

Butt out, Joe

Nonpartisan politics, please

Say it ain't so, Joe. Ah, but when we put that request to our congressman, U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, all he would say was: Paul Sowerby for mayor. We hate to say we told you so, but we told you so.

The office of Farmington Hills mayor is now such a big deal that, just as we predicted would happen, here comes some big-time politico to meddle in our local, nonpartisan elections.

We note with dismay that Joe Knollenberg, a Republican, is unabashedly supporting Paul Sowerby *Farmington Observer*, June 26 for the first directly elected mayor of Farmington Hills.

And, if big-name party endorsements are coming to the Farmington Hills political scene, can big-bucks party contributions be far behind?

Now, try as we might, we just can't recall Knollenberg, or his predecessor, Bill Broomfield, caring — or even knowing — much about the office of Farmington Hills mayor in previous elections.

And that is (or was) as it should be.

But the next Farmington Hills mayor is going to be measurably more important than his predecessors. He's going to be elected by the voters, not named by the City Council. And his term will be two years, not one, with an option for a second term. The office could be an express elevator to some loftier political story.

Yes, the new office of mayor of Oakland County's largest city might be something the politicians in Lansing and Washington want to stroke and control. A few well-placed words or dollars would certainly help toward that end.

■ If big-name party endorsements are coming to the Farmington Hills political scene, can big-bucks party contributions be far behind?

And, too, we can't help wondering if Knollenberg's endorsement of Sowerby wasn't in some small measure a partisan political slapping of Hills Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi, the only other known candidate for mayor.

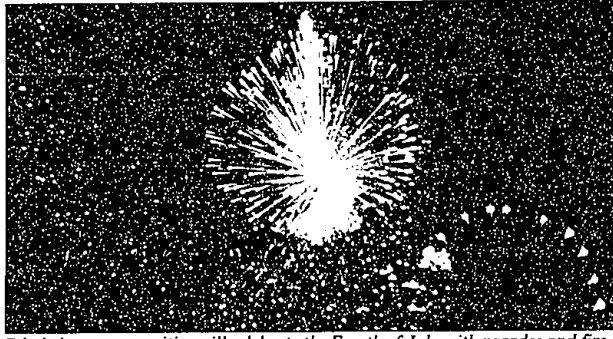
Vagnozzi, at 68 the Grand Old Man of Farmington-area politics, might be considered the heir apparent for the new office. However, he differs from his City Hall cohorts (and just about everyone else in Oakland County) in one important respect: He's a Democrat and proud of it. Can the Republican power brokers allow one of them to ascend to the mayor's chair?

Vagnozzi also distinguished himself last year by not going into the tank with the rest of the City Council over Timbercrest, the controversial development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt roads. The council approved the project, 6-1, and Vagnozzi was the lone and consistent "no" vote. There might be some payback politics aimed at him over Timbercrest.

Now none of the above missive should be taken as New Observer endorsements or put-downs of Vagnozzi or Sowerby or even Knollenberg, for that matter.

We just wish Congressman Knollenberg and his partisan pals would stay out of nonpartisan matters here in Farmington Hills.

Festive Fourth



Enjoy! Area communities will celebrate the Fourth of July with parades and fireworks. The Plymouth-Canton Jaycees present a parade at 1 p.m. Tuesday in downtown Plymouth. Fireworks are set for dusk in the Plymouth-Haggerty Road-Hines Drive area. Parking will be available in the west and east Unisys lots off of Haggerty Road. The city of Westland will close its annual summer festival with a fireworks display at 10 p.m. Monday in Central City Park, south of Ford between Newburgh and Wayne roads.

LETTERS

Money does talk

I think it is interesting that Congressman Knollenberg said he does not normally give his support to local campaign candidates, but he made an exception with Paul Sowerby.

It is interesting because Paul Sowerby has contributed thousands of dollars to the Knollenberg campaign, while Jon Grant and Aldo Vagnozzi have contributed nominal amounts, if any money to Knollenberg.

I guess money speaks louder than character.
Les H. Guthrie, Farmington Hills

I have radiation burns on my left shoulder and breast. I have mood swings and the two percent possibility of endometrial cancer to look forward to.

Through each phase of my healing and recovery I have had additional side effects. I have had the love and support of my family and friends. I have had the love and support of the staff, students, parents and school board members of Huron Valley Schools.

I have had the care and concern of the doctors, technicians, nurses and support staff of Beaumont Hospital and the Hematology and Radiation Oncology departments of the Rose Cancer Center. I have had the blessing of God.

I am blessed to not only have a second chance at life, but I am doubly blessed that there have been and will continue to be so many loving, caring and supportive people in my life.

I know that I have had to take a very positive and active role in my recovery. That part of my healing process could not have occurred without all of you.

I want to publicly acknowledge your part in my healing.

Elizabeth K. McConnell,
Farmington Hills

Joe disappoints

Congressman Joe Knollenberg said that he is supporting Paul Sowerby for mayor because Sowerby is "an individual who strives to bring people together and resolve conflict."

Obviously, Knollenberg does not "pay close attention to local government in Farmington Hills," as he claimed in his letter to the editor of June 22.

Knollenberg obviously does not know the Paul Sowerby we've all come to know. By Sowerby's divisive and mean-spirited tactics, he has tarnished his reputation with many of the residents of Farmington Hills.

In fact, rumor has it that many of the city's administrative employees, who've had the misfortune of dealing with Sowerby in the past, have vowed to resign if he's elected.

That is why I'm so disappointed in Knollenberg. It is clear poor judgment to get involved in a local race, where you are obviously not aware of the climate of the local government or the character of the candidate.

Renee McKenzie, Farmington Hills

Clean up, folks

It is time for the city of Farmington to clean up. I offer two specific suggestions to improve the image our city projects to its guests and residents.

At many residential and business addresses in the city, bushes, trees and shrubbery extend into the sidewalk space or hang so low over the sidewalk that one must duck or walk around them. Proper trimming in order to maintain clear passage along city sidewalks will help to open up the city to foot travel and thus make it more visitor friendly.

Refuse on city sidewalks and streets continues to make our city less attractive than it might otherwise be. Food and paper waste can often be found near businesses in the city. In the downtown area, the iron grates placed in the sidewalk around the trees are especially unattractive due to the paper waste that is caught in the grates. I hope that city workers, business owners and residents will pitch in to help keep the city free of unsightly waste.

Our city hosts many visitors from out of town, and this is an appropriate time for residents and business owners to try to look our very best for our guests and ourselves.

Michael Shelly, Farmington

Respecting flag doesn't need law

The mood — and agenda — in Washington these days might best be characterized as one promoting back-to-basics government. Reaffirmation of so-called traditional values was the guiding force behind Congress' "Contract with America."

Because the American flag is one symbol that characterizes those values, there has been a renewed push by some to enact legislation making its desecration by burning or other means illegal. While we can urge a healthy respect for the "Stars and Stripes" and all it stands for, we can't support such legislation.



■ Courts have ruled time and again that bans on flag burning or desecration violate the tenets of free speech laid out in the Constitution.

The flag is already subject to guidelines set by legislators and several U.S. Supreme Court rulings. In 1942, Congress adopted a flag code that relied primarily on tradition and common sense to set flag etiquette. The code has been amended several times. For example, nighttime flag displays, once prohibited by the code, are now permitted. Improvements in outdoor lighting and the impracticality of raising and lowering the flag each day led to the change.

The current code already lists prohibited uses of the flag. Using the flag as drapery, altering the flag or using it for advertising are among the improper uses. Burning a worn flag is recommended in the code as a proper way to dispose of it.

But the most important reason for not passing such a law amounts to the very thing the flag represents — freedom. Courts have ruled time and again that bans on flag burning or desecration violate the tenets of free speech laid out in the Constitution.

The most recent ruling came in 1989 when the U.S. Supreme Court said that protesters who burned the flag at the Republican National Convention were guilty of nothing more than expressing their constitutionally protected views.

As we get ready to celebrate the Fourth of July it is important to remember that respect for the American flag can and should be advocated — not legislated.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What's on your mind?



'My mother. I just brought her back from Wisconsin.'
Burton Bernard
Menomonee, Wis.



'Passing my English class at Henry Ford Community College.'
Brian Kalczyński
Farmington



'Career information on public speaking and other things.'
Kevin Peacock
Farmington Hills



'Working with students who are trying to maintain and improve their math skills.'
Jayne Headrick
Canton Township

We asked this question in the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.

The Farmington Observer

TOM BAER, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 477-5450
SUEAN ROBIN, MANAGING EDITOR, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2149
PEZ KROEPEL, ADVERTISING MANAGER, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2177
LARRY GORDY, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2234
BANKS M. DASHMAN, JR., PUBLISHER, OBSERVER NEWSPAPERS, 953-2100
STEVEN K. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER,
OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 953-2252

RURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION
PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD RICHARD ADRIAN, PRESIDENT

Our Mission: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power