

POINTS OF VIEW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Great offense

It seems now that the Farmington Public School District is in the business of knowing what is best for your children, by usurping your role as a parent.

Flanders Elementary School and other elementary schools in the district instructed their elementary school teachers to relate the story about the school shooting near Flint to their students.

I, as a parent, had decided not to tell my fifth grader about the shooting. There was absolutely no reason. However, Farmington Public Schools decided they knew better and took that parental right away from me.

If my child had inadvertently heard about the shooting from other students, I would certainly have discussed it with her. I take great offense to the district, as a whole, for making this decision. It seems to me that discussing the shooting would only create anxiety among the students. The students might wonder now if their school is safe, where before the discussion the thought of being unsafe never crossed their minds.

Another part of the discussion at Flanders about the shooting also instructed the students to tell an adult when they know of anybody who has a gun. In the context of the discussion, I asked my child if she took that to mean only other kids. No, she took it to mean all people.

What is going on here? Do I smell infringement on our Second Amendment right to bear arms? This is very alarming and should not be tolerated. The public schools should be in the business of educating our children, not using them to fulfill a social agenda.

Melody Jaaks Farmington

Leave a legacy

Farmington and Farmington Hills are home to many great charitable and non-profit organizations that need our financial support, now and when we are gone.

There's an easy way for all of us to give this support. The Leave A Legacy campaign encourages people to leave something in their wills to their favorite non-profit or charitable organization. We can name a charity as a beneficiary of our life insurance

policy, IRA or 401k savings plan, or donate property after we are gone. This will help ensure that the Farmington and Farmington Hills community organizations we supported while we were alive will still be there after we are gone. We need not be wealthy to Leave A Legacy - just willing.

I encourage all residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills to contact their attorney, accountant, financial adviser or life insurance counselor to find out how easy, and important, it is to Leave A Legacy.

Daniel Turse Jr. Co-Chair, Wayne County Leave A Legacy; Director, Planned Giving, Wayne State University; resident, Farmington Hills

Congratulations

I have recently moved to the Farmington Area. Seeing the many facilities around the area makes this the perfect place to live. The population is very manageable and people in the area are very friendly.

The historic areas are also worth seeing. Places like the Civic Theatre and some of the old churches show us how well kept and upbeat this town is. I have already learned that I won't get bored very easily here.

The library facilities are excellent. To be able to go on the Internet, check out a book, or obtain information of any kind is great. The restaurant and other kinds of food service, which I have been to, are fantastically different from where I came from in England. Places like Starbucks, Dimitri's and the many pizza places are all nice places to stop and get a quick bite to eat.

The schools and activities that kids our age can get involved in are fabulous. I have yet to go ice skating and swimming. The after-school activities in all of the schools are also very good.

I would like to congratulate everyone who has helped the city to look attractive and all the friendly people who have made the city what it is.

Courtney Kramer Power Middle School

It's still not too late for cooperation on Eleven Pines

I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart. - Anne Frank

In a world where fathers try to sell their infant children and "friends" dump a dead heroin addict along the side of the road, it's hard to believe people really are good at heart.

In a country where a president can pass off a lie as semantic misinterpretation and where governments can keep fathers from their sons, in a state where a six-year-old believes you shoot the people who make you mad and the life he led seems as tragic as the one he took, it's hard to imagine anything or anyone is pure, untouched, uncompromised, trustworthy and honest.

By the time the news gets to us, all that's left is a vast, collective grief we forget all too soon and from which we don't ever seem to learn. Instead, we become hardened and cynical. With each new horrific revelation, we see less to believe in, more to doubt.

Is it any wonder the folks in neighborhoods surrounding the 11 Pines property at Halsted and 11 Mile roads in Farmington Hills find it difficult to trust what they're being told is the truth? If I've heard it once, I've heard it a hundred times, in murmured conversations and public pronouncements: "You're not giving us the whole story."

At last week's meeting hosted by the Council of Homeowners Associations, Hills city manager Steve Brock told a standing room only crowd the city wasn't keeping anything from people, that residents could request copies of any and all documents pertaining to environmental testing at 11 Pines. From behind me, I heard a chuckle and whispered comments.

In my experience, that's the standard response when anyone in government says, "Trust me." From Watergate to Filegate, we have been trained to believe our elected officials couldn't find the truth if it stood in front of them and screamed. Or if they know the truth, they'll spin it to make themselves look better.

Conspiracy theorists would have us believe conservatives bribed Monica Lewinsky to make a pass at President Clinton and the CIA runs vast drug operations designed to make agents rich. When you look through the haze of suspicion and pre-termination, you'll see what you want to see. A fingerprint on a file folder becomes incontrovertible proof. A casual conversation, secretly recorded, takes on Machiavellian proportions.

Folks who live around 11 Pines and other residents concerned about the city's liability don't



JONI HUBRED

have even that much. What they have is a portion of the environmental data collected on the site, which is plenty scary but not nearly enough information about the abandoned landfill and its impacts.

Frankly, I don't have much more than anyone else, except I don't have is the overlying suspicion that somebody's up to something.

Call me a Pollyanna, but I just don't believe anyone in Farmington Hills city government is deliberately hiding anything about 11 Pines. I'm a little reluctant to make that kind of statement, because some folks will believe I'm biased in favor of the city council. And they'll be missing the point. I'm not biased in favor of, or against, anyone. If you've got proof of wrongdoing, I'd like to see it. I've got a pretty good nose. I know when something stinks, and I know how to look for the source of the odor.

From what I've heard and seen in this case, the problem has been twofold. First, too many people don't read the local papers, watch the city's cable channel, attend homeowners' association and city meetings. When you own a home and pay taxes, those are all things you ought to be doing. This is your best shot at influencing government, and too few people take advantage of it until problems arise in their own backyards.

Second, officials in Hills government should have done more to publicize this project before they started the brownfield redevelopment process, perhaps even before they purchased the property. In this day and age, it is incomprehensible that someone somewhere at city hall didn't see something amiss when nobody showed up at a public hearing about building homes on a site that includes a contaminated landfill.

Officials admit they could have communicated better, and I really believe they're taking all this to heart. It's not easy to sit where they do and take criticism, suspicious accusations and angry complaints.

Residents should have paid more attention as well. I'm guessing from now on, they will.

The key to all of this will be maintaining civility, cooperation, a willingness to compromise and a common goal of doing what's best for everyone. It wouldn't hurt to salt the entire process with a belief that people really are good at heart.

This time, it isn't too late. Joni Hubred is a Farmington Observer staff writer who covers Farmington Hills.



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