

# Nuts and bolts

## Workshop is boon to candidates

The number of men and women who attended Saturday's spring campaign workshop, "Money, Organization & Media: The Nuts and Bolts of Running for Public Office," could mean a boon to local communities if these participants follow through and throw their hats in the political ring.

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Women Officials' Network, as well as the Farmington Observer, the workshop drew approximately 60 participants of diverse races, religions, ages and political leanings.

Participants got a taste of how to organize a winning campaign, how to finance a campaign and how to deal with the media - or how NOT to deal with the media.

Questions flowed to the speakers, who included Tim Skubick, a senior Capitol correspondent based in Lansing and anchor of "Off the Record," as well as Nancy Dingley, Oakland County commissioner, and various campaign managers. Farmington City Councilwoman JoAnne McShane also moderated a panel of speakers on how to organize a winning campaign.

We always encourage new blood in any political race. That's just a minimum requirement, however. Participants in Saturday's workshop are urged to take their interest and enthusiasm and apply it to reality.

It is one thing to throw your hat in the ring; it is another to know what you are talking about. While we encourage newcomers, we also expect that they have studied the issues confronting their particular community, that they have, indeed, attended meetings and met the players involved.

While the answer "I don't know" is fine initially to questions posed by the media and the public, continuing ignorance on issues doesn't wash for the long run. A good candidate is one who speaks his or her own mind, based on facts and understanding of a community and its issues.

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issue is hashed and rehashed, there's nothing more for that candidate to do. Communities and voters are made up of more than one issue, one concern. A bitter candidate leaves voters just as bitter and less likely to cast a ballot.

Because we live in an era of great mistrust of government, it is incumbent on candidates to be mindful of those feelings. Voters may be titillated by the negative nuance and the dirt candidates can dig up on each other. But that, too, is short-lived. Voters want public servants with substance, who know the community and their feelings and who will do what is best for that community.

Mailing out fliers and putting up lawn signs may be an expedient way of getting your name out there. But visiting voters is the only true way to understand the essence of a community and its residents.

The 60-some participants in Saturday's workshop are to be commended for their interest and their decision to take a risk. Politics is not easy and far too often the best candidate - someone who can make a positive impact on a community or public body - does not win.

We ask those who have taken the time to enter a political race to be knowledgeable about the community and public body to which they wish to be elected, but to also turn to voters and listen to concerns. Many a politician forgets that he or she is being elected to help constituents and the communities in which they live.

# National search is a must

Wayne County officials have a golden opportunity to do something right at Metro Airport - for a change. Unfortunately, loud hints coming from the county executive's office last week indicate just the opposite.

Alas, when it comes to the morass on Merriam otherwise known as Metro, disappointment more than shock describes our reaction to each turn of events.

We speak, of course, of the announced resignation of Dave Katz, the county airports director and top gun at Metro for the last two years. And we speak of the apparent "plan" (we use this term loosely) by Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara to quickly name a successor, without the benefit of a national search.

On Wednesday, Katz said he would be leaving May 1 to head up a golf center in Auburn Hills that he co-owns with several partners, including his boss (McNamara).

Katz's tenure has been at best a mixed bag of hits and misses. He can be credited for at least having enough public relations savvy to realize the airport's image has been anything but world class and for attempting to do something about it. Customer service agents are visible and helpful. Bathrooms and restaurants have been spruced up. But Metro still shows up near the bottom of satisfaction surveys among frequent travelers.

Even more troubling are continuing questions on the airport's internal workings, most notably how contracts are let. The issues of who gets airport contracts and the murky bidding process aren't going away soon, with construction of the new midfield terminal heading toward completion and an ongoing investigation by the state legislature.

Given the job as a political plum with no airport experience, Katz should perhaps be cut some slack. Neither was he helped by the dominance of Northwest Airlines as the airport's primary tenant, a situation that hopefully will begin to change once Northwest moves most of its gates to the new terminal. But, as long as Wayne County oversees the airport, the McNamara administration will get the credit or blame for what goes on there.

The Observer believes appointment of an interim airports director (the county also has jurisdiction over Willow Run Airport) with a

## METRO AIRPORT

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concurrent national search for someone with experience running a comparable facility makes sense. Some national experts and local lawmakers agree.

"There are a lot of very good people out there who would bring in an awful lot of good ideas," said Linda Green, vice president for the International Council of Airports, North American Region, a Washington-based trade organization.

"Our goal is to make Metro a world-class airport. It should not be a training ground at this point," said Wayne County Commissioner Kathleen Husk. Commission approval is required, whoever the executive chooses as airports director.

McNamara, though, seems set on finding a local replacement for Katz - quickly. Staffers and others associated with the executive said the process was well under way and the choice would be revealed in a matter of weeks or even days. It will be someone with airport experience they assure.

To which we ask: where? Flint? Willow Run? Tiny Mettetal in Canton Township? Hardly the kind of background befitting someone asked to keep tabs on some of the nation's busiest runways.

Worse yet, this hurry-up-and-get-it-approved approach smacks of another political payback in the works. Such a move certainly wouldn't be in the best interests of airport users or county taxpayers.

We can only hope the county commission asks tough questions - and hears the right answers - before signing off on a new director. Doing otherwise will further tarnish one of Wayne County's potential jewels.



## 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@oc.homecomm.net

### No balance

How disappointing to see that the Observer would publish an article, "Highmendorf change prompts complaint," on the front page, no less, based on an anonymous letter.

This article was published without any balanced information from those directly involved in the decision. What exactly are the standards for verifying information before it is published? Shame on you, I say.

To the individual who sent the anonymous letter, I ask, when was the last time you attended a Parent-Teacher Organization meeting? We have a responsibility to stay involved and informed in our children's schools. I am a Highmendorf parent, and I recognize the challenge put before our teachers to stay current with curriculum content and delivery, as well as developing enrichment classes which are relevant and effective for our students. Communication could have been more forthcoming in this case, however, I applaud the staff for problem solving their need for education and consultation with an innovative solution.

Our community has a good reputation for supporting the schools. If there are issues to be addressed, there are PTO organizations to act as liaisons with staff. Perhaps if we are more active there, we can improve the communication between home and school.

Susan Felten  
Farmington Hills

### More care, please

A couple of weeks ago, I was on my way back from the movies on a Saturday night and stopped at a local convenience store. While I was waiting in the car, I saw one car pull up on my right side and one pull up on my left side.

On the right there was a teenager in the car. On the left there was a young adult about 21 with a whole group of teenagers in the car. I saw the first teenager buy something from the store. Then I saw the young adult on the left go into the store and buy three 12-packs of beer. I think that the clerk at the store could have easily looked out the window and noticed that there was a group of underage drinkers in the car. Then I saw the man walk out and get back into the car and start passing the beer around in the car.

I am a young person with high morals when it comes to drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol. They could have been driving in the car and gotten into an accident and killed somebody or killed themselves.

I think that when it comes to the stores in Farmington, they should be more on the look out when selling alcohol to people who are underage because they could be putting somebody else's life in jeopardy.

Cheron Freeman  
Power Middle School

### Keep him on

Former Farmington Hills mayor Aldo Vagnozzi has fought for many years to improve Time-Warner's woeful cable TV service to Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Mr. Vagnozzi has sought to repair and replace aging equipment and to improve the number and quality of the communities' increasingly popular public access channels.

Time-Warner has resisted Vagnozzi's efforts at every step, while constantly raising subscriber rates and making enormous profits on its cable operations. It is now proposing to use its monopoly power to actually reduce public access and the money available to upgrade equipment. Not surprisingly, the cities adamantly oppose this.

Time-Warner's latest ploy plays for time by seeking to remove Mr. Vagnozzi from his seat as the city's appointee on the panel that will recommend a settlement of the long overdue franchise agreement.

So thank you, Aldo, for your long-standing, tireless efforts to improve cable service to all Farmington and Farmington Hills residents. I also applaud the Farmington and Farmington Hills' administrations and councils for standing by Mr. Vagnozzi's appointment to the panel in the hope of obtaining a fair and reasonable franchise agreement for cable subscribers. Perhaps in time, with Aldo's help, we will finally obtain the first-rate, modern fiber optic cable network this community desires and deserves.

Mark Steckloff  
Farmington Hills

# Farmington Observer

JOANNE MALISZEWSKI, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 248-477-5450, jmaliszewski@oc.homecomm.net  
PHIL BALLENGER, MANAGING EDITOR, 734-953-2149, wallbenger@oc.homecomm.net  
Pete KROEMER, ADVERTISING MANAGER, 734-953-2177, pkr@oc.homecomm.net  
TROY GIBSON, CIRCULATION MANAGER, 734-953-2115, tgibson@oc.homecomm.net  
RICH FROBELL, MARKETING DIRECTOR, 734-953-2150, rfr@oc.homecomm.net  
JIM JAMESON, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, 734-953-2180, jameson@oc.homecomm.net  
SUSAN RYAN, PUBLISHER, 734-953-2100, sryan@oc.homecomm.net  
BANKI DINGWALL, VP/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, 734-953-2252, bdingwall@oc.homecomm.net  
HOMETOWN COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK, INC.

PHILIP POWERS, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, JENNIFER TOWAR, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL, RICHARD ANSHAN, PRESIDENT

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— Philip Power