

Help wanted

OCC needs new trustee makeup

This year, especially, excellent candidates are needed for the Oakland Community College Board of Trustees. Filing deadline is April 8.

At least one board member, chairman Douglas Wakefield of Southfield, is retiring. Another, Sandra Ritter of Waterford, has served three terms totalling 18 years and may well be retiring.

The OCC board is heavy with public employees endorsed by public employees unions. This is not to say they are bad. Rather, there is a need for balance from the private sector.

What kind of balance?

■ Voters last June boosted the budget by more than one-third to nearly \$100 million. A lot of building renovation will be going on for the next seven years. Candidates who know construction and have worked with architects and know contracts would be useful.

■ It is fashionable to debunk lawyers, but the fact is that OCC hasn't had a lawyer on its board for some years. A lawyer would be useful in helping the two-year college in its dealings with contractors, suppliers and the 800 employees, most of whom are represented by unions.

■ OCC's 30,000 students are either at recent high school graduates who plan to move on to a four-year university or b) older persons coming to learn a job skill. Trustees with knowledge of the job market will help as the college renovates its curriculum for the Information Age.

The board will have five women as holdover trustees. One or two men would add balance, though that is far from our top consideration. The northern and western areas of Oakland County have rarely produced candidates and are underrepresented. But geography, like gender, is a minor consideration.

Objective decision makers who know buildings, contracts and the job market —

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Meanwhile, the board has hired its first internal person as chancellor — Richard Thompson, a pro who is popular for many reasons. We would expect future board members to be supportive of Thompson, who faces a massive building and rebuilding job, both in physical facilities and in internal organization.

To be on the June 10 ballot, candidates must collect at least 50 and not more than 200 signatures of registered voters. Petitions should be filed by 4 p.m. of deadline day with Deanna Cable, deputy secretary, in OCC's George A. Bee district office, 2480 Opdyke, Bloomfield Hills. Candidates also must file two copies of an affidavit of identity.

Nominating petitions and copies of the affidavit of identity are available from the college's communications office in the Bee Center. Questions may be called to George Cartsonis, director of communications, at (810) 540-1540.

Winners of the June 10 election have six-year terms ending June 30, 2002. Trustees serve without pay.

The OCC district covers 28 K-12 school districts. Boundaries are roughly the same as Oakland County's boundaries. K-12 school districts also elect trustees on June 10.

OCC fills an extremely important niche in the economy of the future. Voters did the right thing last June by approving new money. Now they must continue their civic duty by fielding and electing good trustee candidates.

Costick: admired and respected

There is a belief that a city manager's tenure in any given city is five years. The first two years, half of the people in the town hate you. Over the next two years, the other half does.

The fifth year you send out resumes.

Now-departed Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick, in his usual fact-at-his-fingertip manner, told me that the real tenure is actually six years.

Another former city manager said that his colleagues are either fired or retire. Yet Costick left for the private sector while at the top of his game, respected and admired by all.

So how do you explain Costick's 12-year tenure as city manager? And how do you explain him leaving for the private sector on his own terms while the city council, business leaders, his staff and residents were left in shock for weeks after the announcement?

During the past few weeks, everyone has tried to explain the "Costick method" of doing things. In her "Ode to W.C.," longtime Olde Town activist and newly appointed Hills Councilwoman Massie Kurzeja summed up Costick's strengths.

"We have had you 15 years, through the wars, through the fears," the ode goes.

Councilman Terry Sever, who has worked with only one city manager, mocked the beer ad at Costick's last city council meeting.

"If that was a glass of beer you had, I was going to say, 'I love you man,'" Sever said with the proper inflection.

At a farewell dinner for Costick at the former Farmington Hills Activities Center, gifts and gags and sentimental journeys were lavished on this favorite son. And the name of the center Costick was able to negotiate into the city's domain, was changed to the William M. Costick Activities Center that night.

Fire Chief Rich Marinucci joked that his troops weren't going to get canteen boxes a gift.

"Let's save it so that we can suck up to the next guy," he said, then presented Costick with a leather fire helmet and praised the man who hired him as a young fire chief.

Personnel Director Dana Whinnery placed Costick up with his own father in terms of integrity. City Clerk Kathy Dorman, who is serv-



BILL COSTICK

ing as interim city manager until a new one is hired, openly proclaimed her love and affection for him.

I must echo these thoughts. While journalists are by training and experience wary of friendships with officials who may end up on the wrong end of their stories, Bill Costick continually reassured me, as he did others, by the straightforward way he treated people.

Opponents of such projects as the multi-million dollar Kendallwood Drain project, the Farmington Road bike path and even the Timbercrest development that resulted in a recall attempt stopped short of trashing Costick. His credibility assured opposing parties that they would be treated fairly.

One opponent of the Kendallwood Drain project lamented that Costick might leave to become city manager in another city, "such as Roseville."

At the time, this seemed laughable. Bill Costick leave Farmington Hills? Well, it's happened.

But what he left was much more than what he first encountered. His gift was being able to bring out the best in people, not only his staff, but often the residents who joined him in pursuit of excellence on various boards, commissions and study groups. They all became "Friends of Bill."

He was like Tom Sawyer, coaxing others into the same project. Unlike Mark Twain's character, Bill just kept painting.

And, oh, what a fence!

Reporter Bill Coutant covers Farmington Hills for the Farmington Observer.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What's your favorite meal to cook at home?



'Homemade chicken a-laliking. My kids'll eat it.'
Jeanne Smith
Brighton



'Spaghott! It's something my kids will eat.'
Linda Kraft
Redford Township



'Macaroni and cheese. It's about the only thing I can do.'
Lee Kraft
Redford Township



'I like succotash. It's quick and easy and nutritious.'
Wanda Selpio
Southfield

We asked this question at the 12 Mile Road Branch of the Farmington Community Library.

LETTERS

'A positive message'

As parents, it seems that we are continually being tested as to what type of messages our children get from today's world of entertainment.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we become so protective that our children are not prepared to enter the real world. What I am suggesting is that we and our children are subjected to entertainment, specifically movies, that are a long way from "The Wizard of Oz" and "E.T."

Regardless, there are movies currently running in our community that do have a very positive message for all of us. Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to see "Mr. Holland's Opus." As a child of the '50s and '60s, as a parent and as a strong supporter of the music program throughout the Farmington school system, the movie scored a 10, as well as two thumbs up.

I won't spoil the impact of the movie by getting into the details, but we certainly have teachers, just like Mr. Holland, in many of our schools, teachers that have made and will make major impacts in the lives of our children as well as ours, as parents or past students.

I'd like to suggest three possible plans of action: First, go see "Mr. Holland's Opus." It will make you feel good. Second, take the time to stop by and see that special teacher who made a difference in your life or is making a difference in your child's life. Tell him or her just how much we really appreciate what they are doing. And last, but not least, support your school's music program by attending the musicals, the concerts and the marching band competitions and by supporting them financially whenever possible.

It may be just that part of your life that's been missing.

Bob Washer, president,
Farmington High School Music Patrons

GI Bill for parents

Heven help me, but I agree with Tim Richard (Business approach won't work with schools, Feb. 29).

Schools should be run for the educational benefit of the students. Tenure, mission statements, unions, outcomes, cooperative groups, and other business programs borrowed from the corporate world, should be thrown out.

Public schools should be required to use curricula and teaching methodologies that are proven to work for the students.

Since that isn't going to happen, let's cut to the chase. Vouchers and charter schools are only in demand because public schools embraced a host of "innovations" that don't work and parents don't like (i.e., whole language, inventive spelling, values clarification). In other words, without financial resources, parents have no choice but to send their child to public school.

Now, believe it or not, private schools are open to the public. They exist to serve the

public — just as public schools are supposed to. Unlike public schools that are never shut down when children fail to learn, private/charter schools have to offer educational options parents want, or close their doors. The downside of private schools is the extra cost in addition to taxes already paid.

Most parents clamoring for charters and vouchers, support the concept of public schools. However, public schools don't respond to valid complaints in a timely manner. Schools never accept blame when their programs don't work.

Instead, by the time the pedagogical pendulum swings back to what works, a generation of students has been miseducated. (Does anyone remember "look/say"?)

Parents and students can't afford to waste time waiting for public schools to come to their senses. Unless Richard can find a way for public schools to become accountable right now, he needs to get off of his anti-choice soapbox.

Parents should be able to spend their state per-pupil allocation at any institution that meets their child's needs. If public schools are confident that they already satisfy their constituents, they shouldn't be threatened by a K-12 type of GI Bill.

Patricia Alsapach, Farmington Hills

On 'Frost's bias'

Ms. Frederica Frost's article "MEAP tests quietly expose gender bias" (Feb. 8) unfortunately exposes Ms. Frost's bias, not the schools'.

While her assumption that gender-based differences in test results is due to educational bias seems plausible at first glance, it does not bear up to scrutiny. While she attributes the higher testing results that boys achieve in seventh grade to bias, she also points out "Girls generally start school ahead of boys in every major academic area."

How can that be? In Ms. Frost's paradigm one must conclude that parents are biased against their boys. Likewise, by the time college years are concluded, 65 percent of graduates are women. One is again forced to conclude that the net result of the educational system is a bias against boys.

Rather than accepting the counterintuitive conclusion that parents and the educational system are biased against boys, could it possibly be that Ms. Frost's primary assumption that the differences between genders is primarily the result of bias, is incorrect?

The assumption implicit in Ms. Frost's article is that cognitive development is not affected by physiology. Perhaps it is reasonable to believe that girl's intellectual development proceeds quicker in the early years of development, while boys generally catch up and temporarily pass the girls during adolescence, only to be finally matched/surpassed during the college years?

Jon M. Cherney, Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power