

Hashing it out

Fresh ideas needed on council

OK, OK, we know election day has come and gone. But we think a plate of hash or a bowl of stew made up of local political leftovers might taste pretty good right about now.

Let losing pols lie

Farmington Hills gained a mayor — and lost a city councilman — when Aldo Vagnozzi was voted the city's first directly-elected mayor.

Used to be that the city council named the mayor from its ranks. Since Nov. 7, however, it's Hills voters who decide the mayoral race.

But council isn't through voting people into office quite yet. It has to decide who'll fill Vagnozzi's spot on that seven-member body.

There's been some speculation on who that replacement should be. Our advice: Forget the folks who just ran (and lost) for the offices of mayor and council. Voters have said no to those folks. Council shouldn't go overturning that verdict.

Instead, council should trot out someone with a fresh face — and ideas to match — who'll be electable next August when that appointee will have to run on his/her own for the right to finish the rest of Vagnozzi's council term.

Come on, council, you know that qualified people are out there. It's just a matter of finding them.

It may be tempting for council to offer a reprieve to an also-ran from the Nov. 7 shootout, but let's find someone new for this opening.

One partisan monster tamed

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that big partisan push for the losing candidate in the Hills mayoral race.

Some big-shot Republicans had supported the runnerup in what is supposed to be a non-partisan race. Non-partisan means no political parties, please.

We were concerned that, with the recent enhancement of the office of mayor in Farmington Hills, big-name party endorsements and big-buck party contributions would appear to screw things up on the local political scene.

Well, the partisan monster did indeed raise its head, roar and breathe fire. The endorsements were there, and the loser appears to have outspent the winner by a wide margin. But all to no avail. Let that be a lesson to the would-be power brokers from places like Lansing and Washington.

And a newcomer shall lead them

What is it with these newcomers to Farmington Hills city council races? They not only win election to office, but they're the top vote-getters to boot.

It happened Nov. 7, when Vicki Barnett gathered 8,440 voters to outpace savvy pals like Terry Sever and Nancy Bates. It happened two years ago, when Cheryl Oliverio, another homemaker-turned-politician, led her field.

Could it be that the newcomers work harder and walk farther and have more to say to the voters than the comfortable vets. If that's the case, let's have a newcomer in every election.

Food for thought helps needy

For some, Thanksgiving brings only the taste of bitterness to their senses as they realize that a lack of resources, for whatever reason, will deny them a wholesome dinner, complete with turkey and all the trimmings.

That's where volunteers — and the continuous efforts of the Food Bank of Oakland County — are making a difference.

Every couple of weeks, the Food Bank serves hundreds of communities, including Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Rochester Hills, Oxford/Lake Orion, Clarkston, Southfield, Walled Lake and Farmington Hills. Their site-based method is far better for volunteers to manage, especially considering the phenomenal numbers served — more than 70,000 each month.

These may be people out of work, but frequently they're also those who are working, but who simply don't earn enough to provide for their families. Hence, the food network is needed.

Feeding the system itself are donations from commercial suppliers, as well as individuals with food drives and monetary donations. What makes this system so popular is that people aren't solicited for donations from multiple sources. The Food Bank is just that: a central source for collection and distribution.

"So instead of having 100 voices asking for help, you have one voice and the food gets distributed proportionately according to need," said Jim Macy, executive director of the Food Bank of Oakland County.

It also is a lifeline. Volunteers meet with those in need, listen to their stories and are able to direct them to resource points for resolving unmanageable problems.

"We help keep their lives going," said Macy, who is an Oakland County resident.

The concept of food banks is nearly 30 years old. They began in 1967 in Phoenix and have spread throughout the country. It may be a reflection of a trend in which people are unwilling to pay taxes to take care of their social burdens.

Nevertheless, those responsibilities remain and volunteerism appears to be a growing way for the private sector to meet the need.

Currently, Oakland County has a 20,000-square-foot facility that houses all of the four food groups. But meat, eggs and milk are in short supply. People are given certificates to buy eggs and milk.

Macy expects to collect 3 1/2 million pounds of food this year. That's up from 212 pounds in 1993.

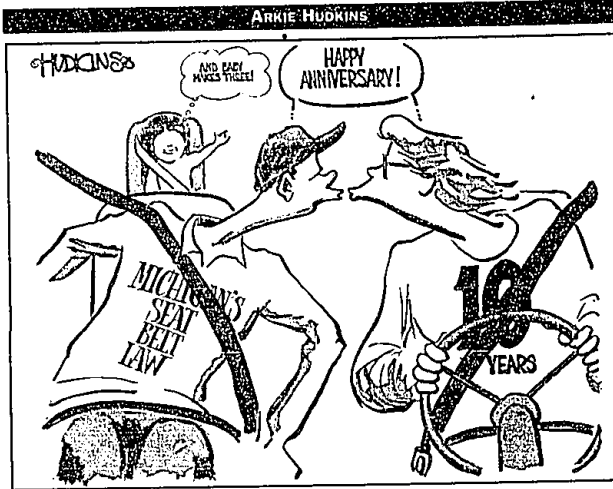
But the work isn't done and your help is needed. "Each dollar you contribute will provide eight meals for a needy neighbor," reads one brochure.

Flyers for the annual tax-deductible appeal will go out in the Eccentric Newspapers with the Dec. 7 edition. And a non-dinner dance, one that actually never happens, is solely to raise money.

Contributions can be sent to the Food Bank of Oakland County, P.O. Box 431385, Pontiac 48343.

Volunteers can also work at places ranging from Lighthouse north in Clarkston to the Salvation Army in Farmington Hills, Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Township, Walled Lake Fish, Yad Ezra in Southfield and Southfield Human Resources, among others.

Your help may not totally erase the bitterness, but it will go a long way toward eschewing hunger.



LETTERS

They say thanks

We write to offer our thanks for your overwhelming support of the Farmington Hills Public Safety Millage that was on the Nov. 7 ballot.

As has been indicated over the past several months, we firmly believe that passage of this millage is most important and will allow both your police and fire departments to operate more efficiently and effectively in providing the quality of public safety services you deserve.

We are looking forward to implementing the public safety service improvements with the funds that will become available July 1 next year. We commit to you that we will do so with the foremost goal of providing noticeably improved police and fire protection services.

The entire staff of your police and fire departments is dedicated to providing the most professional and best public safety services possible. Once again, thank you for your valued support.

Richard Marinucci, fire chief
William Dwyer, police chief
William Costick, city manager

You're yellow

Recent issues of the Farmington Observer contain some of the blatant examples of yellow journalism that I have ever witnessed. Let me explain.

The dictionary defines yellow journalism as the use of unscrupulous methods to attract or influence readers. In the Nov. 2 issue, there is perfect coordination between your Page 1 stories and your editorial page positions.

For example, your lead story, "Sowerby big campaign spender," is a blistering attack on the fund-raising of mayoral candidate Paul Sowerby, while your opinion page endorses his opponent Aldo Vagnozzi.

Continuing in the proud tradition of William Randolph Hearst, the second story on the front page is a piece about the opening of Woodland Hills Park. The opening of the park just 10 days before election day, seems to be the current liberal city council's way of touting its accomplishments to the voters. Then we turn to the opinion page, where every candidate you endorse is a big spending liberal.

In the Nov. 6 issue on page 3A, there is a story entitled "Hills citizen group opposes 1.1 mill public safety proposal." Instead of being a story about the efforts of a small group of taxpayers fighting a well-financed campaign by millage supporters, over two-thirds of this sto-

ry is devoted to presenting the views of the millage supporters, including the ad hominem attacks on the group by the Mayor Joanne Smith who refers to us as "malcontents."

Readers should compare this story to the flattering piece you ran about two weeks earlier (in plenty of time to influence the election) about the group supporting the tax. This story included a color picture and not one word from the opposition. Needless to say, your editorial page endorsed passage of the Public Safety Millage.

These examples conform perfectly to the definition of yellow journalism cited above. William Randolph Hearst would be proud, but not us. Shame on you.

James N. Brozovich,
Citizens for Fiscal Responsibility,
Farmington Hills

'Deeply saddened'

I am deeply saddened as a proud and free American to see what happened within our city on Tuesday, Nov. 7.

First of all, I'm saddened that we could elect such a tax-and-spend liberal (unfortunately endorsed by this newspaper) as Aldo Vagnozzi, that we could elect ourselves another millage increase (I can't afford anymore taxes — our paychecks look like a gigantic deposit slip to the government now).

I think what is even worse than all of this is the fact that out of 49,712 registered voters in this city, only 14,592 actually voted. What a sad day for our community.

I would be very humiliated as an American if I didn't take five minutes that it took me, to cast a vote that we as free Americans are allowed to do. We have an absentee ballot system that you can do from your home and still 35,120 registered voters didn't vote.

I hope that next year our community acts upon one of the most important freedoms that we have as Americans and utilize this most precious right as individuals.

Judy Parran, Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335. Or, they can be faxed to: 810-477-9722.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Have you started your Christmas shopping yet?

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



"No, not even close."
Douglas Whitten
Farmington Hills



"Yes, I have bought one piece for myself. I have to get it over with."
Michelle Teasdale
Marion, Ind.



"I have a quarter of it done."
Joel Lock
Waterford Township



"I bought one gift. I've done a lot of browsing and shopping. I'm kind of waiting for the sales."
Laurie Morster
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Powers