

# Farmington Observer

## OPINION

A14(F)

33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48335

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1999

## Woof, woof

### Let's hear it for a dog park

**W**alk down any street in the Farmington area and undoubtedly you'll hear the bark of family dogs. It's a fact of life. And it's a fact of the community.

Yet in the family-minded community of Farmington Hills, Fido, Rover and Mutt cannot visit and romp and play in any of the parks with their families. That's a shame. The Farmington Hills City Council, however, recently briefly discussed having a dog park. Before non-lovers of dogs moan and groan, think about it.

Why not? When parks in Farmington Hills were established, so were rules banning pets. Yet walk down any street in any neighborhood and you will see families or couples walking their dog or dogs. Remember, many neighborhoods in Farmington Hills will not allow fences.

Yet there's nothing better than playing fetch in a park with your dog. There's some-

thing peaceful about it. People and dogs need to roam freely together without fear of retribution and without fear of being hurt.

We are not asking the city council to spend a fortune. That's not necessary. Perhaps a fund-raising effort would be in order. But a designated area within the parks or, as was discussed by the council, a small, separate park would be appropriate.

And yes, pet owners must be required to be responsible. It's only fitting that owners take care that their pets do not annoy or hurt others, and that all droppings are picked up.

In the city of Mount Clemens, a new dog park is a popular spot on the corner of Groesbeck and Lafayette. A resident donated \$6,000 to pay for fencing while the city provided land. To raise additional money, the park started an adopt-a-bench program.

The same can and should be done here.

## Bill would kill local government

**W**ithout home rule, local government has little effective purpose.

Local units of government — county, city, township and village — and their governing bodies' legal ability to determine how a local community will grow and exist are deeply rooted in the American way of life.

Unlike any other form, local government is closest to the people. It is the level at which regular people can and do have an impact. They can ask questions, get answers and action that determines the way of life in their own community.

Local government and home rule are the foundation of American democratic government.

But along comes politics and deal-making with business lobbies in Lansing in the form of House Bill 4777, also known as the "The Job Creation and Regulatory Responsibility Act of 1999."

Introduced in June by Rep. Robert Gosselin of Troy, the legislation says, in effect, that only the state and federal governments have the authority to regulate business activity. In other words, existing local ordinances, such as barring vending machine sales in restaurants, or enacting penalties for the sale of cigarettes to minors, would be void, and any new similar ordinances forbidden.

The legislation, with its reference to 21 statutes that are defined as state or federal law, would render local government nearly impotent. HB 4777 would prohibit any ordinance or regulation that relates to the subjects in these state and federal laws.

Already, local governing bodies, such as the South East Michigan Council of Governments and the Michigan Municipal League, have adopted resolutions opposing the legislation as a threat to home rule and local government's ability to respond to its constituency and implement plans for communities through ordinances.

Examples of issues which local governments would be prohibited from regulating include minimum wage, liquor control, construction code and highway advertising.

The bill's supporters, such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, believe local ordinances have created a hodge-podge of rules and regulations that in one way or another hamper business activity. Hard to believe with our current thriving state economy, with one of the lowest unemployment rates in history, high job creation, business investment and

expansion.

The pretext for the latest attack on local government is the effort, mostly successful, by a handful of communities, particularly Detroit, to adopt living-wage proposals. Also lurking in the birth history of this bill is some business lobbies' opposition to local communities, such as Marquette, that have banned smoking in restaurants.

HB 4777 is shooting at a ghost. Local government has not and does not hamper business expansion or job creation. In fact, local ordinances that regulate billboards to ensure an aesthetically pleasing community with healthy property values have only served as a gilded invitation to corporate headquarters in our suburban communities. Business thrives in healthy, aesthetically pleasing and safe communities. Local ordinances protect business. Local government also works with chambers of commerce to provide a healthy environment for business and residents.

And nowhere is it found that communities with living-wage ordinances or bans on cigarette smoking in restaurants have brought business expansion or job creation to a halt.

The legislation, which is co-sponsored by Rep. Andrew Raczkowski of Farmington Hills, is written so vaguely as to leave an open door for state legislators to later interpret the language according to their latest needs to satisfy influential and well-financed business lobbies.

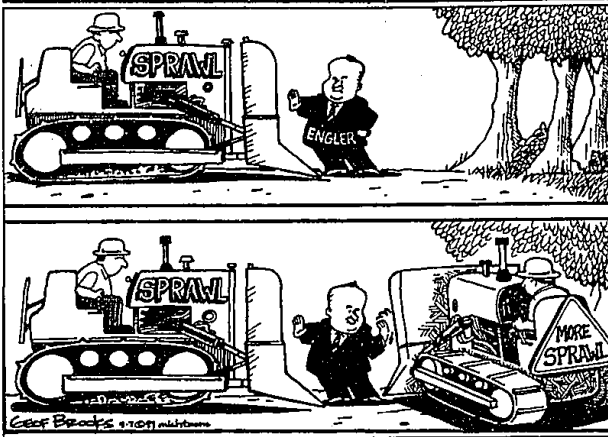
Broad is the only way to define what the bill attempts to cover, including employment compensation, liquor control code, state construction code, consumer protection, occupational health, public health and labor standards and relations.

The travesty of this legislation is the variety of means in which it may be interpreted when the need arises. Local officials cannot conceive what wouldn't fall into these categories if state legislators so determine.

The state Legislature will soon gain a tawdry reputation for passing single-issue and single-minded legislation only to address the gripes of a few business interests who are loading their financial futures on the backs of local government and the health, safety and welfare of citizens.

If the living-wage proposal in Detroit or the cigarette ban in Marquette is what's ailing certain lobbyists and legislators, then they should step to the plate of honesty and address those issues. Wiping out a tradition of home rule in Michigan is not the answer.

GEORGE BROOKS



## 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 emailed to jmaliszewski@oe.homecomm.net*

### With sorrow

**T**he Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills notes with sorrow the passing of Richard Steiger, secretary, board member, and loyal friend.

Dick Steiger gave generously of his time and his many talents to serve his neighbors and his community. Dick's writing, editing, publishing, and communication skills were without equal, and they helped our organization fulfill its goal of promoting communication and sharing of knowledge among neighborhood associations and residents.

Dick's talents, friendship, and quiet dedication will be missed by the board and membership of COHA, and by his many friends and neighbors in Farmington Hills.

Andrew Nickelhoff  
on behalf of the Board of Directors of  
COHA

### Extra billions

**I**n his column of Sept. 2, Philip Power falls for the liberal Democratic line that the Republican tax cut will hurt Social Security and Medicare.

The fact is that both Republicans and Democrats are committed to saving Social Security and Medicare. However, President Clinton, Al Gore and Debbie Stabenow want to spend the rest of the money on more liberal programs.

Republicans and Senator Abraham, on the other hand, want to give the rest of the money back to the people. It is their money after all!

That is why Democrats are so shrill with their "scare" campaign. They are afraid they won't have those extra billions for more spending.

James Collins  
Farmington Hills

### Attention mayor and Edison

**D**ear Mayor Vagnozzi:

While you are still mayor of Farmington Hills and represent our city to the state of Michigan, I would like to bring to your attention the Edison company and its struggle to give to the people of this city the electrical power we need.

I do realize it has been unusually hot across our nation but with all the increases in our power needs, Edison should be required by law to meet our power needs and we should offer them a "three strikes and you're out" system only.

I am on oxygen 24 hours a day and have had three power outages in the last three weeks that have been very hard on me. Better ways are surely needed to handle our power outages.

Updating our power lines to 1999, possibly putting them underground, should be a requirement for our city to make to the Edison company. Finding better ways to handle the emerging power failures is another. Since you are the mayor and the leader of our city what can I expect from your office?

I would like to add that the state would benefit greatly if it would require an oxygen manufacturing company to put a battery operated back-up system in the design of a home oxygen machine for usage in an emergency power outage for a disabled person.

Margaret Frucha  
Farmington Hills

### Forget gutter language

**I**take strong exception to Mr. Hugh Gallagher's views (in the Sept. 2 Observer) regarding the book "Fallen Angels" recently removed from the required reading list by Livonia Public School officials. He conveys the idea that it's OK to use books filled with vulgar, profane, obscene language, as long as a story is told and cultural or moral issues are raised and discussed. Frankly, I don't think parents or taxpayers want their schools used to teach gutter language, so I congratulate the parent who protested the book and also the school trustees for removing the book.

As far as the "power and meaning" of words, if I was mature and adventurous enough to use vivid and shocking profanity to convey my ideas in this article, wouldn't the Observer edit (i.e. censor) the objectionable words out? It should be the same for schools when they consider what type of books they select.

Ralph Bolz  
Livonia

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

What do you like most about fall?



"I like the weather and the new TV season."  
Steve Plunkett  
Farmington Hills



"I love the change of colors and low humidity."  
Nancy Wolf  
Northville



"My birthday is in it!"  
Sally Burley  
Farmington Hills



"I like to go to my Grandpa's and run through a big pile of leaves."  
Marisa Sangster  
West Bloomfield

## Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALISZEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450, jmaliszewski@oe.homecomm.net  
HUGH GALLAGHER, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149, hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net  
PETER KNOX, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 734-953-2177, pknox@oe.homecomm.net  
SUSAN ROBERTS, PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100, sroberts@oe.homecomm.net  
RICHARD BRADY, VICE-PRESIDENT/INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER, 734-953-2252, rbrady@oe.homecomm.net  
MARK WARREN, CIRCULATION DIRECTOR, 734-953-2117, mwarren@oe.homecomm.net  
ROCK FICORELLI, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150, rficorelli@oe.homecomm.net

### HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JEANNE TOMAS, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD ARNOLD, PRESIDENT

**OUR MISSION:** "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power