

He managed nicely! City better for Costick's efforts

Bill Costick is a lame-duck city official who doesn't wobble. Not one bit. Although his days in Farmington Hills are numbered, City Manager Bill Costick is still striding the scene like some colossus.

"What! You haven't seen our new trails at Woodland Hills Park?" Tell you what: You and we're going for a ride," says Costick, ever the booster, to a journalist as they stand in the food line at a recent community breakfast.

By this time, the word is out: William M. Costick is leavin' Dodge, heading north to manage a luxury resort on the shores of Little Traverse Bay. It's the buzz of Farmington-area officialdom that morning.

There isn't a politician or an official in the crowd who doesn't envy Costick's future — or his past.

Costick, the man who gives the city manager or form of government a good name, has been managing cities most of his working life. Over the last 15 years, he's guided Farmington Hills over some bumpy roads safely past political squabbles, population explosions and development disputes.

Today's Farmington Hills, while hardly on Easy Street, seems to be gliding smoothly enough into its status as a well-financed, well-managed maintenance suburb with many excellent reasons for coming and staying. Much of this success is Costick's doing.

Farmington Hills, in our opinion, was a town at the crossroads when Costick arrived in the early 1980s. Back then, it was a chunk of geography that was in the way of some on-rushing commercial and residential development sweeping north and west through Oakland County.

But Costick was the right man at the right place at the right time. While politicians played politics — with consequences that sometimes embarrassed the city — Costick, well, Costick just managed the city.

And he had the vision and the work ethic and the leadership skills to manage quite nicely.

With its parks system, paved roads and improved infrastructure, Farmington Hills is a more livable city than it was when Costick first came on the scene. Let's be honest about it: A lot of suburbs in the first tier of Oakland and Macomb counties haven't fared nearly as well, tax-base wise or service wise.

The challenge for the next city manager will be to keep up Costick's good work. There have to be a multitude of very good reasons for people to come to — not go through — this community.

The leaders have to make it a place where folks are comfortable living, working and spending money. That's what running a so-called maintenance town is all about.

Education a national birthright

"It is only the ignorant who despise education." — Publius Syrus

More than a century ago, educator Horace Mann pushed passionately for public support and control of the quickly growing network of American schools. The Massachusetts native also made an impassioned pitch for better-trained teachers and aroused community interest for improving the basic curriculum.

In Mann's time, with public education in its infancy and farming the leading source of jobs, the rudiments of learning often were limited to reading, writing and arithmetic.

To achieve professional and personal security in today's fiercely competitive world, however, we need a more rigorous approach to education. Meeting that challenge is the job of the school board trustee, hardly the prestige community-service post of years past. You're now just as apt to catch brickbats as plaudits. And the pay is token or nothing. But it's a key job.

Within this backdrop, school boards this month are observing School Board Recognition Month, a Michigan tradition celebrated nationally for the first time this year.

How ironic that America's best-known school teacher, Christa McAuliffe, died aboard the space shuttle Challenger 10 years ago this coming Sunday: Jan. 28, 1986. For challenge is the essence of teaching — challenging tomorrow's adults to reach for the stars today in their quest for knowledge.

Upwards of 75 percent of the taxpayers in some districts don't have students in the schools. But public education is an American birthright. We're obligated to provide it — and provide it we do at significant public cost.

Consider: Rochester schools, with the largest enrollment in Oakland County, have 12,458 students, 23 buildings, 1,457 employees and a \$85 million budget. Farmington, the fifth largest district, has 11,634 students, 27 buildings, 1,469 employees and a \$108 million budget. Birmingham, the 10th largest district, has 7,512 students, 18 buildings, 1,240 employees and a \$78 million budget.

People run for school board for many rea-



BOB SKLAR

sons: a steppingstone to higher office, a passion for the educational process, the power the job brings, a simple love of kids. No matter: there's plenty of debate fodder for this June's races — curriculum, facilities, technology, finances, staffing, drug-free zones, dropout rates, enrichment, literacy, public trust, reading skills, graduation requirements, attendance boundaries, test scores, cultural diversity.

Oakland County's 196 school board trustees are elected to provide equal learning opportunities based on financial resources at hand and to involve a cross-section of the public in all facets of classroom education. They're entrusted to listen attentively to taxpayers but not let special-interest groups color their convictions. They're expected to vote their conscience with the students at heart and the entire district in mind, not defend hollow preconceptions.

In the ever-changing world of public education, no school district can remain static. The secret is assuring change in the education of kids during their most impressionable years is objectively measured. The will of the people, not the whim of the school board, must prevail.

With School Board Recognition Month as a springboard, take a moment to find out who your trustees are and begin to follow their votes through our newspaper, district mailings and cablecasts of meetings. Then make sure you register to vote by May 13 and vote on June 10.

Voting isn't just a privilege. It's a responsibility in a representative democracy.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

Schools superintendent, was honored at a party. Ken George and Billy Otto combined for 32 points and 14 assists to lead Harrison past Plymouth Salem, 68-55.

1 YEAR AGO — JAN. 26, 1995 (OBSERVER)

Gerald Nelson, parks and recreation director in St. Clair Shores, was hired to manage Farmington Hills' new ice arena. Newspaper owner Phil Power spoke on Farmington-area history to Highmeadow Common Campus.

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission approved the site plan for the controversial Timbercrest development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt.

This was the week's news from years gone by as reported in the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise:

40 YEARS AGO — JAN. 26, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

Floyd A. Cairns was appointed Farmington Township clerk to fill the unexpired term of Harry N. McCracken. The 90-year-old McCracken had resigned, closing out a 60-year career in public service. About 40 bow-and-arrow hunters attended a rabbit hunt in Farmington Township sponsored by the Farmington Archers Club. No rabbits were bagged.

10 YEARS AGO — JAN. 23, 1986 (OBSERVER)

Louis Schulman, retired Farmington Public

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What's on your mind?



"This is wonderful, the coming together of the community like this."
Marash Vula
Farmington Hills



"How great it is that people get together like this."
Francis Gjelca
Farmington Hills



"People need to express themselves when it comes to diversity."
Lovely Tom
Farmington Hills



"I was on the multicultural student panel and I didn't get my name mentioned."
Dave Johnson
Farmington Hills

We asked this question at the inaugural Rainbow Recognition Awards Breakfast Jan. 16 in Farmington Hills.

LETTERS

'Beacon of Reason'

Goodbye Mr. Costick. I was shocked and dismayed to hear about your decision to leave our fair city.

Throughout all the trials and tribulations that Farmington Hills has been through in recent years, you have been a steady beacon of reason and compromise, and a glue that held us together. You will be sorely missed.

A lot of folks in this city know that you are one of the finest city managers around. Our city is losing a great asset.

Roy A. Lindhardt, Farmington Hills

'Always available'

By George, I think they (Farmington Hills City Council members) have got it! Or at least they're starting to get it.

Bill Costick, where you're going, west of Petosky, is pretty close to heaven, at least in summer. The drive between Petosky and Cross Village on Highway 119 ranks right up there with the 17-mile drive at Monterey, Calif.

I didn't agree with you on a lot of things, but at least you were always available. Thanks to you, my yard does not flood anymore.

And to (Observer columnist) Tim Richard, on your Jan. 18 column about growing police state thinking: amen.

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

About Hillary

To: Judy Berne. Re: Your Hillary Clinton column (Jan. 18). For openers, let me state that I am an independent voter, not Democratic or Republican, so I have no ax to grind.

I find it alarming that you think a poised, smart, impressive person would do no wrong. Are not the worlds most successful men/women poised, smart, impressive?

Having these attributes will not automatically make a person honest and pure.

In fact, being too smart can be a trap when a person understands and revels in that smartness. They develop a pride of self (remember the story of Lucifer) that leads to arrogant assumptions that they think their points of view and ideas are above those of others. That to indulge and consider other ideas only slows implementation of the right idea, hence the veil of secrecy around the discussions about socialized American medicine.

Another fact pointing to arrogance is that Hillary's panel on medicine was borderline, if not actually illegal, in the way that it was impounded and structured so apart from Congress.

Good thing she still had a Democratic Con-

gress at the time, eh?

They let her get away with it, and it turned into just one of the issues of the brooming of Congress in November 1984.

That being so, Whitewater and Travelgate may be prior examples of Hillary's mind set.

Odd how the Rose law firm papers just happened to turn up two days after the statute of limitations on them expired. Yes, Hillary is a lawyer all right.

Women, in their rightful hunger for feminine rights and progression in this world, must not let the image of a strong, bright, poised woman lure them away from the truth of right and wrong.

To allow that is self delusion and a detriment to growth as a person or as a group. Only a disinterested guest of truth should apply hero, not worship of imagery or selfish partisanship.

Tom Murphy, Farmington Hills

They work hard

Fewer employees, more workload, long hours with little time to stop and chat with customers.

It's a common theme in many workplaces today. That's why, I was surprised, when it happened at my office, it made front page of the Jan. 8 Observer.

I work for the Farmington Hills Post Office. My co-workers and I spend long hours fulfilling our objective: That everyone receive their mail delivery every day. Some days we work long past dark to accomplish this. It's important to us that you get your mail.

In the good old days, that mail was delivered by the same person at the same time every day. You knew your carrier's name and occasionally had coffee with him.

But things change. We offer a much-expanded variety of services, longer window hours — all with the same number of employees.

We do the best we can. When you see our trucks out past dark, try to remember the dedication behind that worker. The mail must go through. But it's not necessarily carried by the same person at the same time every day.

Renaee Vinson, 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, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

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— Philip Power