

POINTS OF VIEW

Time is past for hand-wringing

Under the effective leadership of CEO Doug Rothwell, The Michigan Economic Development Corporation has just issued a provocative report, "Strategic Directions for Michigan's Future."

Among other things, the report argues that Michigan's economy needs to go way beyond automotive metal bending. It identifies three areas where Michigan has a real competitive advantage against other states:

■ Advanced manufacturing, which means highly flexible, short run, nearly customized manufacturing capability, an extension of our existing base in regular manufacturing.

■ Information technology. Headquarters for Internet 2, the effort to produce the next version of the Internet, is in Ann Arbor. Everybody knows how fast the Internet is changing the entire world, and it only makes sense for Michigan to take fullest advantage of the IT capability now emerging right here.

■ An enormous chunk of life sciences research is now going on in our universities where, for example, the University of Michigan leads the nation in sponsored research, much of which is in things medical and biological. State government has pledged to plow \$60 million per year into life sciences initiatives now emerging at U-M, MSU and at the Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids. The potential here is awesome.

What MEDC wants to do get people focusing on how best to get there.

The report recognizes, for example, that the skills and intelligence of our work force are vital. But the perception of many Michigan's brightest young people is that there are "hotter" economies to work in and cooler places to be."

The report suggests some good ideas such as tax reductions and tuition support for college and technical school students and promotion of careers in technology at high schools. Using money from the tobacco lawsuit settlement, Gov. Engler has funded college scholarships at Michigan schools for kids who score well on every section of the 11th-grade MEAP test. This alone should encourage many bright kids to stay home for college and, hopefully, thereafter.

One idea, not mentioned in the MEDC report, has been kicking around for years: Establish a Michigan Math and Science Academy, where the brightest kids in the state would go to get really serious math and science training from the best teachers in the state. It could start as a summer program modeled on the music curriculum of Interlochen, but there's no reason it could not be year-round and residential. Certainly a state that proposes to spend billions on prisons could afford to spend a few millions on an institution



PHILIP POWER

that might keep our science and math whizzes here in Michigan.

Another area highlighted by the report is infrastructure. This begins with adequate roads and effective airports and ends with high bandwidth fiber optic connections into every home and business. Around a third of the Michigan business leaders surveyed in the MEDC report consider Michigan "in the dark ages" when it comes to technology.

A couple of years ago, I served as a member of the Michigan Information Technology Commission. Supported by a generous grant from the Kellogg Foundation, the Commission chewed on how best Michigan could become a world leader in IT.

One of the ideas that came out of our discussions was to create the equivalent of the Baldrige Award - a rigorous and much sought-after award given to companies that absolutely excel in their sector - for local communities that get their information technology infrastructure in order. Towns that, for instance, require developers to put fiber optic connections in all new homes and offered incentives for phone and cable companies to retrofit existing structures with fiber could be certified as "Technologically Friendly."

We reasoned that once folks understood what such designation could do for local jobs and economic development, natural competition between communities could spur improvements in infrastructure through the entire state without having to rely on the heavy hand of government regulation.

Reading the MEDC report is encouraging. It suggests the time has passed for hand-wringing about the state of our economy, and it provides focus for what needs to be done to grow a diversified and healthy economy into the coming millennium.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net.

Some election activities prompt concern

I want to thank the Farmington Observer for asking me to write a periodic column on current events and government issues. This initial column will comment on the recent local elections in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

First of all, let me congratulate the winners - Mayor Nancy Bates and council members Vicki Barnett, Barry Brickner and Chris McRae in Farmington Hills, and Joanne McShane, Bill Hartscock and Jim Mitchell in Farmington.

Both cities are in good hands and the newly-elected officials, working with carry-over council members will continue to move our two communities forward. At the same time I would like to thank challengers Steve Dibert in Farmington, and George Sarkisian, Paul Molin and Ron Oliverio in Farmington Hills for offering their candidacies so that the issues facing the two cities could get an airing during the election campaign.

Having said that, I am concerned about a couple of developments that took place during the campaign. One was the effort by Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus to funnel money from his special political action committee, or PAC, to some of the local candidates. To their credit, four of the candidates targeted for the PAC donations from Posthumus turned them down.

They were Bates, Hartscock, McShane and Mitchell. Our state representative made at least one contribution from his PAC. We don't know whether Oliverio received any such PAC money since his financial disclosure was filed four days late and it did not list any contributions other than his own personal money.

These PACs are becoming prevalent at the state and federal level among partisan officeholders. The money is often raised from lobbyists and other special interests. The holder of the PAC often uses the funds to try to influence partisan elections in districts other than his own.

The Posthumus gambit was probably the first time such funds were attempted to be used to influence local government elections which are non-partisan. Usually, local campaigns are financed by donations within the local community and from friends and relatives who may not live there.

Coming at a time when the mood of the Michigan Legislature is to try to erode as

GUEST COLUMNIST



ALDO VAGNOZZI

much local government home rule as we can get away with (House Bill 4777 is an example) the use of state elected officials' PAC money (outside special interest money) sets a dangerous precedent and can result in negatively impacting local governments and their ability to protect the quality of life of its residents.

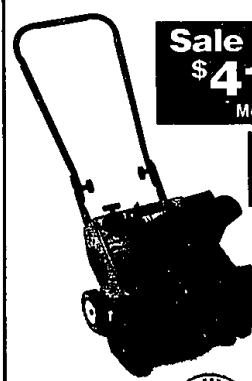
The second development that raises my concern is the way the Farmington Republican Club handled its endorsement process. While the Republican Club should be applauded for its involvement in the election and its sponsorship of two candidate forums, the way they treated one candidate in its endorsement procedure is to be questioned.

After the candidate apparently received enough support from the endorsement interview committee to merit the club's backing, the candidate was told there was no endorsement. Later, the candidate was assured by the club's chair that there had been an endorsement by the Republican organization. But when the Republican Club ran advertisements listing their endorsements that candidate's name was deleted from the list.

During my long years in politics my experience has been that once a candidate receives an endorsement that person is entitled to, and receives, all the support given to every other endorsed candidate, including a listing on slate cards or newspaper advertisements. I hope that in the future if any organization considers endorsement of candidates that the process be open and fair to all supported candidates.

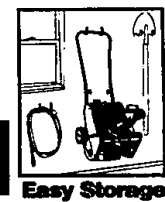
Aldo Vagnozzi, the former Farmington Hills mayor, also served as a longtime council member and school board member.

TORO Powerlite Snowthrower Our No.1 Selling Unit!



Sale Priced at \$419.95* Recoil Start Model 38172

Electric Start \$469.95* Model 38182



Big Performance Throws snow up to 25' Moves up to 1000 Lbs of snow per minute

Lightweight Easy to handle at only 38lbs.

No Payment/No Interest Until April 1st, 2000 To Qualified Buyers

Professional Dealer PLEDGE Knows what you want Competitive Prices Equipment Set-ups Transfer Service Technicians Complete Product Solutions Available Pick-up & Delivery Original Replacement Parts

ALBURN HILLS/OXFORD King Bros. 2351 Pontiac Rd./ 1000 S. Leeper Rd.	COMMERCE TWP. Wheels & Blades 8085 Commerce	DETROIT AAA Lawnmower 15042 Schaefer Rd.	DETROIT Pioneer Sales Inc. 8544 McCraw	FARMINGTON HILLS United Mower 28610 Grand River
FARMINGTON HILLS Wiegerts 39020 Grand River	GARDEN CITY Towne-Country 27740 Ford Rd.	LIVONIA Commercial 34955 Plymouth Rd.	LIVONIA HER Power Equip. 27430 Joy Rd.	LIVONIA WRIGHT'S HARDWARE 29130 W. 8 Mile Rd.
MADISON HTS. Southlane Outdoor Power Equipment 27400 John R.	MT. CLEMENS Stark's Service & Hardware 328 Cass Ave.	NORTHVILLE Mark's Outdoor Power Eq. 18925 Northville Rd.	PLYMOUTH Saxtons Garden Center Inc. 687 W. A. Arbor Trail	REDFORD George's Lawn Mower Sales 28118 Plymouth Rd.
RIVERVIEW Riverview Lawn & Snow Equipment 19839 Fort St.	ROYAL OAK Billings Feed Store 715 S. Main 19839 Fort St.	SOUTHFIELD Mr. Mowez of Southfield 28829 Greenfield	TROY Trevettow Ace Hardware 97 W. Long Lake Rd.	UTICA Wolagert 48001 Van Dyke
WATERFORD Quality Lawn Equipment 8395 Dixie Hwy.	WESTLAND Davies Engine & Mower 8813 Inlander Rd.	WESTLAND Wayne Lawn & Garden Center 2103 S. Wayne Rd.		

Websites - www.toro.com



Seniors get the care they need and the respect they deserve at Sunrise Assisted Living.

Call or visit a Sunrise Assisted Living community to meet our dedicated, caring staff and experience a truly home-like quality care alternative for seniors. Our residents benefit from:

- Wellness program supervised by licensed nursing staff
- 24-hour caregiving staff and security
- Individualized service plans to meet specific care needs of residents
- Incontinence management program
- Three delicious meals a day and snacks
- Activities, social programs and weekly excursions.
- Scheduled transportation
- A special "Reminiscence" program for those with Alzheimer's disease or other memory impairment.

Ann Arbor:
734-327-1350
(Now Open!)
2190 Ann Arbor-Saline Road
Ann Arbor

Ann Arbor North:
734-741-9500
(Information Center Open)
1901 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor

Farmington Hills North:
248-538-9200
(Models Now Open!)
29681 Middlebelt Road
Farmington Hills

Northville:
734-420-4000
(Info Center Open)
16100 Haggerty Road
Plymouth

Rochester:
248-601-3000
(Now Open!)
500 East University Drive
Rochester

SUNRISE ASSISTED LIVING

No appointment necessary. Walk-ins are welcome!