

On losing Larry Primer yields many lessons

A hhhhhhhhhhh. You could almost feel the relief radiate over the city from 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads Monday evening. It was something like the coming of a cool breeze after the passage of a heat wave.

Larry Lichtman — the man they love to hate in certain sections of the city — announced Monday that he would not stand for re-election to the Farmington Hills City Council in November.

He claims his decision has nothing to do with the controversial development he supported or the recall aimed at him (and five other council members) or the fact that he's recently joined the law firm that represents that developer.

Yes. Of course.

Anyway, now it's lame-duck Larry. Larry Lichtman, who supported without equivocation the Timbercrest development in the face of huge opposition, soon will be local political history.

Is everybody happy?

How about you, Sharon Stein and Sol Rossman and all the others who lived so long (and happily enough, if your comments are any indication) in the subs south of 12 Mile and east of Middlebelt? You may be getting the shops and houses and traffic of Timbercrest, but you're losing your chief antagonist. With a simple announcement, Larry accomplished what your name-calling and recall petitions could not.

And how about you, other Farmington Hills Council members? Timbercrest, along with the ensuing acrimonious debate and recall effort, was giving the whole community kind of a bad smell, wasn't it? And five of you sided with

Larry on the Timbercrest issue. Some of you are up for re-election this fall. Yes, of course Timbercrest in particular and development in general will be on the minds of voters.

And, last of all, how about you, Larry? You won't have to suffer the slings and arrows of outraged residents anymore for simply sticking by your beliefs. You'll be happy to find that, yes, there is life after local politics.

Well, here are a few lessons we've learned from our Timbercrest primer:

■ Farmington Hills has lots of fine people who'd rather fight than run that is, move to some new subdivision in some underdeveloped town to the west or north. They understand, no doubt, a developer, like nature, abhors a vacuum.

■ Such citizens who care enough about their community to stay and speak up and act do make a difference. The folks who banded together to form Voters' Voice couldn't stop Timbercrest or recall the council, but the debate they raised resulted in a better development. We know that in his heart of hearts Larry agrees with us on that.

■ If just a few of the Voters' Voices remain involved to the point of running for the council or serving on city boards or commissions or maybe just bothering to vote in local elections, then all the nastiness and upheaval will have been worth it.

■ Larry Lichtman, despite Timbercrest and all that went with it, is leaving the city a legacy, or at least part of one. It's the Ice Arena, now a building in Founders Sports Park on Eight Mile. We think that structure will be heralded long after Timbercrest has become just another strip mall — with vineyards.

Memorial Day marks special time

Memorial Day has special meaning this year because 1995 marks the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Half a century after the fighting stopped, area residents will gather throughout the weekend — mostly to celebrate a day off from work and the beginning of the summer season but also to pay tribute, remember and reflect.

The World War II era retains a certain allure to us still, even though it was a devastating time for many families. That allure comes from being part of a country that pulled together in pursuit of a common goal.

Some 292,000 Americans were killed in the war. Nearly nine out of every 1,000 American servicemen were killed in action.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur once said of the American soldier fighting during World War II, "He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism."

"He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and freedom."

This Memorial Day we remember the Americans who gave their lives so that freedom is a reality.

The generation of Americans who fought that war was an amazing one. They were young but they understood the common purpose.

Rarely since those days have so many people joined nationwide to accomplish a common goal.

There is still political romance in the idea that we are all in something together. That's especially true in our own political times when examples of our division are all around.

This Memorial Day we pay tribute to the millions of soldiers who lost their lives defending our freedom.

Take time to celebrate and ponder and join the special events that will be held throughout the area:

■ Farmington: The Farmington Memorial Day Parade, featuring a military plane fly-over, is scheduled for 10 a.m. on Memorial Day, Monday, May 29, along Grand River in downtown Farmington.

The parade route will be northwest along Grand River Avenue from about Mooney to the war memorials near the Masonic Temple.

■ Livonia: Wreath placing ceremony and parade on Saturday, May 27. Ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. at Veterans Park, Five Mile and Farmington Road in Livonia. The parade will begin at 10:30 a.m. from the southeast corner of Five Mile and Hubbard.

■ Plymouth: Parade starts at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, May 29.

The parade route opens on Theodore, just north of Main, at the railroad tracks and continues southwest along Main to the veterans' memorials at Kellogg Park, where a stage ceremony is scheduled.

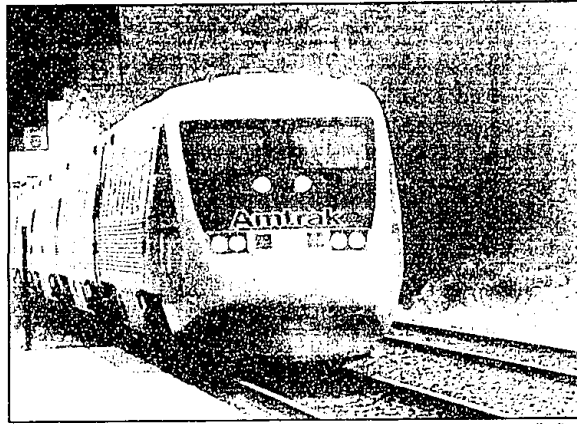
A three-gun salute is scheduled for the ceremony at Kellogg Park.

Also marching in the parade are local Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups, and veterans' auxiliary groups are participating.

■ Garden City: Annual ceremony at 11 a.m. Monday, May 29, at City Hall, on Middlebelt, just north of Ford Road. Taking part are representatives of eight to 10 veterans' groups and Garden City High School Air Force Jr. ROTC.

■ Westland: Local veterans' groups will hold a ceremony at 1 p.m. Monday, May 29, at Veterans' Memorial, in front of city hall, Ford Road, just west of Newburgh.

All aboard!



Rolling on: Public transportation could take a variety of ways to serve the needs of people in the metropolitan area, but it will take business and community leaders to put the system together.

LETTERS

Thanks extended

The staff of Maple Elementary School would like to thank Schechter Landscaping, Kenny Schechter, and Southwyck Corporation, Rick Rosen, for donating their time, materials, equipment and personnel to help us prepare the groundwork for our new play structure.

Without these two community volunteers and their colleagues, the students at Maple would not have been able to use their new play equipment, purchased by the Maple PTA. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation.

Scott L. Little, principal
Maple Elementary School

He loves the city

I am sure that most of Larry Lichtman's detractors have no idea of the time and dedication one must have to serve this city well.

Larry has served this city not for political glory, but instead for his love of the city. And it has been, yes, his privilege thanks to the voters who elected him to serve.

But, this honor has not come without a price. And, no, I'm not speaking to the individuals who try to influence Larry or other councilmembers with their threats, veiled or otherwise, but to the personal cost a family must pay to allow one its members to dedicate such a large portion of their lives to what is essentially a community service.

However, when Larry's integrity is called into question, I can no longer sit idly by.

I wasn't able to view all of the Timbercrest debates, but most of them, and it intrigued me that so many understood so little.

Decisions on the council cannot always be based on wants or desires, but what avenue is legally correct for councilmembers to follow.

The Timbercrest project boiled down to essentially this: The Jonna family owned the property and were within their legal rights to develop it.

Larry understood this, and was willing to take the arrows flung his way. Other council members, however, gave in to cowardice. Perhaps the coming election year played a part.

And finally, for the many of you who do not know our family and what the Lichtman family has stood for over the years, from Fred Lichtman, who was an original charter member, who imprinted in his children the necessity of service with honor, to Larry, who felt he

owed the city, and his children, the belief that your life is more than the four walls that surround you.

And, for those who know nothing of the details of Larry's move to Carson Fisher, please don't speak as if your accusations are indeed fact. I assure you that if you knew the facts, the negative press would cease.

And finally, shame on you, Mr. Vagnozzi, for creating the impression of impropriety. You've known Larry Lichtman a very long time and you know what he's about.

It's the sort of shenanigans that keep professional and capable people out of the public forum.

Holly Lichtman, Farmington Hills

Editor's note: Holly Lichtman is the wife of Councilman Larry Lichtman.

About the bombing

I am happy to respond to the inquiries posed in Sarah Jetta's letter as to the "lack of leadership in Michigan concerning the Michigan Militia as it relates to the Oklahoma affair," as well as the comments on conservatives.

First, there is more of a connection (as far as the FBI is concerned, at least) between the First Infantry Division of the United States Army at Fort Riley, Kansas (where Nichols, McVeigh and other possible suspects met) than there is with the Michigan Militia.

As far as federal authorities are concerned (although you'd never know this from the way the press, in covering the bombing, liberally passed around blame to everyone from talk radio hosts and listeners, to the Michigan Militia, and to conservatives in general), the Michigan Militia has nothing to do with the bombing and the FBI is not interested in questioning them.

As for Jetta's comments that the bombers were from the conservative camp, this is irrelevant, just as it is irrelevant that the Unabomber is from the liberal camp. The terrorism in Oklahoma was sickening and committed by terrorists — period — and was rightly condemned by conservative and liberal groups alike.

Second, I would just like to add that perhaps you should not be so quick to label, because you use labels as broadly as you seem to, those very labels will eventually find you as a deserving target.

Lynn L. Jahneke, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Will the Red Wings win the Stanley Cup?

We asked this question at the Farmington branch of the Farmington Community Library.



"No. They haven't in the past."
Chris Grindler
Farmington



"I don't watch much hockey, but I hope they do."
Deana Murray
Farmington Hills



"Oh, yes. They've been winning all year."
Robert Yates
Farmington Hills



"Yes. I think they deserve it. It's been a long time."
Audrey McClellan
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power