

Grass-roots gal

Webb, Dibert are best for House

It's a tough call, but call it we must: Cathy Webb.

There, we've finally endorsed in this red-hot Republican race for the State House in the 37th District that includes the Farmington area.

It's been a race worth watching, and the community has been all eyes. We can't recall a political contest that has inspired so many heartfelt endorsement letters to the editor.

There are four strong GOP candidates. Three of them, we're sure, would serve the area well from Lansing if elected.

Our endorsement, however, goes to Cathleen M. Webb, who's seeking a bigger challenge after serving almost two terms on the Farmington Board of Education.

Cathy Webb impresses us as the kind of caring, grass-roots gal (she was known as the "Carpool Queen" when she first ran for the board!) who decides that, by serving in public office, she can make things better for her community. She's a doer and a leader.

Such initiative — combined with success in her present office — should be rewarded, we think, with an Observer endorsement and votes in the Aug. 6 Republican primary.

And Webb has indeed been successful in her two terms as a school trustee. She was elected by her colleagues to two stints as

board president. She played an important role in the district's superintendent search two years ago.

In dealing with Webb, we've never known her to be anything but cooperative, hard-working and accessible.

Another plus: She always seems to do her homework on issues before speaking out. If she doesn't know answers, she'll find them.

These are qualities that will serve her well in any elective office.

A concern, one that would apply to any candidate running for any office: She needs to remember where she came from and who elected her.

Other politicians have shown us that it's just too easy to forget the home folks and their problems once they've gained office.

Yes, we are aware that for the first time in 25 years there will be a Democratic primary in a Farmington-area State House race. And, yes, we are endorsing: Steve Dibert.

We like Dibert's ties to small business, as well as his ideas about economic diversification and rebuilding a crumbling infrastructure.

The race hasn't been nearly as intense as on the GOP side, but Dibert looks like the best bet for those voting Democratic.

For sheriff: Nichols, Hogan

After mulling the issues and evaluating the candidates, we've decided to endorse Republican incumbent John Nichols of Novi and Democratic challenger Matthew Hogan of White Lake in the Aug. 6 primary election for Oakland County sheriff.

The major issues include department management and morale, jail management and alternatives, budget controls, privatization, command staff levels, new weaponry, juvenile criminals and cooperation with other law enforcement agencies. The sheriff oversees a \$64 million budget.

On the Republican side, Nichols' four opponents have questioned his health.

The 77-year-old sheriff acknowledges he requires oxygen because of emphysema but says it doesn't prevent him from fulfilling his duty as Oakland County's top cop.

The Deputy Sheriff's Association, the Command Officers Association and police chiefs from across the county have endorsed his reelection bid.

Our editorial board grilled him for 90 minutes and he seemed to breathe more easily the tougher the questions got. A lawman for 54 years, he's as crusty and blunt as ever.

We were impressed by his resolve, vigor and grasp of the issues.

Of the five Republicans and two Democrats seeking the \$90,645-a-year job, Nichols has the most experience as a jailer and with the fine points of corrections: detention, video trainings, overcrowding, boot camps.

That's significant since, by our estimation, jail management encompasses more than half the job.

His success stories include starting Michigan's first boot camp, privatizing the civil division, creating SCOPE (which takes alcohol enforcement education into the schools),

expanding the auto theft unit, increasing road patrols and installing video cameras and recorders in patrol cars to protect deputies and deter lawsuits.

A former Detroit police commissioner, Oakland County undersheriff and Farmington Hills police chief, Nichols replaced Johannes Spreen as sheriff in 1984.

He regained the community's respect when his military style of management brought new enthusiasm to a department short on leadership.

When pointedly asked about the 1993 corruption probe of the sheriff's work-release program and Rochester Hills substation, Nichols said he couldn't possibly watch over 825 employees but readily accepts responsibility for their actions as their boss.

His preventive initiatives now include regular inspections of the substations and tighter accounting of the work-release program.

On the Democratic side, Hogan, 46, is a 24-year veteran with the Michigan State Police.

A lieutenant, he's commander of the Brighton Post and former commander of the Pontiac and Romeo posts. He's a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

He's young, energetic, articulate and politically smart.

He lacks experience in running a jail but is highly knowledgeable about police budgeting and administration, road patrol operations, youth services, modern technology and emergency support teams. His leadership skills are quickly evident.

Hogan is earnest in his pledge to be a people's sheriff with a vision and a plan, not someone who would wilt before the GOP-dominated board of commissioners.

He'd provide an excellent counterpoint to Sheriff Nichols in the Nov. 5 general election.

MEMORY LANE

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

■ 40 YEARS AGO — JULY 26, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

Farmington Road Gospel Chapel opened at Farmington Road and Kirby with a talk by William A. McLellan.

Short item: "It's a great kindness: to trust people with a secret. They feel so important while telling it."

■ 25 YEARS AGO — JULY 21, 1971 (OBSERVER)

Dr. Mervyn Ross, runner up in the June school election, was picked by the Farmington Board of

Education to fill the unexpired term of Gary L. Lichtman, who resigned. The board was asking a tax increase of 3.5 mills for one year in an Aug. 23 election.

Construction of a 100-bed addition to Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills was underway with a completion date of June 1972.

■ 2 YEARS AGO — JULY 21, 1994 (OBSERVER)

Dunleavy's Pub in Farmington was about to change hands, but no Irish wake was in order, according to the new owner, local attorney Anthony Demol.

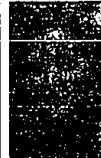
Dr. Sanford H. Sklar was named director of the Critical Care Complex at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

How do you like the ice arena in Farmington Hills?

We asked this question at the Farmington Hills Ice Arena.



I love it. It's a great surface and I'm not sitting in the cold.

Helen Start
Livonia



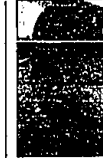
It's a beautiful surface and they have good coaches and staff.

Donna Ireland
Howell



It's new. It has a nice atmosphere and it's a lot warmer (than other arenas).

Kelly Fixzel
Livonia



I like having two arenas and a pro shop.

Dan Ostlin
Farmington

Letters to the Editor

No boot camp here

We've heard Andrew Raczowski say during the candidate debates that he will put a boot camp in every county.

Where would Raczowski propose putting one in Oakland County? We sure don't want one in Farmington or Farmington Hills. Furthermore, we don't believe that our friends in other cities would welcome one in their city, either. Mr. Raczowski needs to think about the impact of his ideas.

Tim and Pam Ellis,
Farmington

Jan: 'Caring citizen'

Your recent (July 11) editorial implying that Jan Dolan was afraid to run for reelection in the 37th District because of a close election was unfair.

Jan has served this community well for many years both as a city council member and as a state representative. Your editorial ignored the fact that Andy Raczowski was backed in the last race by the Right to Life group saturating our area with volunteers from out of our district to add another member reflecting their views.

Your mission statement states that you are "caring citizens of the communities where you work."

You would do a better job of adhering to your mission statement by complimenting another caring citizen of the community where she has lived and worked for so many years.

Sharon Garna,
Farmington Hills

About these PACs

After watching the Republican Club candidates debate on Wednesday, July 10, with the four Republican candidates for state representative voicing their concerns, I did some homework.

In answer to the question whether any of the candidates received any PAC (Political Action Committee) money, Raczowski's answer was, "As chairman of term limits, I would not have had real campaign finance reform where PACs would not be giving any money to any specific candidate... opportunities for people to win elections instead of special interests."

Raczowski inferred that he does take PAC contributions and he emphatically stated that people could check his records which he would deliver to both city halls the next day. I checked. No records delivered.

I then checked his campaign finance report from two years ago when he ran and lost the election. Raczowski received over 30 percent of his funds from PACs!

Which is it? Change of mind? Thought no one would check?

And just a reminder to this candidate, endorsements that carry with it the promise of literature to be mailed with the name, picture, endorsement, etc. of the candidate is in-kind, PAC contributing activity.

Joanne Smith,
Farmington Hills

Mayor takes issue

I must take strong exception to the statement by Wayne Bierbower in campaign literature, that, "Mr. Raczowski is the only candidate, as president of the Farmington Hills Police Association, with the strength and courage to fight for the law abiding citizens of our community."

Without getting involved in the primary election for state representative, I am concerned that a police officer of my city of Farmington Hills would make such a statement.

I know all six candidates and my knowledge of them indicates that all six of them have "the strength and courage to fight for the law abiding citizens of our community."

Mr. Bierbower's statement is particularly unfair to Farmington Hills Councilman Terry Seaver.

It was Seaver who organized the successful door-to-door campaign in support of the police and fire millage last November, which represents a substantial commitment to protecting "law abiding citizens."

That effort, supported by an overwhelming majority of the voters, made it possible on July 8 to hire nine additional police officers, and to break ground next month for a new fire station that will provide greatly enhanced protection for our community.

Aldo Vagnozzi, mayor,
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 Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

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— Philip Power