

Farmington Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

Hugh Gallagher
MANAGING EDITOR
Sue Rosiek
PUBLISHER
Banks Dismann
VP/COO
Jeanne Tower
VP, EDITORIAL
Dick Agnien
PRESIDENT
Philip Power
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Both sides have strong, valid arguments on Baker Street

Both groups involved in the Baker Street Draperies rezoning issue had strong arguments on their side. The issue was resolved Tuesday night as the city council voted 4-1 in favor of rezoning.

A Farmington business will move into an older home on Oakland Street immediately off of Grand River in downtown Farmington.

Master plan zoning shows the house and the house just west can be either commercial or residential. Proponent Shelley Raymond had won parking variances from the zoning board, and site planning and a rezoning recommendation (for approval) from the planning commission.

We hope the city monitors the progress of the new business as the remodeling is done, then keeps a close eye on parking, zoning, and code enforcement once Baker Street Draperies opens. We would like to see this property retain an historic "old home" look well into the future.

Opponents include area residents concerned that Historic Farmington keep its residential character. One letter writer to the Observer called the area "unique and irreplaceable." Other opponents cited lowered property values, parking problems and the loss of intangibles like "charm" and the curb appeal the city has for visitors from out of town.

Indeed, in many communities, historic districts themselves have commercial value as tourist attractions, a point that organizations like the National Trust for Historic Preservation continually makes in its publications and restoration efforts.

On the other hand the city has to keep its word, as it were. The Master Plan is



Approved: Baker Street Draperies will be allowed to go into this home on Oakland Street.

something of a contract with all landholders in the city. It is a significant document that is referred to every time someone comes to city hall to check on a piece of property's zoning status.

No question the city council can change its mind, but that makes us nervous. Battles over land use can open the city to legal expenses and liabilities it cannot afford.

It is a lot easier to defend an existing zoning plan than one that changes under pressure — even if the pressure comes from, by all indications, articulate, concerned people with useful, cogent arguments.

This a fight that should have been waged by these good folks 24 months ago when the current master plan was being discussed.

We like it when the city keeps its word. We'd have fewer zoning battles if all local municipalities did.

Stopping by our own snowy woods in Farmington Hills

The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.

— Robert Frost

Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening

Two bedraggled cross-country skiers pulled off the snow into the paved lot at Heritage Park on New Year's Day about midnight.

Faces flushed by the cold, their clothes and boots had been brushed with a light dusting of snow. Ragged breaths steamed from them in puffs of white.

"How's the skiing?" I asked. "Great!" the man gaped. "It's a little icy, so it was fast."

"That's why I walk," I replied as I pulled on my gloves and walking cap. "It's colder, but it's slow."

Never one to hit break-neck speed, I paced myself along a cleared walkway around the Visitor's Center. It ended in a packed trail, which I pursued gingerly and wondered whether the snow would collapse around my tennis shoes.

I'd brought music, but after the tape ended, I turned the player off and left the headphones in place just to keep my ears warm. In this Cathedral of Nature, the noise seemed sacrilegious, like Marilyn Manson playing in St. Peter's Basilica.

As I walked toward the sledding hill, I could hear the echo of children's screams and laughter over the crunch of snow underfoot. A thinking, feeling person can't walk past a place like that without stopping to watch for a while, and so I did, remembering the silver and blue.

Decades ago. Or yesterday. Hard to tell.

Past the gathering of families and the knot of cars and minivans, I explored a small picnic area and climbed above it, to a rise blanketed with wind-eroded drifts. I walked along the razor's edge, feet sinking deeper and deeper until the hill dropped toward the pavement again.

Snow in my shoes. Cold, squishy socks. Legs prickling with the first stages of frostbite. Does it get better than this? I know what you're thinking. You think I'm nuts.

You've had it with this winter. The snow never seems to stop falling, the temperatures plummet to intolerable levels and everybody's cranky because they're stuck inside. I've thought that,



JONI HUBRED

too. And I'm from where it gets 10 times worse.

But as I explored this crown jewel of the Hills, I couldn't help thinking how blessed we all are to have these natural treasures, even when ice dams up our rooftops and snow piles up in the driveway.

Farmington Hills, a 38-square-mile city, has 628 acres of open space, about a third of which is Heritage Park. Some parks have been subdivided into soccer fields and baseball diamonds, others offer only the most rudimentary walking paths, allowing visitors to enjoy whatever nature hasn't been driven out by the city's almost complete development.

Those are the places where you'll find silence, not in the absence of sound, but in the quiet rush of wind through dried cattails or the trickle of water flowing beneath a thin sheet of melting ice. There, beauty lies in the last, bravest berries still clinging to a dormant vine and the perfect symmetry of bunny tracks dotting small drifts of snow.

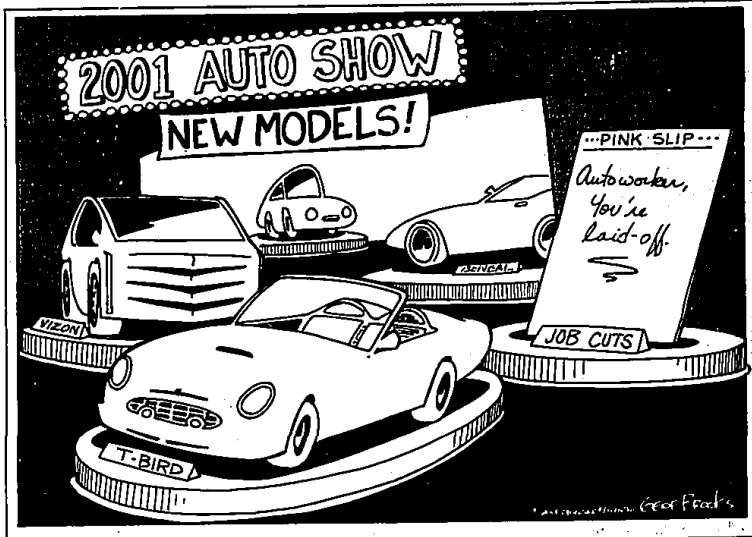
The only shadow darkening the brilliant hours I spent in Heritage Park lay in the occasional Styrofoam cup littered carelessly along the paths. I thought to myself, *These things are so small, whoever threw them may have not seen the trash cans or thought someone else would come by and pick them up.*

But that's no excuse, is it? Aren't we all His caretakers?

Farmington Hills doesn't have enough of these quiet havens, but neither does the world. In order to keep them, all of us have to respect the gifts our parks offer day in and day out — fresh air, clean water, magnificent views of God's finest work.

At most of all, that simple gift of silence and the comfort it affords.

Joni Hubred is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.



LETTERS

Off the mark

In response to Mr. (Aldo) Vagnozzi's recent letter, he is once again off the mark with his perception of the facts.

The case is not closed when the truth has been distorted. Example one is the alleged attempt to smear Mr. Vagnozzi during the campaign. If you check the facts, the information was not released until after the election, so as not to be used as a campaign issue.

Example two is that my letter quoted directly from the Observer article and Mr. Vagnozzi is calling this untrue. Wrong again. Example three is the fabrication of an issue never discussed until Mr. Vagnozzi put it in his letter. No one ever claimed that elected officials did or did not drive themselves to the airport. The issue was using a city fire department vehicle to pick up the Bates at the airport and then saying that this service was available to any Farmington Hills resident.

We applaud the fiscal responsibility of any city official who has a friend or relative drive them to and from the airport and thus save taxpayers dollars. To us, Vagnozzi's exact words, "those are the facts." How he can accuse Ron Oliverio and I of being untruthful is incomprehensible. And, as for his last line "for the truth shall set you free" it all depends if you know what the truth really is.

Bill Smith

Farmington Hills

Amazed

My wife and I have only been in the Farmington Hills area for a few months and have been amazed by the generosity of the community in supporting our efforts to provide holiday assistance to those of our neighbors who needed it.

We watched as families, individuals and businesses shared from their bounty by providing toys, clothing, food and gift certificates.

We marveled as over 1,600 senior citizens were visited in area nursing homes and given gifts.

We appreciate the stamina of all those who volunteered to stand outside in the extreme cold to help carry on a long standing Christmas tradition of a kettle bell-ringing.

We have much to be grateful for in this new year as we realize that without those volunteer workers who gave of their time to help make the holidays brighter for others, the Salvation Army would have been unable to meet their needs.

May God bless all of you with a happy and healthy new year.

Captains John and Rachel Klammer

Corps Officers

The Salvation Army

of Farmington Hills

CCW facts

"I will remove myself from the gun board rather than be required to comply with legislation signed by the governor changing the requirements for obtaining a permit to carry a concealed weapon." David Gorecki, prosecuting attorney for Oakland County, has been quoted in a number of newspapers stating this claim to personal, opinionated independence, and he now stands before his profession holding a some-

what ambiguous torch.

It was always my understanding that prosecuting attorneys are hired to uphold the law and not pick and choose which ones meet their own particular criteria. It was always my understanding that lawyers are trained to compile and evaluate evidence which leads them on the proper course.

In all these years, with a majority of our states having enacted CCW laws, there has not been one state whereby the incidence of crime increased. Our nearest neighbor, Macomb County, has the same conclusive statistics. There has been overwhelming evidence and countless studies to indicate otherwise. There has not been one shred of evidence to depict that the CCW laws were harmful where enacted.

Since Mr. Gorecki is trained in evaluating evidence and since he refuses to acknowledge the facts at hand, it is becoming extremely evident that the real problem is loss of power by the gun board. And that, of course, is not acceptable.

Unlike other countries, America's strength lies in its people. Its citizenry has found that government — whether it be on the national, state or local scene — cannot always defend it. Therefore, it is incumbent that Americans never lose their rights as individuals to self defense, and it is overwhelming data which concludes that this right of self defense is not a harmful entity in the pursuit of life, liberty and personal independence.

Samuel Adams stated, "The Constitution shall never be construed to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms." In their own writings patriots George Mason, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, amongst others, have reiterated this same dictum.

George M. Haddad

Franklin

Keep lame ducks

I just read Aldo Vagnozzi's column regarding the lame duck legislative session. Eliminating lame duck sessions is bad public policy. It would create a dead zone for two months where nothing could be accomplished, even in the event of an emergency. My preference is to have a legislature that always has the ability to be proactive — it's what we pay them to do. If Aldo dislikes the people in Lansing so much, why in the world did he ever want to serve in the State House?

Christopher M. Cummins

Farmington Hills

Love our home

In 1998, as newlyweds, we bought our first home at the corner of Farmington Road and Oakland Street, a beautiful 1910 square house with oak floors and moldings, tall ceilings and big porches. Growing up in the neighborhood and having baby-sat for the previous owners of the home, I had always loved the house. It was an exciting time for us. Never did we consider that someday houses on our street could become businesses. Oakland Street had looked the same for the 23 years I had lived in the neighborhood. Now, the city is planning to

rezone two properties on Oakland for commercial use. Needless-to-say, we are disillusioned and angry. We have made a major commitment to invest in, reside in and someday raise a family in this lovely, historic neighborhood. Rezoning neighboring houses for business use jeopardizes our financial future and even our commitment to remain in the home and neighborhood we love so much.

Katie and Kevin Stewart

Farmington

Meeting Jan. 18

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission will hold a public hearing (Jan. 18) for rezoning requests for a massive retail project at Orchard Lake and 14 Mile Road.

The city council will hold a public hearing for a planned unit development on the same property from the same proponents next Monday (Jan. 22). Farmington Hills really needs a regional shopping center at that intersection, right?

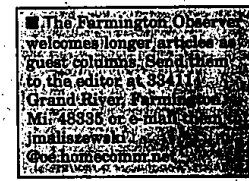
Let us carefully consider if the residents of Farmington Hills can afford the dubious honor of a Tel-12-sized mall in the south-east triangle of Orchard Lake, 14 Mile Road and Northwestern.

Quiz:
(1) How many vacant retail businesses are there along the Orchard Lake corridor between 12 Mile and 14 Mile Roads? The count is currently 30.
(2) Who's next?

Assuming our population is relatively stable then where is the demand coming from for "big box" development? Where is the independent cost benefit analysis for such a project?

Fran Valley

Farmington Hills,



Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

Mail:

Letters to the Editor

Farmington Observer

33411 Grand River

Farmington, MI 48335

E-Mail:

jmaliszewski@oe.hometowncomm.net

Fax:

248-477-5450

