

Bucolic billing

Power setting is worth saving

We heard it again just last Monday: So-and-so moved to Farmington eight years ago because she and her family wanted the small-town atmosphere that they enjoyed in Illinois or Iowa or someplace.

Farmington, our Farmington, a small town? A place suited for a story line of "The Aldrich Family" radio program or the set of an Andy Hardy movie? Well, anyway, So-and-so informs us that she's been perfectly happy here.

You hear that small-town thing so often about the Farmington area that pretty soon you begin to believe it. Never mind that it's the 1990s (the mid-'90s at that!) and the Detroit suburbs have sprawled well beyond Hagerty Highway and 14 Mile Road.

Still, they like to talk about small-town Farmington and countrified Farmington Hills. Perhaps wishing makes it so.

But there is at least one spot in the Farmington area that does live up to this bucolic billing: It's that so-called "Natural Beauty Road" — Power Road, actually — that runs about a half-mile from 11 Mile north to a dead end at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

That dirt stretch of Power Road is delightfully deep in the woods to the 30 families who live on it. They're definitely off the beaten path. You can't blame them for wanting to keep it that way.

Now, along comes a developer, Joe Trupiano of Livonia, with a plan to combine properties and develop a new subdivision of 41 expensive houses along that road. It'll be the

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'90s style of residential development — big houses on small lots.

The Power Road homeowners are concerned about the proposed development, and they've vowed to be in "100 percent attendance" tonight when the plan is considered by the Farmington Hills Planning Commission.

One of the homeowners, Sy Kernicky, lists some compelling reasons (aside from natural beauty) for not developing the area.

"We're all on well water and septic tanks," he told the Observer in a May 15 article. "Our septic fields will be very susceptible. Increasing the number of homes by 135 percent will create a traffic problem and the road will be destroyed. We figure at least 100 more cars a day."

Still, developer Trupiano says he hopes "a happy medium" can be reached. Wonder what he'd say if he lived in one of those fine old homes on Power Road north of 11 Mile?

Well, here we go again with another development squabble in what's supposed to be a "maintenance" community. And it seems as though this town is battling zero for ever against the pitches from deep-pocket developers.

We hope this development saga turns out to be one of the few that have happy endings for the homeowners. Maybe wishing — plus a lot of compromising on both sides — will make this so, too.

OCC millage merits yes vote

A cautious Oakland Community College board listened to the voters and has placed another property tax request on the June 12 ballot. That kind of responsiveness by the board — a lower tax rate for fewer years — deserves praise from the public it serves. And the measure itself merits a yes vote.

Voters on March 16 gave OCC only a 45-percent approval for a proposed "in perpetuity" tax. This time OCC's request is for seven years.

But there were vocal objections, enough to convince the board to shorten the time. It considered a five-year proposal, and 10 years, then split the difference at seven years.

The board also scaled back its request from 1 full mill on March 16 (\$1 per \$1,000 of taxable value) to 0.8 mill (80 cents per \$1,000 of taxable value). That decision clearly was prudent. If it's approved, the lower rate will yield some \$25 million versus more than \$29 million in the first proposal.

We have heard grumbling, from folks unfamiliar with tax history, that this proposal amounts to a "doubling" of taxes for the two-year college. That's terribly misleading, and that perception must be corrected.

Thirty years ago, OCC voters approved 1 mill for operations. By the end of the 1970s, OCC actually was levying 1.7 mills — 1.0 for operations and 0.7 non-voted for debt retirement. The bonds have been paid off, and the 0.7 mill has expired. The college's current tax rate is 0.85 mill, about half of the historic high and well below the historic average.

So if the June 12 proposal is approved — as it should be — the total OCC rate will be a bit more than 1.6 mills. That's not excessive.

Many Michigan community colleges levy 2 mills and more. In spending per-student, OCC ranks 29th among 30 community colleges — including those in the Upper Peninsula, where costs are much cheaper.

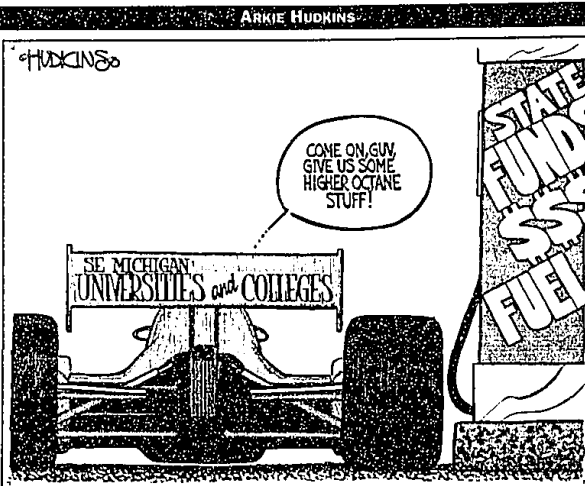
The new money would raise annual revenues to \$97 million. In the first two years, the bulk of the new money will be earmarked for capital improvements — equipment, computers, remodeling, repairs. Gradually, more will go into new programs. More full-time faculty will be hired, which will be good for the students. While normal salary increases are likely, this money will be for improving education, not improving paychecks.

There is one other major reason this OCC proposal should get a yes vote. A brand new law on the books called PA 7 of 1995 gives a \$250 state income tax break for college tuition — with one catch. The tax break goes only to students enrolled in colleges which this year hold tuition increases at or below the rate of consumer price inflation — 3-plus percent.

If this OCC proposal goes down, tuition hikes are almost certain to exceed 3 percent; all the universities are saying so at legislative budget hearings. So a defeat for OCC June 12 would mean students would be nailed twice — with a tuition increase beyond the rate of inflation and with no income tax break.

That would be a bad way to treat young people entering college. It would be a terrible way to treat people who have been out of school a few years who want to upgrade their skills. And it would be an abysmal way to treat older folks for whom OCC is a second and perhaps final chance.

Be anxious, come June 12, to say yes to all of us.



LETTERS

A 'special thanks'

On May 1, I was having chest pains. My wife called 911. In about three minutes, the police arrived, and within five minutes the ambulance was here.

We do not know their names, but we would like to let these dedicated men in our community know how much they were appreciated in our time of need.

A special thanks to all of them.

Lou Fox, Farmington

Thanks for coverage.

Dear editor: Thanks for your extensive coverage of the Farmington Hills volunteer meeting May 1.

Your editorial May 4 and the further coverage May 8 were grand. Thanks to writer Bill Coutant and photographer Sharon LeMieux for her excellent pictures.

Ken Lockwood, Farmington

The date's showing

In the recent restructuring of the ceiling of the portico of the Masonic Temple, the "cornerstone" above the door is once again in view. The inscription includes 1876 as the date of construction of the landmark building at Grand River and Farmington Road.

I wish to commend the Masons in their uncovering of the cornerstone of this historic building.

Lee S. Peel, Farmington

It's a 'Keeper'

Awonderful thing happened the last weekend in April. The Promise Keepers met in the Pontiac Silverdome.

It was one of the largest gatherings of men ever recorded in the pages of history. More than 72,000 men met together to share, to grow, to commit or recommit their lives to the service of others: to God, to one another and to their families.

Conceived in 1990 by former University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney and his friend, Dave Wardell, Promise Keepers has grown from one conference in 1991 which drew 4,200 men to Colorado to 13 nationwide conferences expected to reach more than 600,000 men this year.

It saddens me deeply that there were those who chose to ignore or condemn this event. Promise Keepers condemns no one or anything except sin.

The attendees are uplifted and inspired to be men of high moral and ethical worth, and to minister to others. Speakers of music and praise encourage men to live a life of commitment to God and to others, with the highest regard for strong moral convictions and integrity.

My husband came home a changed man. He wept openly, as did the majority of men in attendance. He embraced others in a unified spirit of fellowship that is rapidly reaching extinction in our autonomous society.

I was not invited to attend Promise Keepers, but I did not feel slighted or scorned. My husband had a positive life changing experience, along with a literal multitude of others. He gained maturity, integrity and spiritual insight.

Some 72,000 men were exposed to the positive influence of committing their lives to others. Think of how many people will be touched in a positive way.

For more information, write to Promise Keepers, P.O. Box 18376, Boulder, CO 80308. Ellen K. Grider, Farmington Hills

Not accurate

In response to the letter from reader Albert Rosen, published May 1, I would like to refute his claims regarding the taxing of Social Security.

Mr. Rosen's claim that he must return 85 cents of each Social Security dollar received is completely inaccurate.

The accurate story is that a person can at maximum be taxed on 85 percent of his or her Social Security income, depending on total income. Since the top tax rate is 36 percent (as per IRS publication 17, page 236), the following would be an example as to the maximum paid in tax.

Example: Social Security income \$20,000, 85 percent taxable, \$17,000; 36 percent tax rate, \$6,120.

This means 30.6 cents of every dollar goes to tax, not 85 cents. It should be noted, however, that a married couple filing a joint tax return in the above example would have to have an income of \$140,000 or more to be taxed at 36 percent.

I would assume that the majority of Social Security recipients would fall into the minimum tax bracket of 15 percent.

Torkild Nielsen, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's on your mind?



"What a beautiful tribute to the volunteers this was."
Ben Scott
Farmington Hills



"Having a cup of coffee."
Leota Rammell
Bloomfield Hills



"Getting this place cleaned up."
Debbie McIntosh
Farmington



"Lunch. I'm hungry."
Jennifer Nieral
Livonia

We asked this question at the Farmington Hills Senior Center after a volunteer recognition breakfast.

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TOM BAER, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 477-5450
SUSAN ROSE, MANAGING EDITOR, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2149
PES KROGGER, ADVERTISING MANAGER, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2177
LARRY GIBSON, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2234
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— Philip Power