that currently is not taught by academia: When water freezes it expands, causing it to float. Subsequently upon thawing it shrinks, and will not cause oceans to become fuller.

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 assure 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 48338.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

**QUESTION:**  
What's your idea of a good breakfast?



"A bowl of strawberries with sugar, any kind of fruit with sugar."  
Mike Webster  
Farmington Hills



"A tall glass of milk. That's all I have."  
Melissa Travis  
Farmington Hills



"Eggs, toast, glass of milk, orange juice, maybe some bacon all that university stuff."  
Dan Kelly  
Farmington Hills



"Pizza. It's easy to make ... just throw it in the microwave."  
Matt Kaseeb  
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power