

## Parking lot City sends wrong message

You can't blame residents on the east side of St. Francis Street by Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills for being upset. Their world of homes, flowers and trees may soon be replaced with a concrete pasture of cars — an expanded parking lot for the hospital administrative building.

The Farmington Hills City Council recently — despite opposition from the planning commission — gave its blessings to a zoning change from a residential to a parking district.

In its denial of the zoning request, the planning commission acted properly in noting that a parking lot is incompatible with the existing neighborhood and doesn't fit the city's master plan.

That denial followed the rules and the intentions of the master plan, a document that is designed to protect land uses.

When the issue rose to the city council, politics entered, rules and reason left.

All it took was Gerson Cooper, Botsford president and CEO, to stand up and make his case for additional parking to accompany the increases in patient use of emergency and urgent care facilities.

More importantly, Cooper played expert politics. And he won. He simply reminded the council what he and the hospital have done for Farmington Hills — which is a lot and certainly is appreciated.

But that's not the point, and the majority of

the council who voted for the zoning change should know that. Cooper's efforts on behalf of the hospital leave one wondering if indeed such community-mindedness and generosity is altruistic, or merely creates a tab for future IOUs.

There is no doubt Botsford needs more parking. And there's no doubt the hospital plays an important role in the community.

But the city council went against its own master plan and in doing so violated its pledge to maintain older neighborhoods in the city.

And, as councilman Jerry Ellis so aptly put it: "Mr. Cooper came here tonight and seems to be calling in his chips ..." You can't blame Cooper for trying his best when it comes to the hospital.

But the city council failed to show leadership when it allowed Cooper to succeed in calling in his chips. The hospital may be the largest employer in the city, but the only message offered by the council is that if you have the money, the clout and the recognition, it doesn't matter what the rules are, there's a good chance you'll get what you want.

What has been allowed to happen is a shame. It definitely has the potential for ruining a relationship between the neighbors and the hospital. And the council's decision certainly sends a sorry message to residents who work hard to maintain their neighborhoods.

## Be SMART: Cast a yes vote

The most important proposal on many communities' August primary ballot doesn't involve a candidate, but a concept.

That concept is suburban mass transportation.

SMART, the regional bus service serving many area communities, seeks renewal of its 1/3-mill transportation tax. We ask voters to approve the renewal.

Because SMART offers service on a community-by-community basis, the millage renewal is on the ballot in many, but not all, Oakland County communities. It's on the ballot in Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, Farmington Hills, Southfield, West Bloomfield Hills, Troy. It isn't on the ballot in Bloomfield Hills, Commerce Township, Lathrup Village and Rochester Hills. (For a complete list, see today's news section.)

The millage will raise \$19 million, more than one-quarter of SMART's total budget. Without the millage, SMART goes out of business. It's as simple as that.

There is a possibility the Detroit Department of Transportation would pick up at least

some of SMART's major trunk line routes, but that's far from guaranteed. Nor would it be unreasonable to expect D-DOT would eventually ask for suburban money to keep suburban routes afloat.

Major routes aside, SMART's defeat could put an end to community bus service for thousands of handicapped area residents and senior citizens. SMART operates such programs in Farmington, Troy and West Bloomfield, as well as other suburban communities.

Defeat would also come at a time when SMART's ridership is increasing. Ridership is now at 850,000 — an increase of 250,000 since the millage was approved three years ago.

Two other points need to be made. First, no mass transit system in the nation survives on fare box fees alone. Second, federal transportation aid isn't currently available and likely won't be available anytime soon.

Ridership alone shows SMART is more necessary than ever. The community-by-community format is confusing, but we ask voters in those communities where SMART is on the ballot to vote yes.

## Choose Kaplan and O'Brien

In judicial primaries, experience counts as much as issues and in the primary for the open Oakland County Circuit Court judgeship, we find Steven Kaplan and Colleen O'Brien have the most experience.

Kaplan, a West Bloomfield resident and former Southfield school board member, came within a whisker of being elected Oakland County Prosecutor two years ago. He's familiar with Michigan's circuit court system through his 12 years as a Macomb County assistant prosecutor.

O'Brien of Rochester Hills, has been a practicing attorney for 17 years and has served on a variety of professional organizations, including a stint as president of the Oakland County

Women's Bar Association.

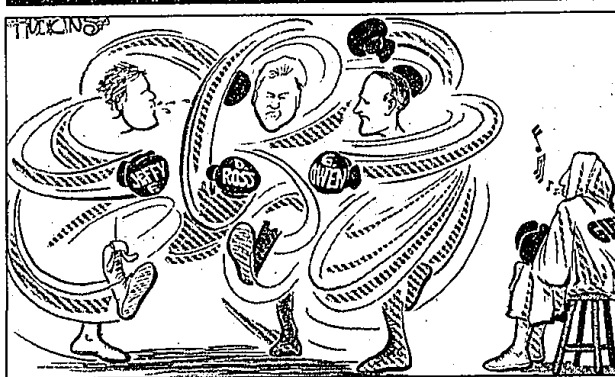
The primary, of course, is just a beginning. Both candidates have questions to answer for the November general election.

Kaplan, now seeking for a judgeship after two tries for prosecutor, must put to rest doubts he won't seek any other job, at least until his judicial term is up.

O'Brien must show how her experience will enable her to go from someone who works with lawyers to someone who dictates to them from the bench.

But those issues would be best decided in the fall. Primary voters should give Steven Kaplan and Colleen O'Brien the chance to make their case.

ARKIE HUDKINS



## LETTERS

### Equal opportunity

"Integration dream's downfall," by Philip Power is an excellent review of Detroit history. I want to add my personal observations.

When the 1967 Detroit riot began, police were ordered to leave shotguns in their squad cars and take no action that might enrage the citizens as they robbed stores. Looters realized film crews were looking for "police brutality" scenarios and acted for the cameras. National Guardsmen were expected to intimidate rioters merely by their presence, but citizens understood the game, "don't dare touch us."

The city was burning when the rules were secretly changed. Police badges were removed. License plates and military vehicle identification were covered with masking tape. Enforcement got tough. No officer or soldier was sued for cracking the head of a thief. No news program mentioned the change of rules. If this was a "gentleman's agreement," it did work.

Cross-school district busing destroyed Detroit more than the riots, and continues today. School enrollment represented neighborhoods. Detroit was a melting pot of ethnic enclaves — Polish, Chinese, Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, black, rich and poor. All had purchased homes in communities they chose to raise their families. Yellow buses began taking their children to schools far from home. This was too much for any loving parents. Those that could afford to move did so — only the poor remained.

Coleman Young adequately represented what was left of Detroit. The residents would not have elected a strong, wise, and almost ruthless mayor (he would have needed to be black) capable of turning the city around. Financial investors and the ablest and brightest residents had fled. Hiring, job promotion, and purchasing based on skin color would not bring them back. City income taxes, residential requirements and meter maid terrorists added barriers to any renaissance. The EPA is about to close remaining industries because they exist in poor neighborhoods.

To be a great city again Detroit will need other "gentlemen's agreements." Stop harassing the police, stop preferential treatment, school busing and all programs that discriminate. Only "equal opportunity" will encourage opportunists to invest their talents in this city. It can happen!

Hank Borgman  
Farmington

### Richard clueless

Columnist Tim Richard purports to care for Michigan's children, yet he feverishly opposes any attempt to allow parents more

options for improving their children's education.

Tim rejects all forms of school choice, from charter schools to vouchers. He erroneously claims that the Mackinac Center "is pushing vouchers, hard."

Tim needs to rent a clue. The Mackinac Center has proposed a tuition tax credit, not a voucher. There is no transfer of public funds to private schools, as Tim maintains; parents and businesses simply get a credit against their own tax liabilities when they pay a child's school tuition with their own money.

Rather than belittling parental involvement in their children's education, Tim should check his ideological agenda at the door and embrace school choice as a real way to improve education.

Steven P. Schaller  
Clawson

### Well done

Congratulations to the city of Farmington for taking the initiative regarding the new juvenile smoking legislation slated to begin Aug. 24.

By taking advantage of the relationship with the Family Court in Pontiac, teen smokers will now face a speedier disposition of their smoking violations when ticketed.

Smoking, and the purchase or possession of cigarettes by those under 18, is currently prohibited by state law. The city of Farmington has recognized the need to make this state law more enforceable one.

As an alcohol and drug education instructor, I am encouraged to see steps taken that may deter youth from the gateway drug of tobacco products. Well done Farmington.

Cynthia Helleak  
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.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:  
What would you do without air conditioning?



"I'd buy a kiddie pool and lay in it for three hours."  
Patrick Petersen  
Livonia



"My favorite thing is to open the windows, but when it's 90 degrees and humid, I like the AC."  
Phyllis Algor  
Farmington Hills



"Buy a lot of fans. Stock up on ice. Buy ice cream and popsicles."  
Michael Goodman  
Farmington Hills



"I'd recondition myself to the way it was when we were growing up."  
Joanne  
Farmington Hills

## Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALUSZEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450  
SUSAN ROSEN, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149  
HUGH GALLAGHER, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2118  
KATHY HERSCHFIELD, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 248-901-2501  
LARRY GEIGER, CIRCULATION MANAGER, 734-953-2234  
BANKS M. DISHMORE, JR., PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100  
STEVEN K. POPE, VICE-PRESIDENT/GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252  
RICK FIGURELLI, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150

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— Philip Power