

## POINTS OF VIEW

## LETTERS

## 'Yes' to site improvements

We encourage Clarenceville District residents to vote yes in the upcoming Sinking Fund Election. The administrators and school board members have demonstrated their conviction that a quality education is of primary importance for our children. We need to support them in this belief by making funds available for much needed site improvements so that money is not taken out of the general fund which is used to educate our children. We are very happy to be members of the Clarenceville family and support this program.

Bob and Sharon Simpson  
Farmington Hills

## Much already spent

After reading recent articles pertaining to the two ballot proposals (in the Clarenceville School District), one could almost think no renovations have ever been done to our schools in past years.

Back in June 1985, the voters of Clarenceville approved 1/2 mill for the purpose of improving facilities in the district. It would keep our buildings going for the next 30-plus years.

In April 1989, the Wayne County Allocation Board was told we had started the projects to take our present buildings, equipment and facilities into the year 2015.

In June 1995, the voters passed two ballot proposals. The first was a 10-year (2005) \$4.6 million dollar bond issue. The second was a building and site sinking fund which would raise \$2.5 million over a 10 year period.

We only have four schools. Since 1990-91, \$455,335.25 has been spent on roofs. Since 1996 we have spent \$200,335 for heat. Of that over \$80,000 was at Botsford. Another \$738,301 has been spent on electrical and now you tell us we are still using fuses?

We were told the board represents us and does what we ask. If that is true, who asked to do away with the tennis courts? Then there is the question of the money still owing for the removal.

Last, but not the least, I resent it when I go to a board meeting and I am asked, "What are you doing here?"

Denna Bame  
Livonia

## Old days were safer

There was a time, not too long ago, when being a teenager was one of the best times of a person's life. Over the years, I felt I had been deprived of potential fun on a larger scale compared to other generations. The radio was no match for the TV, arguments were settled by fistbumps or wrestling and settled promptly. Beer, alcohol and cigarettes were usually taken from the parents' storage place. Paper routes did not earn enough money to buy a car or other luxuries. We had the highest respect for the authority of our parents, the police, teachers the elderly and even some politicians.

Today, many students will receive a car or pickup truck as a graduation gift from proud and affluent parents or grandparents. There are always "friends" who are old enough (and willing) to make purchases of items unlawful for juveniles to purchase. Recent events tell me I was really VERY fortunate to have had my youthful teenage years back when they were more fun and much safer. Any classmate who died, actually died of natural causes or a rare automobile accident. Are we going to make the future generations safer or are we not? The responsibility is OURS today!

Anthony B. Brehler  
Livonia

## A vote of confidence

I plan to vote for Linda Enberg in the upcoming Farmington Board of Education election.

I have known Linda for many years, and had the privilege of working with her at Farmington Families in Action, and on the Advisory Boards at Power Middle School and Farmington High. My husband and I attended her class, Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol. Linda is talented, dedicated, energetic, articulate and caring. She is a positive force on any committee.

Linda's efforts toward the bond improvement projects will benefit our district for years to come. Linda also led the initiative to return 81 percent of the Durant funds to the taxpayers. She recognizes the importance of character development in the schools.

Even though Linda is running unopposed, I plan to give her a "vote of confidence" on June 14.

Debbie Read  
Farmington Hills

## University funding: Behind the scenes

It's June and, right on time, the annual tussle over funding for Michigan's universities has emerged from legislative cloakrooms in Lansing. Last week, the state Senate passed a bill to increase funding for Michigan's universities by 8.4 percent, while rejecting Gov. John Engler's proposal to equalize university spending. The House previously went along with the governor's plan, so the two contending bills will go to a conference committee where some heavy-duty tugging and hauling will eventually result in an agreement.

Here's a peek of what's really going on behind the scenes in this year's version of Michigan's longest-running competitive battle.

Much of it has to do with the close relationship between Gov. Engler and Michigan State University President Peter McPherson. McPherson is an old buddy of Engler's (both are MSU alumni) and was the governor's hand-picked candidate for the MSU presidency. Ever since McPherson arrived in East Lansing, he's been all over the state Capitol looking for money and effectively preaching the doctrine that MSU has been short-changed for years when legislative appropriations are handed out.

It's true. Michigan State is in a financial bind these days. But some of it is self-inflicted.

McPherson got a lot of favorable publicity back in 1995 when he announced that MSU tuition increases would be indexed henceforth to the rate of inflation. That sounded great to Michigan families who were sore at seeing tuition bills that regularly exceeded the cost of living. But it also put MSU's income stream (a big part of which comes from tuition fees) in a straight jacket.

Moreover, MSU has been increasing undergraduate enrollment. Over the past three years, some 4,000 additional students have been admitted to MSU with what amounts to a guarantee that their tuition bills will not exceed the rate of inflation. Assuming the guarantee still holds, that means MSU tuition bill increases this fall will be no more than 1.7 percent, the current rate of inflation.

To make things worse, Michigan State's faculty is getting restive over low salaries. Pay for MSU full professors is dead last among Big Ten schools, while associate professors rank eighth and assistant professors come in ninth. And even the most other-worldly professor gets grumpy when it's explained that the reason faculty salaries are so low is because the university has decided to link income from tuition to a low rate of inflation.

So the big question facing McPherson has been how to get some extra money out of the legislature so he can get the faculty off his back and relieve MSU from its increasingly tight financial bind.

Enter Gov. Engler and his budget director, Mary



PHILIP POWER

Lannoye, who concocted a controversial scheme that would classify state universities into four tiers according to size and mission and equalize per student payments for each university within a given classification. For the coming fiscal year, each school would get an appropriation ranging from \$4,500 to \$8,500 per student, with the lowest funded schools in each tier receiving the largest increases.

Clumped together in the "research universities" tier would be the University of Michigan, MSU, Wayne State University and Michigan Tech University. And (what a surprise!) under the Engler funding plan Michigan State would have received the largest appropriation increase of 4.5 percent, while everybody else would get 3 percent.

Now the MSU folks have a point. Michigan State gets less money per in-state student than U-M, WSU or MTU. And it's been one of McPherson's highest priorities to make up that difference.

But Sen. Joe Schwarz, a U-M alumnus and the powerful chair of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that deals with university funding, refused to go along.

"It's robbing Peter to pay Paul to fund the consequences of the Michigan State tuition guarantee at the expense of other schools," says Schwarz.

The Senate agreed with him, thus setting up the coming showdown between Senate and House versions of university appropriations bills.

You'll read about the results in your regular daily newspaper, but now you know what's really going on behind the scenes.

Phil Power is the chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. A veteran observer of university funding wars, he is also a former Regent of the University of Michigan and member of the Governor's Commission on the Future of Higher Education that proposed in 1982 another funding formula for Michigan universities. He can be reached at ppower@homecomm.net or at (734) 665-4081.

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