

What's in a name?

Everything for waterways

A drain by any other name just might become a waterway of aesthetic importance to Farmington area residents. Instead, the waterways that traverse the communities bear the shallow sounding names of Seeley, Minnow Pond, Caddell and Smith. And none of the names do much to stir the imagination or the environmental urge to protect and to nurture.

But there's a move — or at least a thought — afoot to rename the drains.

A great idea. For their history alone, the waterways should receive names that give them a little more nobility and inclination toward the pristine.

After all, a waterway is a waterway. And a drain, well, it sounds like a drain. A drain brings thoughts of places to dump old tires, or a ravine alongside a roadway that fills with dirty water when it rains and fills with weeds when it doesn't.

The Farmington Hills Beautification Commission is right on target with thoughts of renaming the nearby drains, which are divided into drain districts.

Beautification commissioners, the Historical District Commission and city officials pitched their ideas at a Rouge River Project steering committee meeting in May.

Rouge River supporters liked the idea and want the project taken up on a sub-watershed basis as opposed to communities taking up the effort separately.

We too like the idea and encourage participants to push to the hilt until the drains are renamed.

The renaming notion to some might seem trivial.

But we disagree. The process, which includes various legalities like public hearings, would not be trivial. It's well worth the effort and in the process we may all learn about the environment and the history of the area.

Drain names are expected to be talked about during a sub-watershed meeting Aug. 26. Make



More than meets the eye: Minnow Pond Drain is too pretty to be just a drain. We support efforts to rename the area's drains to reflect their aesthetic and environmental importance.

your opinions known. Contact SEMCOG, as well as the beautification and historical district commission.

New names — either historic as wanted by the historic district commission — or otherwise could promote a waterway instead of just drain. New names would go far in drawing attention to the need for preservation and stewardship.

In the public's mind, a drain is just a drain. Clearly, these drains, however, are useful to the area, environmentally, aesthetically and in a very practical sense.

As Tom Biasell, Farmington Hills public services director, explained, heightened interest in the drains might satisfy a public education requirement that accompanies application for a voluntary General Storm Water Permit to release storm water as part of the Federal Clean Water Act.

And then grant money might be available. And let's be honest. Wouldn't you rather live on a babbling brook or a creek than a drain?

Trains: Let's learn to be safe

We've all seen it. There we sit at a railroad crossing, the red lights flashing, and the traffic arms down to stop cars and trucks. Then, there's that one car or truck. It slips around the arm and quickly crosses the tracks.

The driver has saved five minutes, but because he or she was in such a hurry, the driver has put the rest us in danger of dying.

The reason is that trains just can't stop quickly. It takes an average freight train traveling at 50 miles an hour nearly a mile to stop, according to a spokesperson for CSX railroad. At a slow 25 miles an hour, it takes about a half mile.

When a freight train hits a car, it's not a pretty sight. The train is often derailed, which means box cars go off the tracks and tip over. That puts everybody nearby in danger, not just the driver who challenged the train.

It doesn't much matter what kind of car or truck a person is driving. An average freight train hitting a car is equivalent to hitting a pop can in the road with your car.

Plymouth Township, with its abundance of railroad tracks, has had its share of vehicle/train collisions.

In less than a year, two Redford teenagers have been hit by trains. One youth lost his legs when he fell off his bicycle while playing tag with a box car and was run over by the train. Then, on July 20, an 18-year-old Redford girl died as she was attempting to cross the tracks.

The train's horn was blowing and a com-

panion was yelling at her not to try crossing. The teen disregarded both, tried to walk, but tripped and fell in front of the engine.

Both were horrible accidents. But the truth is neither teen should have been near the railroad tracks. It's private property, and they were trespassing.

Railroad lines are different these days. Once upon a time there were scheduled passenger and freight trains. People living near tracks knew when trains would pass.

That's no longer true. Trains serve the auto industry in western Wayne County. With just-on-time parts delivery to auto plants, trains run at all times of day and night. There's no schedule.

Also, just because a train has been sitting on a set of tracks for a few days doesn't mean it can't start moving at any time.

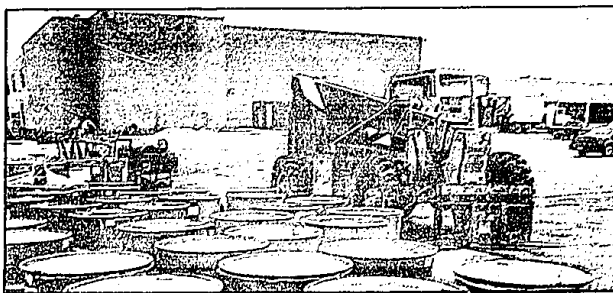
Trains move both ways, which means stepping across the tracks behind a string of box cars is the same as crossing the tracks in front of an engine.

Railroads are important to our economic health. They move heavy cargos cheaply and help provide well-paid manufacturing jobs. Railroads keep more truck traffic off the roads. Each boxcar represents one more semi-truck that would be sitting next to us.

Those added trucks would not only clog crowded roads but would also produce more air pollution.

Trains are vital to our area. We just need to learn how to live safely with them.

Opening day



When: With construction continuing throughout the school district, parents are getting concerned whether school will start on time at the end of August. School officials should have a meeting informing parents of what's happening. It certainly would reduce rumors that are causing concern.

LETTERS

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to: Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335, faxed to Joanne at (734) 459-2700 or e-mailed to jmaliszewski@homecomm.net

Remembering Vets

When I was in the Army in 1950, I saw many casualties and wounded vets. One in particular was really a great guy; he was a young soldier who was actually half a human being; he apparently had fallen onto a live hand-grenade on his right side, destroying the whole right half of his body entirely. He had a glass eye, prosthesis right arm, prosthesis right leg, and walked with a slight limp. When you reached out to shake his hand he always extended his real left hand towards you.

I used to go into town in a jeep and I always took this lad with me. We had much fun drinking Cokes, listening to music and mixing with civilians and other G.I.s. I tried very hard to show him and myself a good time. We never discussed his injuries. How I wish I could remember his name!

I'd like everyone to always remember the sacrifices of our brave young folks in the service of our great country.

Respect the flag, and be thankful. Remember your veterans.

Leon Schoelch
Farmington Hills

Well informed

The July 25, 1999 Observer featured the Farmington Hills/Novi Police Department's South Oakland Narcotics Intelligence Consortium (SONIC). I am pleased that the article portrayed our aggressive attack on drug trafficking. The article highlighted the execution of a search warrant for crack cocaine at Gateway Apartments in Farmington Hills. Observer reporter Larry O'Connor witnessed SONIC officers buy crack and execute a search warrant.

I would like to commend the management representatives of Gateway Apartments who are proactive leaders and participants in our multi-housing community-policing program. Residents of Gateway Apartments should applaud management officials for their efforts to ensure Gateway Apartments is a safe and premier multi-housing facility. Gateway officials have been educated to screen prospective residents and report existing residents who engage in criminal activity.

(The July 18 raid) at Gateway Apartments is an isolated incident and is no reflection of the law-abiding residents. Gateway is a desirable place to reside because drug dealers and criminals are not welcome.

Editor Joanne Maliszewski and reporter Larry O'Connor are to be commended for their dedicated daily review and accurate coverage of crime and police related issues. The Observer staff does an excellent job keeping the citizens of Farmington Hills well informed on issues that affect their lives.

William J. Dwyer, chief of police
Farmington Hills Police Department

Make views clear

I enjoyed your recent editorial about a proposed retail development near the M-14 and Gofredson interchange in Salem Township. Even though the area described is not in Westland, I have driven that route several times, and I've also enjoyed the beauty of the surrounding trees. I even recall a large pumpkin patch just off M-14 that I took my daughter to when she was in kindergarten. Unfortunately, where the pumpkin patch once was now sits a subdivision of expensive new homes.

Your comments raised several issues about the proliferation of "new" stores, "new" buildings and "new" concrete roadways. Despite all the rhetoric about the need to curtail "urban sprawl," local decision makers are hesitant to take a stand when these issues arise in their communities.

It doesn't help when the editorial department of the local newspaper also hedges. "Hard" as it may be and regardless of the ramifications to your circulation, you owe it to your readers to state your position. For or against?

It is not enough to mourn the loss of a scenic drive gone astray. The continual destruction of open, natural spaces represents a much broader issue and speaks volumes to society's selfish desire to have it all. Until the local citizens really let their concerns be known AND until the elected officials really listen and heed the desires of the citizens, this type of controversy will repeat itself over and over for the next 25 years until ... (as we see today in Livonia, local citizens fighting to preserve one of the last wetlands in the city from becoming a retail development while empty buildings abound in the area) ... there are no natural environments left to destroy.

Cheryl Graunstadt
Westland

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What one thing do you want to do before the end of summer?



"Go the Chicago to visit my sister."
Tamera Woods



"I'm just anxious to get on to fall."
Jane Bonkade



"I want to go to Cedar Point and get a tan."
Mike Troelsen



"Build a model plane."
Harold Merritt

We asked this question at the Farmington Community Library on 12 Mile Road.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power