

Farmington Observer OPINION

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MI 48335

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Walled Lake keepers Pick Siegler, Altman, Onder

It's the best of times and the worst of times for the Walled Lake Consolidated School District — which sprawls into the north-west corner of Farmington Hills — and those who run it.

People are flocking to attractive new homes built in the district communities of Farmington Hills, Novi, Wixom and Commerce and West Bloomfield townships.

But Walled Lake school officials claim they cannot keep up high quality standards without getting money, and lots of it, to build new schools and fix old ones.

It's a lament residents have been hearing from officials for a couple of years now, ever since the \$135 million Project 21 was served up and shot down.

And, judging from comments made by candidates in the current Walled Lake school race, it's a tiring lament with the public.

It is those residents who, Monday, will pick two of five candidates to four-year terms on the Walled Lake Board of Education.

Voters also will pick one of three hopefuls for a single one-year stint.

Although we do not advocate change for change's sake, now is a good time for some new perspectives on difficult issues, mostly those revolving around finances and a perceived communication breakdown between officials and residents.

So, whoever is elected must have business acumen and the ability to clearly convey information to the public — especially if yet another multi-million dollar bond issue is proposed in the next year or so.

We do not want to see anyone elected who only wants to square off against Superintendent James Geisler, his administration, or the rest of the board, just to get his or her way.

Now is a good time for some new perspectives on difficult issues

Provincial thinking within the district was one of the sore spots cited by candidates during the campaign. But maybe a new challenge is necessary.

With that in mind, Walled Lake voters Monday should elect incumbent Marc Siegler and challenger Harvey Altman to the pair of four-year seats, and challenger Alp Onder to the one-year term.

Siegler, who is now completing a one-year board appointment, will push to bring disparate sections of the district together. He also intends to do whatever it takes to improve communication problems.

One suggestion is particularly on the mark: For different schools to do more collaborating on extracurricular activities. That would go a long way toward helping people from one part of Walled Lake schools understand the needs of those in another part.

By electing Altman, voters would be choosing someone with a unique understanding of what education is about. He also has a proven track record in seeking, and obtaining, grant money that could only help the district, perhaps in the much-needed technology area.

Although Onder's two opponents for the one-year term are both dedicated parent volunteers, we like his ability to communicate well and handle major financial problems and strategies for his clients at Roney and Co. in Farmington Hills.

He admits not having much previous experience in education circles, but he is open and honest. Those traits, in our opinion, make him the best candidate for the job.

Many reasons to OK millage

Oakland Community College is seriously under-financed. There's a lot of worry these days about governments spending too much money, but here is a case where one is spending too little.

Voters can correct the situation Monday, June 12, by approving OCC's request for 0.8 of a mill of property tax for seven years. The modest proposal deserves a yes vote.

It would raise OCC's total rate to about 1.65 mills, well below the state average of 2.16 mills. On a per-student spending basis, the millage will put OCC somewhere near the middle of Michigan's 29 community colleges.

This proposal is something the OCC board and administration should have asked for sooner. OCC's leaders withheld their request to allow the K-12 system to make reforms and get their houses in order. OCC's reticence was understandable. But it gave some folks the incorrect impression that all was well, money-wise, on the five campuses.

All hasn't been well:

■ A lot of repairs need to be made to the buildings, some 30 years old. Walks, roofs, parking lots, carpeting, general remodeling, pools — many things have been let go during recessions to keep teaching programs going.

■ A lot of new technology is needed, not only for the teaching of engineering design and manufacturing, but for the new era in photo imaging and medical care. Some of it is being donated by visionary industrialists. Much still needs to be bought and paid for.

■ The public is making greater demands on the two-year college. Some 30,000 students are en-

rolled at any one time, making OCC one of the largest institutions of higher learning in the state. Even the wealthiest school districts are sending 20 percent of their high school graduating classes to OCC where young people not only get good instruction but beat the soaring costs of four-year universities for a couple of years.

■ The workplace has changed, and many people in their middle years are upgrading their skills for the global market. Society has changed, and many displaced homemakers would rather work than join the welfare lifestyle. Both ends of the political spectrum — from U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich to Gov. John Engler — agree that community colleges will be the major factor in training the workforce of the future.

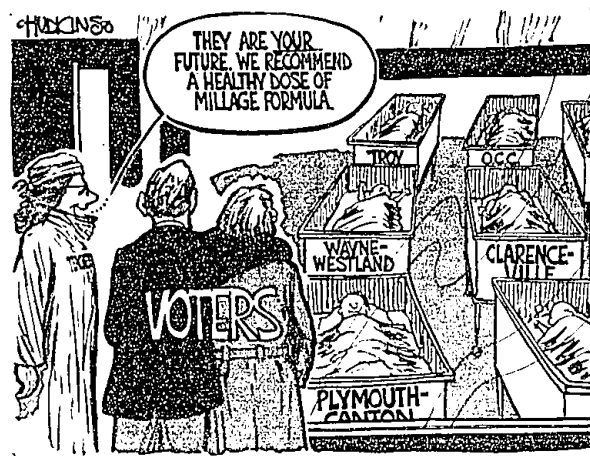
■ The state has been less than kind to OCC. With inflation running at more than 3 percent, the governor proposed a 1.1 percent state aid increase, and if OCC is lucky, the Legislature will come up with 2.5 percent. Hurting Oakland is the state aid formula, which is based in part on a one-mill local effort. OCC doesn't raise the matching money.

In past decades, OCC has done its building with bonds and non-voted taxes. The total rate has been as high as 1.7 mills and has averaged 1.4 mills. The building days are over, the board has decided. Existing buildings must be maintained with voted millage.

Hence, comes this modest proposal of 0.8 mills for seven years, which would raise the total rate to a bit more than 1.6.

It's about time OCC goes to the voters! The college's record merits an overwhelming approval of the June 12 proposal.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

For Enberg

I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the candidacy of Linda K. Enberg for the Farmington School Board.

Having known Enberg and her family for years, I believe the community is fortunate to have a candidate of her caliber willing to serve on the Farmington School Board.

Besides being highly qualified, Enberg has an excellent record of community involvement as well as a genuine concern for the community's students.

Ronald Oliverio, Farmington Hills

A Levin man

I write to endorse your June 1 recommendation to elect Jennifer Levin to fill the open seat on the Farmington School Board.

Her family background has been filled with dedication to serve communities in many areas, with an emphasis on the education of children.

Jennifer Levin's election would bring a bright, open-minded, sincere and dedicated woman lawyer with fresh and well-thought-through views on continuing to improve the education product delivered to Farmington Hills students.

Sheldon M. Lutz, Farmington Hills

No to millage

Vote no on Monday, June 12, on OCC's millage increase request. Several months ago, voters rebuffed Oakland Community College's first request this year for a \$30 million pay hike.

Apparently they thought we had misapoken because here they've come back again like the Everready Bunny.

John E. Mayer, West Bloomfield

Chamber says 'yes'

At its May meeting, the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors endorsed Oakland Community College's request for an eight-10ths of one mill increase for a period of seven years. The millage election is scheduled for Monday, June 12.

The board of directors acknowledged the numerous partnerships established between area businesses and OCC. The college is a recognized leader in providing essential training and re-training for area employers and employees.

It trains highly skilled medical personnel, including nurses, radiologists, diagnostic medical sonographers, emergency medical technicians, who are employed in Oakland County and directly add to the quality of services received by county residents. The college is also a major educator for police and fire personnel serving area communities.

Many local residents attend OCC as regular students, whose goals are to be more skilled and whose training makes them better employees. The college requires its funding request to continue providing quality services in these critical areas.

Jody Soronen, president, Chamber of Commerce

More for Enberg

I encourage residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills to cast their votes for Linda Enberg on June 12.

Linda has shown her dedication to students, education and community through her involvement in Farmington Families in Action, Parent Advisory Forum at Farmington High School and other committees.

Linda is an intelligent, interested, concerned citizen and a lady with a lot of class. Betty Nicolay, Farmington Hills

Thanks to all

We wish to thank the editor, writers Bill Coutant and Mary Rodrigue and photographer Sharon LeMieux for the extensive coverage given to residents' concerns regarding the huge subdivision proposed for our half-mile section of North Power Road.

We also wish to thank all the wonderful people who have given us support by way of numerous encouraging phone calls, letters — Linda Green wrote not only to the Planning Commission but also to the mayor and city council — and last but certainly not least, our profound thanks to those super people who spoke up on our behalf at the public hearing held by the Planning Commission on Thursday, May 18.

Mary Burk's heart warming poem "Save Power Road" has become our rallying cry.

As longtime residents of Power Road, we are determined to oppose what seems to be a plan to destroy our quiet, peaceful way of life. We were moved to tears by the intense outpouring of support from area residents. There are no words to properly convey our gratitude.

Irene Kernicky, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What are your dreams for the future?



"A decent job a fun job." Andrea Cossetti



"To somehow do God's will and to be the best person I can be." Rochelle Reese



"Be the best that I can be." Lisa Velasco



"To go on a world tour with my band, 'Affliction'." Courtney Cahill

We asked this question of graduating seniors at the recent Harrison High School commencement in Ann Arbor.

The Farmington Observer

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— Philip Powers