

Farmer Jack

City sends correct message

The Farmington City Council's recent message to Farmer Jack and its parent company, Greater Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co., is loud and clear.

As long as good faith talks continue for finding a suitable tenant for the vacant Downtown Farmington Center Farmer Jack grocery store, the city won't file a lawsuit.

That's pretty clear and pretty simple. And we hope it's a message taken seriously by the national food chain that closed its doors downtown June 27.

The city council is right to stand up and demand some action for downtown Farmington, which is definitely in need of a grocery store to serve area residents, who have already made it clear they want a top quality, full-service grocery to occupy the 20,000 square feet.

The city council has promised the only action it can take. In too many other communities, national chains, such as Kroger and Farmer Jack, have closed up shop, only to hold the lease hostage in fear of inviting other grocery competition into an area.

In fact, all Farmington area residents need do is take a peek into history when the Rogers at Grand River-Halsted closed during the 1980s. Again, residents, many senior citizens, complained vociferously about the lack of a grocery store that was conveniently located. That closing had a domino effect, as well.

Other stores in that strip mall eventually left. Don't be surprised if the same thing eventually happens at the Downtown Farmington

Center if the Farmer Jack space is not leased to a quality tenant that can attract consumers to it and adjacent businesses.

Obviously the national food chain and landlord, Kimco Realty Co., must be given time to meet and find a suitable tenant. But the city council is urged to monitor the progress and success of these meetings.

True, Farmer Jack/A&P and Kimco have a legitimate lease with three years remaining. A long-term vacancy or an unsuitable tenant will serve no purpose, including that of the landlord.

The city council and city attorney are wise to consider the relatively new state law that addresses the negative impact a vacant building has on nearby businesses and residences. The law establishes a six-month time period after which an empty building — with no attempt to sell or lease — becomes unsafe because of its vacancy.

As we have mentioned, national food chains are expert at holding a building vacant for fear of inviting competition. But competition is what America is about. There's nothing better for consumers or a community than competition between businesses.

The city council must hold true to their position that the Farmer Jack building must not remain vacant and that a suitable tenant — we hope a grocery store — will be found. Residents and businesses in the area should lend support to the city council in its resolve. Only good things for downtown Farmington can come from such an effort.

Closed: The Farmington City Council is keeping its eye on any progress made in finding a suitable tenant for the now-vacant Farmer Jack building in the Downtown Farmington Center on Farmington Road. In many communities, national food chains have held leases hostage long after closing a store in order to prevent competition from other grocery chains. But downtown residents are clamoring for another grocery store.



Legislators pass some good laws

We have lashed the Legislature for its late hour votes, its sausage-making habits and its inflation of partisan issues.

So it is incumbent on us to praise our heroes and heroines in Lansing for rising to a bipartisan occasion with some good laws. Top examples: organ donor laws and efforts to outlaw "date rape" drugs. These laws, when implemented by an informed public, literally will save lives.

One set of new laws will require the secretary of state to include organ donor information when drivers renew, or apply for new, Michigan licenses or for state identification cards. Applicants will receive a postage-paid card they can sign and return to be listed as willing organ donors in the event of their unexpected deaths.

The secretary of state would forward the applicant's name and address to the state central organ procurement organization. In other bills, the Legislature provide \$40,000 for producing a pamphlet explaining the organ donor program and \$64,000 for the return postage cards.

The willing donor would have a statement to that effect on his or her driver's license or state identification card.

Michigan ranks 45th among the 50 states in the number of people who are registered organ donors. More than 2,000 people are on organ transplant waiting lists. An estimated 11 patients per month die because donated organs are unavailable.

In short, lawmakers assume Michiganders will respond to the request to be organ donors once they know it can be done and is needed. We think they assume correctly. Michiganders can and will be more generous in helping others live through the ultimate act of recycling organs.

The bipartisan team included Democratic Reps. Lingg, Brewer of Holt and Lynne Martinez of Lansing and Republican Sen. John

Schwarz of Battle Creek.

Meanwhile, the Legislature has passed Schwarz's bill to outlaw GHB, gamma-hydroxybutyrate — the "date rape" drug. The new law classifies GHB as a Schedule I controlled substance, along with opium and hallucinogens.

"GHB is particularly dangerous because anybody can buy the materials to make it over the counter and cook it up in a kitchen," said Schwarz during Senate debate.

A sexual predator can slip it to a young woman in a drink and rape her when she passes out. The drug also causes a loss of memory so that the victim can't even identify her assailant. Administered too freely, GHB can even cause death.

There are, of course, severe punishments for possessing and using GHB. That's if the predator is identified, caught, tried and convicted.

It would be much better, according to our Aug. 6 Community Life section report, if women were taught to prevent such tricks. Hlene Zisk of First Step in Canton says growing numbers of area women are becoming victims, particularly in the last two years. Target population, she says, is college women.

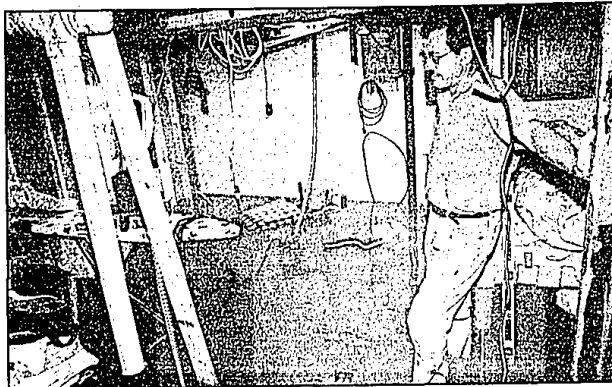
Warning sign: The victim appears drunk but has no odor of alcohol on her breath; her speech is slurred, her face not animated, her body limp; she's confused, dizzy, drowsy, speaking incoherently.

Preventive steps: Don't accept a drink from someone you don't know well or trust; at a bar, accept drinks only from the bartender; watch your friends' behavior; keep your eye on your glass and never leave it unattended.

So our Michigan Legislature deserves a collective, bipartisan pat on the back for passing these laws.

But it will be up to the people — those who have the attitude of being their brother's and sister's keepers — to donate organs and guard against drug-passing predators.

Not again



Reliving history: Roger Trost of Farmington Hills waits for a pump to empty about 1 foot of floodwater from recent heavy rains. History seems to repeat itself for many area residents who have asked the Farmington Hills City Council for help. The time has come for some relief.

LETTERS

Don't forget

Recently the Michigan House of Representatives passed a pay equity bill that would guarantee workers equal pay for equal work, regardless of race, sex, or any other personal characteristic. Forty-seven representatives voted against the bill, including Farmington's Andrew Raczkowski.

Because of wage discrimination, thousands of women in Michigan, heads of households, struggle all of their lives to support their families on wages only 71 percent of that of men. Their earnings are less, so they save less, and their social security and pension credits are smaller. In retirement, their incomes sink to 58 percent of that of men. Because they live longer and have more chronic ailments than men, they often wind up on public assistance, a burden upon the taxpayers.

A vote against the pay equity bill was a vote against the dignity and worth of all workers. I hope Farmington citizens will remember Rep. Raczkowski's failure to support this humanitarian measure, and cast their ballots in November for his compassionate opponent, Democrat Steve Dibert.

Virginia Nicoll
Farmington Hills

Thanks for caring

One year ago our grandson, Shawn Mayberry, died. He was our daughter's only child. He played football for Harrison High, and I want people to know what wonderful friends he has.

The coaches and players saw to it his mother received a necklace made out of the championship ring he would have had. The mothers, his teachers, his fellow students saw to it his headstone was paid for. Every day someone checked with her to see how she was, they cut grass, helped every way they could to make things easier for her. Mother's Day her yard was filled with flowers from Shawn's friends. Every act of kindness you could think of these kids did.

One year gone by and still he is remembered by his class mates.

The next time people worry about teenagers gone bad — please remember these wonderful kids and their parents.

Thank you!

Darlene Fulks
Livonia

Student value beyond MEAP

A school, whether small or large ("Large schools often perform better than small ones," by Tim Richard, 7-23-98) is more than the MEAP scores! Using MEAP scores as the basis for comparing "performance" is weak and insufficient. As an adult, I would not want one score to reflect my value, nor would I want one score to illustrate my potential.

The success of a student and a school is multidimensional. The successful student and school is a culmination of many facets within a school and school district. These facets include, but are not limited to: grade point average, community service program, self-esteem initiatives, attendance, academic achievements, athletic achievements, SAT and ACT scores, artistic expressions, literary endeavors, technological victories, triumphs of the underdog (academically and athletically), drop-out rate, percentage of college-bound students, academic teamwork successes, daily acts of maturity and acceptance of diversity. Intellectually, these create a picture of the "better" school. So, save the MEAP scores for the politicians. Universities and corporations desire more in a student than success on the MEAP test.

Please use your forum to identify school districts that strive to create a multifaceted individual that benefits our society. Stop pitting schools and school districts against each other to create an individual who can only be successful on the MEAP test. Challenge school districts to actively pursue strategies that allow a "whole" individual to leave the institution and make their world a better place to live. You are part of a medium that will assist our society in transforming their mind-set to appreciate the "who" student and not just one part. Help spread the word that "better" means so much more than just one MEAP score!

Casimer F. Badyne
Livonia

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.

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— Philip Power