

## Better, harder OCC: Regroup and try again

**T**hose aging buildings, those dated computers, the old technology they're not going to be replaced with the wave of a magic wand by Oakland Community College.

OCC has been visibly under-financed for the better part of 10 years. It is levying 0.85 of a mill in an era when most of Michigan's 28 other community colleges are closer to the 2-mill mark. Any visitor can see it, particularly at the older buildings on the Orchard Ridge, Highland Lakes and Auburn Hills campuses.

Voters said no March 16 to a 1-mill property tax proposal. The elected trustees have little choice but to try again, better and harder.

Should they do anything differently? There are high-priced campaign experts better equipped than we are to give that kind of advice, but we offer a few thoughts.

### ■ The day.

We heard a lot of grumbling over the choice of a Thursday. People think someone's trying to put one over on them. Many voters can sniff the air and tell there's an election going on. When their suspicions are aroused, they become irritated to the point where they can't concentrate on the overriding fiscal issue.

Most Michigan elections are conducted on Tuesdays and school elections on Mondays. Yet, as the Walled Lake returns showed last month, Saturday wasn't a bad choice, either, for a good voter turnout.

### ■ The market.

Overall, the OCC proposal got a fairly healthy 45 percent. But it fared badly in the northern and western tiers of school districts, where the campuses are easily reached by commuting students but physically invisible to the general run of voters. Clearly, OCC must do some missionary work there.

It may even be necessary to subdivide the college district into electoral districts so that voters in the outlying areas have a greater sense of identification with the college.

### ■ The times.

After World War II, consumers fueled an inflation because, during the war effort, they

### ■ The elected trustees have little choice but to try again, better and harder.

had been unable to replace cars, appliances and clothes. They'd buy anything — even cars with wooden bumpers. Millions of new families were formed at the same time.

Similarly, Michigan public agencies have held back during the K-12 school finance war of the last 10 years. This year road interests are beating the drum, understandably. The suburban public bus system, never locally funded in its 26 years of precarious life, is beating the drum, understandably. And K-12 districts still must put the finishing touches on Proposal A by winning approval of non-homestead and "hold-harmless" millages, understandably.

In short, there's still a strain on the voter that may have to run its course.

### ■ The low profile.

OCC's campaign committee ran a deliberately low-profile campaign, concentrating on its 30,000 current students and 180,000 former students. Of those more than 200,000 friends, fewer than one-tenth showed up to vote yes.

But how does one finance a high-profile campaign? OCC can't spend taxpayers' dollars to win a yes vote. It can't award big campaign donors with ambassadorships and memberships on regulatory commissions. The solution must be continually making the college visible by every low-cost means possible.

Michigan's job market is about to be short of a supply of skilled workers as old tradespeople retire and new skills are needed. This newspaper continues to believe that a skilled workforce is a stronger inducement to industrial and commercial investors than the fast-buck tax deals being discussed in Lansing.

Without question, OCC's leaders must prepare an attractive tax package that conveys to even tired voters the message that the college is a key to Michigan's location in a new, global economy.

## Put racing in major leagues

**D**etroit area teams are in the big leagues, but when it comes to horse racing, we're not on par with the Toledo Mud Hens.

That's why the racing industry seeks approval of legislation to allow racetracks to offer more betting on out-of-state races. It would help DRC and Northville Downs better compete with the Windsor casinos for the gambling dollar.

Horse racing translates into jobs in western Wayne County. According to a study done by Public Sector Consultants for the racing industry, Michigan racetrack operations in 1993 created and supported nearly 5,300 full- and part-time jobs, which paid out more than \$51 million in wages and salaries. Farm operations related to racing generated employment for nearly 37,000 and created more than \$181 million in income.

House Bill 4536 would allow more simulcasting of races, intertracking broadcasts from one Michigan track to another, and electronic computerized gambling devices.

We support the simulcasting, but oppose allowing racetracks to install video poker machines or other electronic computerized gambling equipment. Racetracks should not be turned into gambling casinos.

There are many reasons why DRC in Livonia

and other Michigan racetracks are in the minor leagues.

One is that racing just isn't as popular as it once was in Michigan. Attendance at DRC averaged 3,694 per day during 1994. At Oaklawn in Hot Springs, Ark., the average daily attendance for 1994 was 15,784, according to the state racing commission. And Arkansas is a state with a population of less than 3 million.

Part of the blame for racing's decline in metro Detroit can be laid on the track owners. They haven't done enough to attract better horses to the tracks. At Oaklawn, it's common to see Kentucky Derby-bound horses running during the 63-day racing season. You're unlikely to see such a horse at DRC.

The proposed house bill would help remedy that. It would allow more simulcasting of races from other tracks. Currently, DRC and other tracks can only offer one simulcast race per day. That means race fans miss out on the Breeder's Cup. It would be the same as allowing a baseball fan to view only one game of the World Series.

We urge area representatives to take a close look at the provisions of House Bill 4526 to allow more simulcasting and help the industry help itself. However, don't turn racetracks into gambling casinos.



MARVIN TEEPLES

## LETTERS

### Bouquets to them

**R**idgewriters were pleased with recent (Community Life, March 9) coverage the Observer gave our Farmington Hills-based writers' group.

Beth Sandra Jachman gave such a realistic meeting account, it was almost like being there. And Sharon LeMieux's photos also caught the spirit of the lively evening.

Bouquets to both. Several phone calls followed from aspiring writers.

Betty Monson, director,  
Ridgewriters

### It's not taxing

**A** word of gratitude and praise for John Antonelli and his crew of dedicated volunteers with the AARP Tax Assistance Program at the Farmington Hills Activity Center.

It is such a relief to have your taxes done by trained people who freely give of their time to assist the seniors. Many thanks to this group of people for their fine work.

Isabel Cylkowski, Farmington Hills

### Find a new topic

**R**egarding the article "Some supporters of religious right missing a few facts," I have this comment. When is Tim Richard going to get over his angry obsession with the so-called religious right?

It seems he loves to sit and scan his voice mail, so he can pick apart anyone who doesn't agree with his liberal position.

I believe it is Tim Richard who is the Rip Van Winkle. When is he going to wake up and write about something else?

Cheryl Walker, Livonia

### 'Logic is there'

**A** police officer once suggested this solution to police pay and manpower problems:

He suggested that the pay status for all policemen and women be reversed from what it is. He suggested that the lower one is on the police department totem pole, the more

police work the officer does, but is paid less.

The higher an officer gets in rank, the less work he or she does and gets paid more for doing less. If the foot soldiers of police departments received top pay, instead if vice versa, there would be little incentive to rise in rank, therefore more real police work would be accomplished and for less money.

Police departments would no longer become top heavy, paying high salaries for those who spend most of their time sitting on their duffs.

The end result would be far less crime, less need for more and more officers, because they would become far more proficient in maintaining their status quo in rank.

My personal opinion is that the idea sounds goofy at first, but with some modifications it might work.

The logic is there. The question is: How do you go about getting the payroll reversed? Are cities paying the wrong people too much and for doing less work?

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

### They say thanks

**W**e at the Farmington Historical Museum wish to thank the Observer for the publicity that the paper has given our Farmington historical afghan project.

The original headline article generated at least 16 inquiries and orders, and then the articles of March 9 and the Focus remarks of March 13 brought at least 20 people to the museum to purchase afghans on the first Wednesday that we were open after your mention of the availability of the afghans.

We are certain that other interest was generated for which we will realize the profit. We have had to place our first reorder.

We think that these results very graphically indicate the value of publicity in the local newspaper that we continually strive to receive.

The museum is an institution that needs an avenue of communication with the general public and the local newspaper is that first line of communication.

Again, we thank you and the Observer for your support of the latest museum endeavor, the Farmington Historical afghan project.

Dick Carvell  
Farmington Historical Museum

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Any retirement advice?



"Learn what Social Security has to offer two years or so before retirement."  
Bill Elliott  
Farmington Hills



"Do some research. Don't jump in feet first. Cross your fingers and hope."  
John Yagerlener  
Farmington



"Make sure you have enough worthwhile things to keep you busy."  
Richard Morrey  
Farmington



"Be sure you have money."  
Ed Steele  
Farmington

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— Philip Power