

Towns meeting

A good chance to talk roads, plans

It's not likely Farmington Hills officials will break any new ground when they meet with their counterparts from West Bloomfield in October.

But this is a good opportunity for both towns to share their common interests and the need to start cooperating.

The governing bodies of both communities are to meet in West Bloomfield Town Hall on Oct. 6 basically just to talk. A chief concern of both is the development of both sides of 14 Mile at Orchard Lake Road.

There is a project in the works to redevelop the southeast side of the intersection on the Farmington Hills side, creating, among other things, a new Super Kmart, new retail and new housing. At the northwest corner, on the West Bloomfield side, plans are in the works to develop a 53-acre tract into housing and shopping.

Orchard Lake at 14 Mile is the pivotal point for both projects, which ideally would complement each other. Both communities view the intersection as a gateway to their towns. And both are concerned their sites be developed carefully into attractive and productive areas.

Somewhere along the way, the two towns are going to have to join forces to improve the Orchard Lake/14 Mile/Northwestern Highway

intersection so it will be able to handle the inevitable increase in traffic the proposed developments would generate. That's fine. It's difficult to find anyone who doesn't want the traffic flow there to be improved.

But that's only part of the issue. Fourteen Mile Road is the border of the two communities and a direct feeder to the proposed developments. Maple, a mile to the north, is a growing access route for residents of the lakes communities to the north and west.

Realistically, both roads need some degree of improvement to accommodate the massive influx of traffic should both developments evolve. How and when expansion of these two thoroughfares should take place are hot-button questions that need to be fully debated and ultimately answered.

West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills cannot force each other to act in any particular way. But meeting is a good first step toward both communities acting in their mutual best interests. It makes sense to have open lines of communication between the two towns regardless of any pending issues.

Sometimes, such as dealing with the state Legislature, our communities need to present a united front. This is one such situation.

Our expectations aren't too high, but good things could come from this meeting of minds.

Torch Drive a beacon of hope

Amid this land of plenty we call Oakland County — amid the luxury estates, upscale malls, pristine lakes, fine restaurants and flashy cars — live families sorely in need of a kind heart and a caring hand.

The Torch Drive, in partnership with Oakland County health and human service agencies, brings to our less-fortunate neighbors an unflinching spirit of goodness.

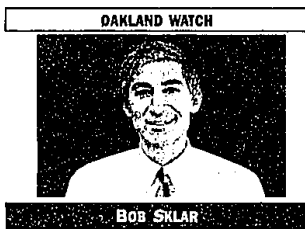
Sponsored by United Way Community Services, the Torch Drive is all about people helping people. Ninety cents of every dollar donated goes to someone in need; 10 cents support fund raising, fund management and administration. Upwards of 1.7-million tri-county residents, 160,000 in Oakland County communities served by the Observer & Eccentric, annually receive services from 130 Torch Drive-supported agencies.

Detroit-based United Way is the area's largest non-governmental funder of health and human services. Led by volunteers from business, labor, government, human services, education and the community, it not only acts as a fund-raiser but also provides technical support to human service, nonprofit and civic groups.

A torchlighting at 5:15 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 11, at Detroit's Hart Plaza kicks off the 1997 Torch Drive, which runs to Nov. 13. A Unity Run preceding the torchlighting will begin at Hudson's at Somerset North in Troy at 12:20 p.m. The 23-mile route follows Big Beaver west to Woodward, then heads through Birmingham southward. Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer will pick up the torch at the Fox Theatre and carry it the final leg of the run to Hart Plaza.

The lighting of the torch brings light to those in darkness. Giving to the Torch Drive helps advance cancer and AIDS research, battle infant mortality and illiteracy, protect an abused wife or child, shelter a homeless family, teach teens to negotiate instead of fight, keep elderly folks independent, retrain laid-off workers and instruct young mothers in child care. To give, please call (313) 226-9200.

A sampler of United Way agencies represents a tapestry of Oakland County-based



social services.

Community and special assistance services include Jewish Family Service, The Arc of Oakland County, Catholic Social Services of Oakland County, Kenny Foundation, HAVEN, The Sanctuary, the Arab-American and Chaldean Council and Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, Inc.

Health services include the Arthritis Foundation/Michigan Chapter, Epilepsy Center of Michigan, Karmanos Cancer Institute, Mental Health Association of Michigan and United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Detroit. Family services include Oakland Family Services, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit, Lutheran Child & Family Service of Michigan, St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center and FAR Conservatory of Therapeutic and Performing Arts.

Youth services include the Boys and Girls Club of South Oakland County, Camp Fire Boys and Girls/North Oakland Council, YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit and Child Abuse & Neglect Council of Oakland. Last year, United Way ticketed \$14 million to solve youth problems and assist youngsters and teenagers in crisis.

Give a little and help a lot. Pledge to support the 1997 Torch Drive. The investment will pay dividends in the most compassionate of terms.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Question: What are you looking forward to in the coming school year?

We asked this question at Farmington schools' "welcome back" picnic at Shiawassee Park in Farmington.



I'm going to be a senior.

Amanda Deuckelaere
Farmington High School student



The passage of the bond issue.

Linda Enberg
school board president



I can't wait to see the kids coming in... and then get them going on various projects.

Julie Ingalls
teacher



For an extremely exciting year. I'm just looking forward to the children learning a lot.

Naum Shulman
teacher

LETTERS

Yes votes boost values

I would like to express my support for the upcoming for the school bond proposal. What attracted me to move to the Farmington area over 1 1/2 years ago, was the excellent school system. With two children this was very important. With our area competing with other neighboring school systems when new people are looking for homes, we must maintain world class schools.

Coming from Northern Illinois, where the school system was very poor, selling a home with a declining property value was difficult. The school system, due to its lack of public financial support, was destroying its property owners' equity values.

Farmington must maintain good schools! Every property owner should support these proposals, after all who would want to destroy the equity in their home? Good schools and school systems are the number one reason new families are attracted to our area. These new people are critical to maintaining and increasing our property values.

Let's all increase our property values and vote yes to both proposals in September.

Russell Hartman
Farmington Hills

View of city countered

Try as I might, I cannot reconcile the picture of Farmington Hills painted by Massie Kurzeja in her recent letter with the real community that we live in.

As of last weekend I had visited more than 4,500 homes in Farmington Hills. I always ask if they have any questions or problems as a resident of our city. The overwhelming majority tell me that they are happy to be a resident of our community and many add that they would not live in any other city.

In my walks I made an interesting discovery. More than half the residents who are moving are relocating in Farmington Hills. I thought this was a significant tribute to our city.

The claim that residents "are struggling with city officials" to preserve the character of their neighborhoods against the onslaught of developers, isn't so.

What we have are city council and city officials working with residents to deep developers from putting in overly-dense projects in the remaining undeveloped land.

In three areas mentioned in Kurzeja's letter — Power Road, Howard Road and Greening/Alycekey, the city took action to rezone most of the land to a less dense zone even though developers had already started planning for subdivisions.

Power Road was upgraded from R-A1 to R-A1A, and the number of units in a planned subdivision reduced from 41 to 27 homes, in the face of a lawsuit that sought the more dense development.

On Howard Road, we similarly lowered the

density by changing the zoning from R-A1 to R-A1A, thus reducing the density on the home sites.

In the Greening/Alycekey area, we lowered density by rezoning from R-A2 to R-A1, except for the northern portion where the rezoning is tabled as a way of keeping the developer from putting up a low-density development.

In the proposed development that borders Springbrook subdivision we have already succeeded in increasing lot size from 80 to 100 feet with more discussions to take place before approval.

In the Woodcreek area we have already reduced the number of units the developer wanted to put in, in the face of a court order that substantially tied our hands. Again, approval for the Woodcreek developments have not been finalized.

The claim that we are allowing beauty roads to be decimated also flies in the face of a diligent effort to protect them. In the Power Road development the city is insisting that we have control of the placement of sewer and water lines so we can protect that beauty road.

One of the problems that we face is that the people who live on the beauty roads are selling their property for development as happened on Power Road and on Halsted. We cannot legislate against a landowner selling his or her land.

As to preserving as much of the community's natural beauty as possible, the city of Farmington Hills has bought several parcels to keep them from being developed — the 80-acre Woodland Hills nature park, the Woodcreek property on 13 Mile that is now being developed into a single family neighborhood and land on the east side of Orchard Lake, opposite the community college entrance.

Recently, the council adopted an ordinance which protects the neighborhoods by prohibiting the location of cellular towers or antennas in residential areas — an action that drew praise from the president of the Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners Association (COHA).

Incidentally, the city council has placed a charter amendment on the Nov. 4, 1997 ballot calling for preservation of Woodland Hills nature park from any future development. Does that sound like a city government hell-bent on leveling every piece of greenery? I don't think so.

Aldo Vagnozzi
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 248-477-9722.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

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

40 YEARS AGO — AUGUST 29, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)

Charges and counter charges were tossed back and forth at the Farmington Township Board meeting before board members voted to set rules for transferring employees and to establish separate funds for construction of a new township hall and a new fire hall.

City and township police officials were preparing for the anticipated heavy flow of traffic that was to move through the Farmington area for the Labor Day weekend, with the anticipation that the "new expressway cut-off" would be open to eastbound traffic.

25 YEARS AGO — AUGUST 28, 1972

Farmington school officials planned to spend \$350,000 more than it raised in revenue for the 1972-73 school year. The extra money would be spent from a surplus from the previous year's budget. The district's total budget would be set at \$17.4 million, pending school board approval.

2 YEARS AGO — AUGUST 28, 1995

Residents on both sides of the issue spoke up at a Farmington Hills council meeting before council members approved a new sidewalk along the east side of Drake Road between 11 and 12 Mile roads.

A Farmington Hills man, 67, was able to rescue his 6-year-old grandson from a swimming mishap in Lake Michigan.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power