

25 years of service

Bill Hartsock deserves honor

Politicians in local communities come and go. During the time they are in office, the public may be aware of them, but in many cases their names don't become household words.

The one major exception is Bill Hartsock, who has served the city of Farmington for 25 years.

Hartsock has offered this community not only his time, energy and commitment, but more importantly, his heart.

There is no doubt that during his career Hartsock could have looked elsewhere on the political ladder for success and accolades. But he chose to stay in Farmington as a council member and mayor. The community is better for his decision.

The amiable and good-humored Hartsock is known for being accessible and for making clear, sound decisions that benefit the community - residents and businesses.

His character has always been beyond reproach and he has long been considered one of the valuable players in the community. When you ask him a question, you are sure to get a heartfelt answer and one based on a view of all sides of an issue. That's just what we have all come to expect from Hartsock.



Bill Hartsock

City officials and former mayors recently honored Hartsock for his years of service. The attendance of former mayors is a testament to Hartsock's hard work and well-earned reputation.

And in Hartsock's humble manner, he told the crowd that had gathered to pay him tribute that recognition for his service "is more a testament of the community than to the length of my service... I don't know if we've ever seen a community so supportive."

It's true. Farmington residents are pretty supportive of the community and the council. Indeed, there's a core group of council watchers who are just as committed to attending each meeting as the council is committed to its work.

There's a message when a community is committed and consistently votes a member back into office over 25 years. That message is clear: by an upstanding public servant who consistently takes the time to discover and study an issue; take the time to know and value each resident and business; and always keep the health of the community at heart.

Do what Hartsock has done and do it with as much enthusiasm and love for the community as he, and you will indeed be as equally considered a valuable leader.

Consulting job casts shadow

In the 11th hour, newly elected Oakland County Commissioner Terry Sever has brought a veil of suspicion over himself and perhaps in the long run, the Farmington Hills City Council.

Sever disclosed - the day after his victory over Democrat Deborah Goldberg of Farmington - that he is in fact working as a consultant for developer Steven Schafer of Hills-based Phoenix Land Development.

Sever said he approached Schafer after the August primary because he has ideas for how the city-owned Eleven Pines project should be developed. Sever, who said he had a feeling he would win the county commission seat, also admitted to the Observer that he has already accepted payment from Schafer - while he served on the city council.

If we walk the fine line of conflict of interest, it's probably true that Sever has none because projects with Schafer as the developer and Eleven Pines itself has not come before the city council since the August primary.

Again, that's walking a fine line. When you have served on a public body for years, as has Sever, you make plenty of contacts and have the inside track on many issues. Certainly, any smart business person would - after resigning from public office - make use of the contacts. But Sever has cut it all a bit too close.

In the end, if Schafer wins from the city council a proposal he plans to make - with Sever's help - for developing Eleven Pines, someone out there will question whether he was given an inside track. A shadow will be cast over Schafer and Sever, as well as Eleven Pines and the city council, who in the end will make a final decision on the project's development.

And if Schafer loses, the first comment - likely from other developers bidding on the project - will be that the loss came because

Sever was involved.

There is no winning here.

But far more important is the shadow his actions cast on himself as a public servant of integrity. That is a characteristic he has campaigned over the years, and again in the recent Oakland County Commission race.

If Sever had waited until his term was up on the city council and then sought out Schafer his actions may be viewed as that of a savvy businessman. But under the current circumstances, it does appear that Sever is bailing ship and taking what he can to help himself.

And we have not forgotten that Sever is having personal financial problems right now that include failure to pay his taxes, both on his home and his business. It's clear he has to make money to pay off his debts.

But taking on a job as a consultant for a developer, who in many cases has tested the patience and ignited the ire in certain areas of this community, shows desperation and far less dignity and class than we have come to expect from Sever, a veteran public servant whom we have acknowledged as hard working and fair.

As far as his bid for the Oakland County commission seat, we believe that Sever should have made it clear for whom he was working long before the day after the election. Voters deserved to know.

Indeed, Sever - who was expected to resign from the city council Monday - should get himself off the council fast. And we urge all those involved with the city to treat Sever - in his capacity as a developer's consultant - the same as any other developer or developer's staffer or consultant would be treated - and not more so.

All the more scrutiny will be required to ensure that any decision on Eleven Pines is on the up and up - for good of the community.

percent didn't vote for either gubernatorial candidate.

We report this to bring voters up to date, not to scoff at political pundits.

What is significant is that for the first time since 1983, all three branches of government - the governor, both branches of the Legislature and the Supreme Court - are under the control of one party.

U.S. voters have enjoyed playing tricks on the federal government, electing Democratic Congresses with Republican presidents Clinton and Bush, and giving President Clinton a Republican Congress after two years.

Michigan voters have played the same trick, giving Democrats full control for only one year from 1983-90 and giving Republicans very narrow margins for just two years of Engler's eight.

As of 1999, one party will be in charge in Lansing. Voters no longer can play tricks by electing a divided government. The next two years will be time for party responsibility.

It's time for party responsibility

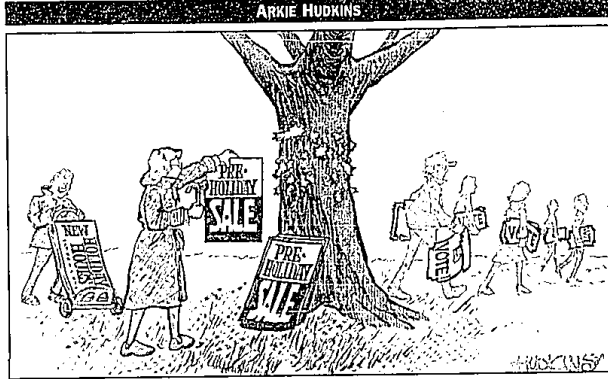
Nov. 3 was a bad day for political prophets. Bill Ballenger of Inside Michigan Politics fame predicted: "Higher education board - It should be an 8-0 Republican sweep, especially if (Gov. John) Engler reaches 65 percent, although SBE (State Board of Education) incumbent Barbara Roberts Mason may manage to survive the deluge. So might sitting U-M Regent Phil Power."

Steve Mitchell at Mitchell Research & Communications Inc. in East Lansing: "The Republicans will win all eight board seats this year."

Result: Republicans won five of eight posts. Although three Democrats won statewide education posts, Mason and Power weren't among them.

Mitchell: "I predict a voter turnout of 2.8 million, down slightly from the 3.1 million who voted in 1994."

Result: The vote for governor was 3.02 million, which is lower than the actual number who want to the polls since an estimated 3.5



LETTERS

Too hard to say no?

I just returned from the Oct. 20 meeting at Farmington Hills City Hall in which our sympathetic zoning board members granted a ridiculous 1,300-foot variance to the minimum 16,500-square-foot lot required to build a house in Pasadena Park Subdivision. Over 80 percent of subdivision residents opposed it.

Why was it approved? Some ZBA members call it a hardship. The former neighbor and resident said the family had paid taxes on this parcel of property for 40 years and should be able to sell it for a profit. It was also stated the mother was ill.

The truth is as I see it is a "self-inflicted" hardship or, better yet, self-inflicted "greed." This former resident owned several parcels surrounding him which he split and sold off throughout the years. Is it Pasadena Park residents' fault he made a bad business decision in splitting of these properties? Why did our former neighbor wait 40 years to do this? Is it because he didn't want to spoil his own view? Also when he sold his home, why didn't he include this property as part of the home it adjoins? Oh, I forgot he made \$50,000 by selling it separately.

I remember back in July 1993, the Farmington Hills ZBA granted a 20-foot height variance to a 6-foot maximum fence code to another Pasadena Park resident. Same reason - hardship. I've come to believe that our subdivision residents' majority vote doesn't count when an individual comes to you for a variance.

Well, folks, remember you can bend the rules with the Farmington Hills zoning board if you remember the magic word hardship. What a cop-out. Is it too hard for you to just say no?

Susan Keon
Farmington Hills

Not reported

Do believe that journalistic reporting is: who, what, where, why and when. An unbiased view of the news to put forth to your readers.

It is very unfortunate that the Farmington Observer often neglected to report fully to the readers in the recent election concerning the 11th District. (Including the article of Nov. 5, "Knollenberg has easy win.")

The who should have included Libertarian candidate Dick Gach. He earned the spot on the ticket just as Knollenberg and Reeds.

The what should have included that there was a third-party candidate, a Libertarian, on the ticket.

The where neglected to inform your readers that the 11th District had three candidates, not two, to select.

The why, to inform your readers that the Libertarian party would like to bring this

country back to a constitutionally limited republic and to not use taxpayer funding to run a campaign as the Republicans and Democrats have the luxury.

The when, Libertarian candidates work hard everyday for liberty for everyone in this country. This is often not reported.

I look forward to reading your newspaper for complete reporting on election and political matters.

Shari Schwartz
Farmington Hills

Congratulations

I would like to extend a belated thank you to the businesses who did not receive citations in the Oct. 2 Farmington Hills tobacco sting. The Farmington Hills Police Department conducted a tobacco compliance operation in which three teenagers, ages 16, 16 and 15, were sent into local businesses attempting to purchase cigarettes. Out of the 62 businesses visited, 18 of them received citations for selling to the minors. These citations resulted in a misdemeanor violation and the potential of up to \$500 fine and up to 90 days in jail.

Obviously, this means that the remaining 44 businesses did comply. I am grateful to any business owner who properly trains their employees to check ID, and to take their responsibility in this matter seriously.

The businesses who did comply on Oct. 2 are as follows: Andy's Market, Arbor Drugs (Middlebelt), Arbor Drugs (Orchard Lake), BJ's Liquor, Discount Drinks, F&M (both locations), Farmington Hills Wine & Liquor, Farmington Party Store, G&J Party Store, Grapevine Party Store, Jonna's Fine Wines, Kroger (Middlebelt), Last Stop Party Shoppe, Liebhich's Marathon, Marathon Oil (Orchard Lake), Marathon Oil (10 Mile), Meadow's Liquor & Wine, Mid-Nine Market, Mobil Oil (Orchard Lake and Middlebelt locations), Mr. B's Liquor, Orchard Place Market, Rite-Aid (13 Mile, 14 Mile and 12 Mile locations), 7-Eleven (10 Mile Farmington and Middlebelt locations), Shell Oil (Orchard Lake, 12 Mile, 10 Mile, Northwestern Highway and Grand River locations), Smokers Only, Smokes 'n More, Speedway (Orchard Lake), Sunoco (Grand River and Orchard Lake locations), Tom's Party Store, Total (12 Mile), Union 76 (Middlebelt), and the Vineyards Cafe.

I can't believe I'm the only citizen who cares about this problem. If you do care, why not take a moment to thank one of the businesses on this list... and encourage them to stay on this list in the future.

Cynthia Helisek
Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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 — Philip Power