

# Farmington Observer

## OPINION

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MI 48335

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1995

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## Baloney

### Millage isn't cheap lunchmeat

**G**loom and doom prognostications from officials in those school districts facing pending millage elections are recurring themes.

Many times, their words are wrapped in large slices of baloney.

"Get out and vote for our cause, or else face the consequences. No teachers. No janitors. No buses."

Indeed, such proclamations might persuade the most prudent senior citizen or business owner to lessen the grip on their purse strings.

But there also could be an opposite effect, particularly in districts where the electorate is opinionated and where loyalty isn't blind.

Which scenario will play itself out in Walled Lake School District, which includes a northwestern portion of Farmington Hills? Voters soon will have their chance to decide whether administrators are bombarding them with baloney or not.

On Saturday Nov. 18, a 10-year millage renewal is to be decided. Superintendent James Geisler and other officials maintain its defeat will wipe out about 20 percent of the 1996-97 operating budget and send life as Walled Lake students know it to unforeseen depths.

What is the upside of a defeat? Parents can consider enrolling their children in private schools.

Sarcasm aside, the facts do support the need for a successful millage.

It is no secret that subdivisions continue to spring up all across the district. The annual in-

crease in enrollment has maxed out resources and pushed class sizes to the absolute limit.

In order to adequately handle this year's enrollment, the district had to lease Meadow Lake Elementary School, formerly part of Birmingham schools. Attendance boundaries for other buildings also were changed.

And full-day kindergarten sessions also have been implemented.

Geisler's people have been beating the drum for more than two years now about the need to solve the space dilemma. Three times, since October 1993, bond issues of more than \$100 million each have been put before the public and soundly defeated.

One might understand why some didn't want to spend more money in those cases, which would have paid for the construction of state-of-the-art buildings and linking of the district to The Internet. Those were categorized as frills, or "nice-to-haves," by opponents of those bond issues.

But this election is not about niceties. It's about renewing the millage rate, in order for the quality of programs and staffing to continue as they are beyond the current year and on toward the 21st century.

Voters, meanwhile, need to put the back-to-back bond issues in the past. They need to find out as much as they can about the millage renewal in the next several weeks and thus come to the conclusion that it's different this time.

We suspect they'll do the right thing on Nov. 18 and approve the question at hand.

## OCC damage is spread wide

**T**he board of trustees finally has succeeded in firing Dr. Patsy Calkins as chancellor of Oakland Community College — a decision as popular as a manager dumping a ball player with a .375 average and 50 home runs. Calkins ran a successful millage campaign and won admiration from the county's politicians, industrial elite, faculty and students.

It was the elected trustees who hired the chief executive, however, and the elected trustees who voted 5-2 to fire her. We recall H.L. Mencken's commentary: "Democracy is the theory that the people know what they want and deserve to get it — good and hard."

But harm was done to more folks than Calkins, who will continue to collect full salary and benefits for 19 or so months without having to put in 60-hour work weeks. The college is getting it good and hard.

First, the board fired Calkins after giving her a very good performance evaluation — 4 on a scale of 1-5. It appears two of her friends and two dissidents participated. Three dissidents sat it out, suggesting the five-member majority itself is shaky.

The majority sent a message to employees of all institutions who undergo annual performance evaluations by the boss: If the boss wants to get you, she's going to get you — your abilities, accomplishments and reputation to the contrary notwithstanding.

Second, trustees were unable to approve the minutes of their previous meeting. It's solid evidence of Calkins' allegation that some trustees don't do their homework and come to meetings unprepared. Additions or corrections to the minutes are usually dealt with immediately and routinely.

Third, the board held up action on all personnel appointments because some trustees had problems with a mere handful. For months, OCC was unable to hire janitors, transfer groundskeepers, approve retirements or even accept resignations. Trustees who had done their homework should have been able to pick and

choose which matters deserved routine approval and which should be held up.

Fourth, there is the matter of hiring a construction manager. Two meetings were held to interview representatives of five companies. Attendance by trustees was such that now they must hold still another meeting to ask questions that should have been asked at the first round of interviews.

Meanwhile, the tax money approved by voters June 12 is earning interest in the bank, but it isn't paying for the building renovations that our 30,000 students need.

Even if the board majority were right in firing Calkins, its performance has been sorry.

There is a movement afoot to recall the five dissident trustees — Sandra Ritter, Judith Wier, Douglas Wakefield, Carol Crew and Pamela Davis. The Alliance for OCC's Future can be contacted at 810-788-1877.

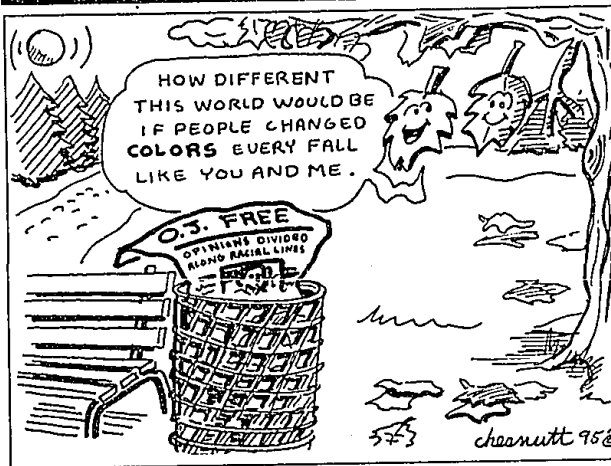
This newspaper neither endorses nor opposes the recall drive, but points out that a recall is fraught with danger. What if the drive fails to collect the required 100,000 petition signatures? How will it look?

What if a recall election is held and apathetic voters fail to throw out the trustees? Collectively, the trustees have Republican Party connections, Democratic Party connections, MEA connections, AFSCME connections, personal financial resources — and success in running nine election campaigns. A failed recall drive will vindicate them.

Whatever your decision on a recall, keep in mind the next election is in June, seven months away. Dissident Wakefield has said he won't run again. Dissident Ritter may decide that 18 years of public service are enough; we encourage her to think of retiring.

Voters can change the board's face at the polls next June and give a new majority a chance to hire a new chief executive officer. For the sake of the students, let's hope the damage hasn't been so great that it scares off good candidates.

DAVID CHESTNUTT



## LETTERS

### Candidate on target

**A**s the Nov. 7 election approaches my wife and I were very pleased to hear the comments of Farmington Hills City Council candidate Dennis Fitzgerald. During an informal "meet the candidates" format on the local cable access channel, Mr. Fitzgerald advocated the possibilities of "raising revenues without raising taxes." This is an exciting and feasible alternative in that several community centers such as the new Farmington Hills Ice Arena and the Farmington Hills Activities Center already show great promise in their abilities to become self sufficient.

The thought that these centers would not cost Farmington Hills residents additional taxes and instead generate positive cash flow revenues makes this a win-win scenario for every Farmington Hills resident.

What greater sense of satisfaction could a resident have than knowing that without raising taxes his or her participation at these centers was helping our city maintain its image as a leading community in which to live?

My wife and I, as 13-year residents, applauded Mr. Fitzgerald's proposal. But even more so is his understanding of the importance that these centers are available to residents because there is a demand for them. This same demand helps create self-sufficiency and is imperative as our city evolves from being a developing community to becoming a maintained community. Let's maintain it through self-sufficiency and not increased taxation.

Larry and Mary Crites,  
Farmington Hills

### Voting solution

**O**ne of the questions that is puzzling many of the people I talk to in Farmington Hills is: Who should be our next mayor? As a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, I have had the opportunity to see both candidates, Aldo Vagnozzi and Paul Sowerby, serve this community. I am impressed with both men.

So then, what candidate would serve this city best? In my mind, there are a couple of issues. First, if we should elect Aldo Vagnozzi, we have lost the opportunity to get the benefits of Paul Sowerby's insights and leadership.

If Paul Sowerby were elected, Aldo Vagnozzi still would remain on council. Voting for Paul Sowerby gives us the opportunity to get the services of both men.

The only real difference at a council meeting between mayor and a council member is who chairs the meeting. The mayor's vote is no more important than any other council member. Whether Aldo chairs the meeting or Paul does will not really mean a thing.

The next question we must address is who will take Aldo's seat if he is elected mayor? According to our City Charter, the council will appoint a citizen to fill the vacancy until the next election. Do we as citizens want the council to decide who serves our city or should the voters decide? If Paul Sowerby is elected mayor, the citizens of Farmington Hills will have elected all people serving on our city council. That's really the way it should be.

Stuart L. Sells, Farmington Hills

### Lost his vote

**A**ldo Vagnozzi, you definitely have lost my vote for mayor. Why you might ask? For the picture of you at the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Kroger Store at 11 Mile and Middlebelt. The Kroger Company kicked out a number of tenants so they could expand that store. It was those tenants that paid the price for Kroger.

Mr. Aldo Vagnozzi, did you know that City Manager William Costick fought tooth and nail to prevent that from happening? And now with your appearance for the ribbon cutting one now knows which side you supported. I cannot help wonder did Kroger support you for your campaign for mayor?

Therefore I wish that there was a way to remove you from office for good. It is true. That area needed a facelift. In fact at one point Kroger had agreed to do it with those tenants still there. But Kroger changed its mind.

Therefore by you being there for Kroger tells me all I wanted to know. You are not a worthy man to be mayor, let alone a city councilman. You have disgraced those that have lost their jobs. You aren't even worthy to be a friend. You in my mind sold out to Kroger. All those people were people that I knew.

Vernon Kielpinski,  
Farmington Hills

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

What book would you recommend someone read?



"I think I would probably be 'Huckleberry Finn.' It has bearing today on how people get along."  
Art Wadeau  
Farmington



"One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I read the book; it's very interesting. The author got a Nobel Prize for literature."  
Fernando Mesa  
Farmington



"How To Win Friends and Influence People." That's the best book I've read. It deals with real-life situations."  
Brian Cahill  
Farmington Hills



"Some Books on Mohandas Gandhi."  
Gary Kane  
Northville

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— Philip Power