

To do list

Cities, schools can get it done

A pristine desktop calendar, a new date to scribble on checks and a fresh blanket of white snow has inspired us to come up with a to-do-list for Farmington's governmental bodies.

These are issues well within the grasp of elected officials to bring to a close. Some have already been kicked to death. Others are suggestions to simply mull, ponder and ruminate over.

Let's start with Farmington Hills City Council:

■ The proposed commercial and residential redevelopment for Orchard Lake, 14 Mile and Northwestern Highway; Malan Realty touts big plans for the triangle but continues to present hurdles before city council. The developer should know by the end of the month whether the unnamed high-profile retailer is in. To speed up things, city council members should decide exactly what form the city's share of \$6 million in infrastructure or cost savings should take. Clairview residents who are affected by the proposed development have twiddled their thumbs into a rheumatistic state and deserve fast action on the developer's and city's part.

■ On the contrary, city officials pledge to take considerable time on deciding what best will coincide with the San Marino Golf Course expansion on the Eleven Pines property. City staff will take the next few months going over nine plans in order to "come to a consensus."

No matter how open-ended the process, the debate will boil down to density and dollars. Developers will contend they can't have one without the other while city council members want nine holes in a near pristine natural setting. In this meeting of the minds, city council and developer need to be realistic about each other's needs. Otherwise, duffers won't be playing through to the 10th hole anytime soon.

To the Farmington Board of Education, we

■ These are issues well within the grasp of elected officials to bring to a close.

pass this on for consideration.

■ Block scheduling, a nouveau method of structuring a high school student's day, fueled plenty of debate at Harrison High. Funny enough, Farmington High switched to a block schedule two years ago without nearly the fuss. North Farmington High's is next to take a swing at block scheduling. The folks at North would do well to consult those at Farmington High. The district should do more to reassure doubters that the block method is not merely another educational fad.

■ Next fall, all three high schools will have lights and host Friday night football games for the first time. Neighboring residents are not exactly enthralled with the idea. A good plan would be setting up sessions with the surrounding residents at each of the high schools to remind them of the change and help allay fears and listen to suggestions to curb potential problems.

For the folks at the city of Farmington:

■ The recently dubbed "Kid's World" playscape in Shiawassee Park is a novel plan and the idea of selling individual pickets at \$25 a pop to raise money a brilliant one. But why limit it to individuals? Many corporations — including those in Farmington Hills — should be encouraged to get involved.

■ City officials should continue to ride herd on Kimco Realty officials when it comes to their Downtown Center, the retail focal point in Farmington. The Farmer Jack vacancy, which has deprived nearby seniors of a viable food store, has lingered longer than the small of 1995 dated egg nog.

With that, we say let's get it done.

Blizzard shouldn't snow us under

For once the TV weather forecasters were right. They said it was going to snow and, boy, did it snow. From eight to 14 inches, depending on where you happened to dip your shovel.

Saturday afternoon and evening the white stuff was coming down like . . . well, like flour from the business end of some cosmic sifter.

That blizzard was nature's first real winter test in some time for us here in southeast Michigan. So how did our section of the Detroit area do on the exam?

Well, the final grades aren't in yet, but don't be looking for metro Detroit on the winter dean's list. We didn't flunk out; on probation — and needing a tutor — would be more like it.

Sure, eight to 14 is a goodly amount to receive in one dropping, but eight to 14 shouldn't cause the danger and disruption and frustration and aching backs that it did.

Seems like on Monday morning everyone had some nasty little story to relate about what the TV wags dubbed "The Blizzard of '99."

Anyone unfortunate enough to be out driving in the mess Saturday night must have thought that the snow plow hadn't yet been invented. And when the plows finally did get going, the work was sometimes so inept that huge piles of snow were left to snag autos at neighborhood and subdivision intersections. By opening of business Monday, some parking lots still hadn't been touched. Of course,

most schools were closed — it just isn't safe to have busses on roads that aren't plowed very well — and we bet a lot of folks said to heck with work Monday. Hey, who can go to work when there's snow to be shoveled and out-of-school kids to be tended?

Well, we guess we can blame our showing on this test to lack of study. Mild winters have been a fact of life in these parts the last several years. You've got to go back to the late '70s — when "experts" were telling us that a new Ice Age was dawning — for the last really big blow. Now it's fashionable to talk about the Greenhouse Effect and the general warming of the Earth's climate.

We've said it before, but we guess it needs repeating every January: Most of the problem is that winter isn't well managed around here. Hasn't been for years.

It isn't only the nitty-gritty stuff like inattention to snowy sidewalks and highways and cars that won't start because they haven't been properly winterized. It's more that winter simply is more cursed than celebrated by many of our residents.

The unfortunate mindset is that winter is something to be endured. So encouraged, lots of us are content to take part in the three great wintertime pursuits — eating, drinking and watching TV.

Well, old Ma Nature has given us one test. We're sure there'll be others before the first crocus pops next spring. Maybe next time we'll be better prepared.

Smooth sledding



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEERER

Fast and furious: Sledders at the hill on Shiawassee and Farmington roads welcomed the deluge of snow that blanketed the Farmington area during the weekend.

LETTERS

Minlster responds

As the minister of the "church" property that Mr. Terry Sever refers to in his "Point of View" column (Thursday, Dec. 17) I feel that I need to respond.

The Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington, located on Halsted Road just south of Eleven Pines, was approached by Mr. Sever in September, when he came to the church and asked to speak with the minister. The church administrator told him that I was not in and he stated that he wanted me to call him because "the City of Farmington Hills was interested in purchasing some of our property."

Our church administrator told Mr. Sever that the minister did not have the authority to make a decision of that kind but that she would inform the minister and the Board of Trustees. I called Mr. Sever and he told me that the "City of Farmington Hills was interested in purchasing two, possibly three, acres of our property."

I informed our Board of Trustees and they asked that I invite Mr. Sever to our Oct. 21 Board meeting. Mr. Sever agreed and came to the meeting. He introduced himself as a member of the City Council of Farmington Hills and told us that several developers were interested in purchasing the City owned piece of property known as Eleven Pines (he did say specifically "The Phoenix Group") and that "they" would like to acquire two or three more acres — which the church owns.

However, collectively we believed that Mr. Sever was acting on behalf of the City of Farmington Hills, not the Phoenix Group. He also said that "they" would probably be willing to pay us \$100,000 an acre. We thanked him for his presentation and he left.

Subsequently, we hired Mr. Marty Burnstein, a real estate attorney, to look into this matter on our behalf. Mr. Burnstein, after talking with Mr. Steve Brock, the City Manager, found out that the City of Farmington Hills knew nothing of this proposal to us and that Mr. Sever was not in any way representing the City but that he represented Phoenix Group.

Obviously, all of this is a moot point, as the Phoenix Group has decided not to bid on the Eleven Pines property and, of course, is now not interested in purchasing any of our property.

I cannot comment on Mr. Sever's 20 years of service to the City of Farmington Hills. But I will say that speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees and myself, we were very disappointed in the way Mr. Sever conducted this entire affair with us.

He states in his editorial "It was the only proposal that took into consideration the church property — I hope the city council will protect their best interest." I can assure Mr. Sever, that after 150 years in the Farmington area, we are quite capable of looking after our own best interest.

Rev. Suzanne Paul,
minister
Universalist Unitarian Church
of Farmington
Farmington Hills

What about us?

I am a junior at Farmington High School, and I just wanted to ask why is Harrison always the main feature? They are always on the cover of the sports page, and they are also often found on the front of many other sections. Harrison is not the only school that has accomplishments. North Farmington and Farmington have many accomplishments but do not get close to as much coverage as Harrison. I know Harrison has many good sports, but when North Farmington and Farmington do well in something, they do not get as much attention as they deserve. I'm not really sure about North Farmington, but I know that Farmington has had two outstanding accomplishments this year that did not get very much coverage.

One of those two accomplishments is when the boys soccer team became district champions. I'm sure they got some coverage, but not as much as they should have. I'm not saying that they are usually a bad team or anything, I am just making the point that the Farmington soccer team is not always district champions, and that they deserved a lot more attention than what they got.

The other accomplishment made by Farmington is when the marching band made it to state finals. Yes, we did get some coverage, but we were also in the same article as Harrison, most of which was about Harrison. Sure they placed higher than Farmington, but Farmington doesn't make it to state finals nearly as much as Harrison, therefore it seems like it is more of an accomplishment for Farmington. I'm not saying that this is not an accomplishment for Harrison, it's just that Farmington has not gotten to experience that as often as Harrison. Farmington is just as proud of their marching band as Harrison is of theirs.

I hope you will take this letter into consideration the next time you write an article about one of the local high schools. Thank you.
Melissa Smart
Farmington Hills

QUESTION:

How do you cope with the snow and cold?

We asked this question outside the Farmington Hills Branch Library when the temperature was 3 degrees below zero.



"A snow blower. I haven't had a major problem."

John Lightner
Farmington



"Not well."

Alecia Bocks
Detroit



"I have no problem. If it's cold and snowy, I don't go out."

Alvin Strom
Farmington



"Layers and layers. Get a quilt and stay home."

Ledee Swan
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power