

Massie and Donn

Kurzeja, Wolf should stay in office

Every city council needs a Massie, and the Farmington Hills Council already has its. No, we wouldn't want seven of her, but one's just fine.

We're urging Farmington Hills voters to keep Massie Kurzeja, that down-home activist who's as outspoken as she is plain-spoken, on their city council when they settle the matter of Aldo Vagnozzi's unexpired term on Tuesday, Aug. 6.

Kurzeja, 59, was appointed by council to replace Vagnozzi after he was elected mayor last November. If she passes Tuesday's trial-by-bullet, she'll serve out the term which expires in November of 1997.

There are two qualified candidates for this office, but Kurzeja, a 35-year Farmington Hills resident, seems to have the clearest — and best — vision for Farmington Hills.

She served a long term on the Hills Zoning Board of Appeals, so her opinions on development issues should carry some weight.

Zoning, so crucial in protecting property values, also has taught her how to make decisions — not always popular ones — and stick by them. That's a trait that should serve her well on city council.

We like Kurzeja's people-first attitude ("You can't guarantee a business will be here in a few years, but people are forever," she told an Observer reporter early in the campaign), as well as her attitude on unbridled growth ("I don't think you need to develop every blade of grass").

Too bad she wasn't on board during that great Timbercrest development flap that gave

the city council such a black eye.

Kurzeja, we think, has shown she can communicate effectively, one-on-one. She also seems to understand the concept of compromise, and that'll be another help on council.

We hope she'll continue to listen to the residents and try to understand the issues that concern them.

There's a race (sort of) for Oakland County Commissioner in the 19th District, which includes Farmington, southern Farmington Hills and a tiny portion of Southfield.

Donn Wolf, the Republican incumbent, deserves re-election to a fifth term on the commission, we think.

His Republican opponent has refused to show herself during the campaign, and has all but conceded the election to Wolf in a July 11 letter to the editor.

Wolf, a former mayor and city councilman in Farmington Hills, would be a strong candidate no matter the opponent.

Wolf seems to know his way around county government and has a good grasp of the issues in the 19th District. He impresses us as hard-working with a good attendance record at commission business.

Voters in the 19th District should take note: You may have been reading about Ron Wolf, a candidate for the parks board in West Bloomfield Township who was arrested for stealing political signs. Ron Wolf is no relation to Donn Wolf.

moving into the private sector. But a successful prosecutor needs a core of trial-seasoned assistants.

Gorceya also vows to speed investigations and decisions on behalf of law enforcement agencies without compromising the rights of defendants and victims. It's notable that many police officers are privately supporting him.

In his most celebrated trials, Thompson wasted staff time and taxpayer money in twice trying West Bloomfield's Jack Kevorkian, the retired pathologist and assisted-suicide crusader. The second trial was a desperate bid for conviction under common law. We agree with Gorceya that prosecutors must rally the state for an enforceable assisted-suicide law with physician-approved regulatory guidelines.

Though principled and caring, Thompson, 59, is far more stubborn and ideological than a prosecutor should be. Those traits have alienated him from many party operatives as well as district and circuit judges, county commissioners and assistant prosecutors. He has played to the Birmingham-based Michigan Christian Coalition as a constituency rather than just one of many special-interest groups. We believe Gorceya would be more open-minded and effective in dealing with the complexities of the prosecutor's office.

In the November race for Oakland County prosecutor, our choice is a matchup between Dave Gorceya and Steve Kaplan.

For prosecutor

Gorceya, Kaplan should face off

We think Dave Gorceya deserves the Republican nomination for Oakland County prosecutor over incumbent Dick Thompson, who no longer seems in touch with the majority of the people who elected him.

A former Oakland County assistant prosecutor from 1988 to 1990, Gorceya is now in general practice in Bingham Farms. He's also a Royal Oak city commissioner. He's focused, decisive, tireless and well versed in the inner workings of the prosecutor's office, having served in virtually every division.

The Republican winner in the Aug. 6 primary will face Democrat Steve Kaplan, a Macomb County assistant prosecutor, former Southfield school board president and a strong contender in his own right. He came within 42,000 votes of ousting Thompson in 1992.

At 34, Gorceya is not as experienced as the two-term incumbent, who served as chief assistant prosecutor under then-prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson from 1973 to 1988. But Gorceya's demeanor and drive offer the promise of a tough prosecutor whose administrative approach to key issues like plea bargaining and staff management would better serve the county. We're confident he would deal aggressively with drug dealers, youth gangs, murder cases and domestic violence. He vows to build a dedicated, experienced staff with less turnover by giving them wider latitude to plea bargain so more resources can go to battling major crime. We expect some turnover because many young lawyers view the prosecutor's office as a training opportunity before

For circuit court

O'Brien, Garagiola are best choices

Time after time this newspaper has heard judges and attorneys comment that all four people, campaigning to join the Oakland County Circuit Court bench, would make fine additions to it. However, voters in the Aug. 6 primary election may select only one of the four. The two with the most votes will face off in the Nov. 5 general election.

After individual interviews with the candidates, checking their references and talking with others in the community, John N. O'Brien and Carol Hackett Garagiola stand out as our best choices.

Electing a judge is serious business. Rarely is a sitting judge turned out of office. Now open is a position soon to be left vacant by the retirement of Judge Robert Tompkins who has passed the maximum age limit set by law. It carries a six-year term and pays \$109,257 a year.

Ironically, both O'Brien and Garagiola serve as assistant prosecuting attorneys in Oakland

County, providing them with familiarity with the circuit court system. Garagiola heads the domestic violence unit and has administrative as well as legal experience. O'Brien has been assigned to prosecution of child sexual offenders, as well as other cases. Both also have a record of community service.

Our system of justice should rely not just on the law, but on a judge with a sense of compassion for the victims of crime and a desire to do more than just lock people up and throw away the key. O'Brien says that prisons "without programs are just cages." Garagiola repeatedly expressed "respect" in her interview for domestic violence victims who are too frightened to take legal action against their spouses.

Not just intelligent but thoughtful, not just hard workers but leaders, not just committed to the law but to justice, John N. O'Brien and Carol Hackett Garagiola deserve your confidence by way of a vote in the primary.

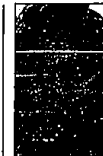
COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Would feel safe going to the Olympics after the bombing in Atlanta?



I'd still go. It seemed like an isolated incident. Tell you one thing, though: I'm afraid to fly.
Florence Sopko
Livonia



I wouldn't be afraid. We can't let people like that intimidate us.
Susan Thomas
Livonia



No, probably not. When your time's up, your time's up.
Pat Girbach
Farmington



No... these kinds of things can happen anywhere?
Jan Pesock
Farmington Hills

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

Letters to the Editor

Jerry's the 'right person'

I have known Jerry Ellis for over 20 years. He is honest, intelligent, informed, and dedicated to improving the quality of life in Farmington Hills.

Jerry Ellis is the right person to elect to the Farmington Hills City Council on Aug. 6.

As Chairman of the Parks & Recreation Commission, he has been at the forefront of preserving land for all the residents. As a professional business person, he is experienced and adept at dealing with county, state and federal authorities.

He has proven his commitment to the community, and we need his abilities to deal with the issues of over development, traffic and revenues.

I urge everyone to vote for Jerry Ellis on Aug. 6, as he is the right person for Farmington Hills.

Bruce J. Lazar,
Farmington Hills

Their choice: Massie

There is something different about this year's Aug. 6 primary election. In addition to choosing nominees for each of the political parties for various offices, there is a contest for the Farmington Hills City Council on the non-partisan ballot.

As present members of the city council, we strongly urge that you consider and vote to retain Massie Kurzeja to the position she was appointed to fill seven months ago.

She was appointed to fill the council vacancy based on her strong record as a member and chair of the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) where she consistently voted to uphold strict zoning requirements.

As we both ran for office last November, in an intensive door-to-door campaign, the message we heard throughout the city was that the residents want us to reduce the density of our developments and to address the growing traffic problems.

Since Massie Kurzeja came on council she has joined us in carrying out the wishes of the residents. In recent weeks, Kurzeja has voted to reject three proposed developments because she felt that they were too dense and did not fit the character of the neighborhood around them.

She also strongly supported the launching of a city-wide traffic study which is currently underway.

Kurzeja also voted to oppose a proposed speculative oil exploration project in the southwest area of our city. In addition, Kurzeja voted to change the zoning of historic Howard Road to a less dense category at a time when bull-dozers were poised to turn part of that area into a cluster-type development that would damage its pristine and rural-type atmosphere.

As a member of council, Kurzeja has continued to play a major role in the renovation and restructuring of Grand River. With her leadership, residents and businesses in the Grand River area have come together to make improvements that have already increased our tax base by several million dollars and more on the way.

The current council has developed a team spirit that has allowed the city to make substantial progress in several areas. Kurzeja has been part of that team effort.

Please consider supporting Massie Kurzeja on Aug. 6 so that we can continue working together for a better Farmington Hills.

Aldo Vagnozzi, mayor;
Vicki Barnett, council member

A Massie backer

As you know, Mr. Editor, I have been a council watcher in Farmington Hills for 12 years and a longtime, active parks and recreation commission watcher.

As such, I was a citizen representative on the Woodland Hills Park Committee. These are the reasons I support Massie Kurzeja for city council:

- Massie supports parks.
- Massie supports businesses.
- Massie has experience.
- Most of all, Massie supports people — the residents.

Let's retain Massie Kurzeja. She is not in anyone's pocket.

Masha Silver,
Farmington Hills

Why he's for Jerry

How would you like the following qualities on the city council of Farmington Hills?

- Leadership: A proven track record of being elected by their peers to positions of leadership on every committee, association or commission they have joined.

- Results: A visible track record of making a promise and keeping it for all citizens and taxpayers.

- Visions: Clearly understands where we have been as a city and has stated clearly where we are going and most importantly how we can get there.

- Fiscally sound: Champions accountability of spending taxpayers payers and has a proven record of that talent within this community.

- Articulate: Answers your questions honestly, directly and clearly, without regard to who asked the question, why it was asked or whether you will like the answer. To get all of the above and more, joins my family in supporting Jerry Ellis in the Aug. 6 non-partisan city council election.

Dennis Fitzgerald
Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power