

Farmington Observer

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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.

PUD is best bet for N'western center

Reasonable people can argue whether it's a good idea to put 650,000 square feet of commercial/retail space in the 14 Mile/Northwestern/Orchard Lake triangle in Farmington Hills.

City officials have been asked to balance the varied interests in the project, which is no easy task. Residents in surrounding subdivisions are concerned about traffic, noise and stormwater drainage, as well as the continued paving of what little open space is left in their community.

Homeowners adjacent to the site have spent 10 years begging for some relief from the tide of commercial development creeping steadily along the Northwestern corridor. While they've waited as proposals after proposal have fallen by the wayside, even utility companies hesitate to update their equipment, because they don't want to invest in infrastructure that will only be torn up by new development.

Without question, Hills residents have had their say. In countless meetings throughout the checked history of this property, public hearings have stretched long into the night.

We have serious doubts as to whether this tentative alliance of property owners and developers will survive. At least one neighboring property owner hasn't signed on and everyone still has to come to terms with a complex Planned Unit Development agreement.

Citizens have good reason to be suspicious of such agreements. They are, by nature, non-specific as to design details.

However, they also give the city the best possible control over the entire project. Officials can negotiate for a say in aspects like architectural control, landscaping and traffic mitigation.

And residents have made it clear they don't want "piecemeal" development; this PUD allows the 119 parcels to be developed as a whole.

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oped as a whole, in three phases.

It should also be noted that the only proposals brought forward for this project over the past 10 years have been commercial. The last one, a "life-style center" with some residential development, sounded good in theory, but didn't work in practice.

And why would it? It's tough to sell people on the idea of living in the heart of a commercial center.

Northwestern Highway, 14 Mile and Orchard Lake Roads are major thoroughfares, places where this kind of development belongs. This acreage, designated in the Master Plan as a Special Planning Area, deserves special treatment.

For all of its vague promises, the PUD process is the best possible way to get it.

Share stories of diversity

Editor's note: The following remarks were delivered at Mercy High School during the recent candlelight vigil and march honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Karen Bolen is co-chair of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Multicultural Community Council.

We are here to honor and encourage unity of humankind, the unity of all Americans, and the community oneness we represent tonight in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

We honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. because he gave his life to the Civil Rights Movement from which we all benefit. And we meet here tonight to honor all of Dr. King's comrades who preceded him, those who walked beside him, and those who still work today to develop unity of humankind.

Due to Dr. King and many other devoted civil rights soldiers, laws enacted in the latter half of the previous one hundred years laid much of the groundwork for us to develop the true equality that we so well written in our great country's founding documents, but as we know, a reality for all of our founding mothers and fathers.

The laws made a statement and many in positions of power have taken notice and have rethought the way they do business. Others, however, to this day, continue to ignore human rights and do business in ways not honoring the equality of human beings and still some others continue to commit grievous hate crimes. But most Americans respect the law. I believe most Americans are glad about our societal progress. I believe most Americans are proud we are the only free nation on earth that we have created by legally ensuring equality for all of our citizens.

This progress, these thoughts are ones to celebrate. Freedom speaks.

However, we need to continue to make sure laws are followed. But we cannot rely only on legislation. Human relationships cannot be legislated. We have to rethink our society. You cannot go in one direction for hundreds of years and say we have turned in another direction and say the problem is solved.

America is a big ship to turn around. For hundreds of years we institutionalized wrongs and so often these wrongs could not voice their opinions, for fear of death or at least more exclusion than they already experienced. There has to be a time period where we share and heal as we make our turnaround.

We are in the midst of that time. We need to have common understanding of the problems created by past injustices before we can solve them. Much of the discussion so far has been via the media. We will never solve our social ills - the

disparity of housing, education, health issues, economics and all of their ramifications if we cannot come to a common understanding of who we are, what our problems are, and how we got here.

You may be thinking, how are Farmington Hills and Farmington affected? We have a community where the students in our schools speak 85 languages and where we have racial diversity. Most residents co-exist without many problems. That is true and once again, we should celebrate.

I was raised in Farmington Hills and so was my husband. We both graduated from Farmington Public Schools. We are now raising our children in this community, as are a number of our friends who also grew up here.

The fact is our community. It is a better community now because my children and our friends' children have the advantage of living racial and cultural diversity.

The children in our community will be well-prepared to live and work in the diverse world we have become. Their experiences with people of different cultures and races as young children are far beyond any their parents and grandparents experienced.

But, we community members still need to share our histories. The Multicultural Council has existed for 11 years and we have tried to lead the way in the community for sharing our backgrounds.

We need to share our stories more. We should enjoy our community's achievement, but we need to build on it and continue to shine as an example for other communities.

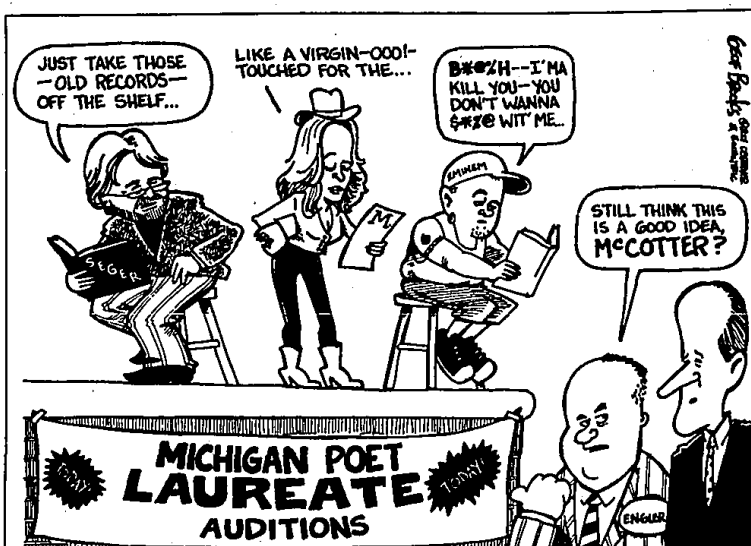
We need to be inclusive in leadership opportunities and we need to train existing workforces to embrace different cultures. We should also venture outside of Farmington and Farmington Hills to help our regional community.

A song I've heard sung numerous times by choir throughout Farmington Hills, entitled "One Small Voice," reminds me of our community. As the song progresses it says "one small voice can teach the world a song."

Our community can continue to embrace our differences and seek the unity that we all desire to be one example for all Americans so that we help our nation realize what was written in our founding documents more than several hundred years ago.

Our nation will then be able to teach the world a song: one of respect for diversity and unity in a great democracy, a song that has been taught by people from many other countries in the world.

When we are truly one country indivisible with liberty and justice for all, we will be free at last!



LETTERS

■ Take the MEAP

MEAP -- It is not a ratings game. Regardless of the underreporting of the MEAP results or what you would like to believe about the MEAP, there are two simple facts: It tests an individual student's ability to choose the correct answer to questions on material that he should know; and, for over a decade, it has been effectively used by some schools to correct the learning deficiencies of the students who took the test and to adjust the building portfolio of instruction to prevent the recurrence of the deficiencies in future students. This would not be true if the MEAP were as flawed or inconsequential as some would like to believe or would like you to believe.

The variation in MEAP results between buildings and the elementary and secondary levels identify educational issues and inequities that, to address and fix, need to be acknowledged and understood at the community, district, building, and classroom level. Playing the MEAP results as a ratings game does not contribute to the correction of these problems. Treating the MEAP as a flawed or meaningless test or to excuse your student from taking the test does not contribute to the correction of these problems.

Your expectation should be 100-percent proficiency on the MEAP within the margin of error of a given year's test peculiarities and human error of the students taking the test. Where that performance level doesn't exist, a problem does exist. Colleges and universities have added MEAP-style testing to their application process and as a prerequisite for their introductory courses.

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David L. York
Farmington Hills

■ Greenspan is wrong

The United States is not headed for a recession, nor are we experiencing the beginning of one now.

We are experiencing an economic slowdown triggered by one man, Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve. Greenspan raised the Federal Reserve interest rates a couple too many times and he can lower those rates at the drop of a hat.

It seems he did not take into account that most Americans are now invested in the stock market, either directly or in mutual funds. The stock market is an emotional animal, greatly sensitive and subject to rumors and innuendoes rather than financial logic and fact.

Enormous numbers of stocks, billions daily, are traded online at the drop of a hat by speculators hoping to make fast money at the slightest movement of stock prices either up or down. It isn't like the old days when stocks could be traded according to corporate earnings and price/earnings ratios. Those days are over.

Stock price volatility is probably here to stay for a long time.

When stock prices tumble as fast as they do now, with so many Americans invested, it naturally scares investors who see their portfolio values dwindle

ding 20, 30, 40 percent or more in just a few months.

So they simply spend less for goods and services, not knowing if they will ever recover their losses. Our economy is in good shape, low unemployment, people have money saved and business is good.

But because of the extreme sensitivity to Federal Reserve interest rates, which have risen too fast recently, Alan Greenspan has single-handedly triggered the current recession scare.

And he can turn it around by admitting he made some mistakes and begin lowering Federal Reserve interest rates immediately.

I personally like President-elect Bush and voted for him, but I do not like his tax cut plan. I think Gore's plan of paying down the federal debt was the more sensible plan.

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

■ Scouts correct

The letter by Andy Novak in the Farmington Observer on Dec. 28 should evoke a great many responses from those in the community that know better. To suggest that the Scouts in their many years have taken a position on a particular social issue that did not please all the people can be tolerated, condoned, if not appreciated by the majority.

To rant and rave that the Scouts are a group that "denies someone is a person," are encouraged to "hate in the name of God and the morals and values simply because you don't believe in the same God," "to preach tolerance while showing blatant and unquenchable hatred," "to deny other people's God for the benefit of your own," may identify a group or two in our Country, but doesn't come close to identifying the Scouts' tenets or behavior. The language used by the writer is vicious.

I have never known a Scout who thought and acted as the writer suggests, have never known anyone who knew anyone who knew of such Scout behavior. It is surprising that an Observer newspaper would publish the misinformation at best, lies at the worst, that writer Novak put to paper.

Millions consider the Scouts one of the finest organizations in the country. The vilification, vilence, villainy, virulence, the vitriol of Novak's opinions are not only shameful, but so far from the truth that the publication of such bombast leaves many of us aghast. Entitled to one's opinion? Yes, always. It seems the writer has a cross to bear. Yet even though he believes the Scouts have no right to affiliation, to choose close association, even though the Court has said they do, he does report that the Scouts have no use for association with unmarried heterosexual partners.

It's the behavior, (complete with your favorite deleterious, adjective). The writer is correct when he says the Scouts are discriminatory.

What he seems to misunderstand is that discrimination is good, it's beautiful, it's the only reasonable way to live one's life. A man discriminates as to what he eats each day. He chooses carefully what he wears. Most importantly, he chooses his friends, discriminating. He displays acute discrimination when choosing a lady to marry. Choosing friends who don't mean as much as a list of 20 he has met in the last week that fails to meet his

qualifications for friendship. And so discrimination is good. Only the profound idiot would fail to understand.

Discrimination can be bad when a word or deed hurts another person. It is wrong. The Scouts, in contradiction to the writer's inference, do not create in conversations against homosexual behavior. They don't take to the dais to suggest an anti-homosexual ministry. They wish to be left alone, as they leave others to their preferences. It is wrong to deny the Scouts their right to affiliation. So says the Court. So says the people.

Nell Goodred,
Livonia

■ Staebler remembered

My experiences in the Democratic Party of Michigan bear out Phil Power's tribute to Nell Staebler (Orderly Michigan recount reflects Staebler's legacy, Dec. 21). I participated with him and others in many political activities, including our joint campaign for U.S. Congress in 1982.

I was the 18th District Democratic nominee. The 18th covered all of Oakland County -- very Republican. For me, it was a warm-up for 1984. We Democrats hoped to re-elect Gov. Swainson in 1982 and in 1983 to hook my area in Oakland to part of Macomb to assure a safe seat for a Democrat in the new 19th District. Romney won and my district was made even more Republican. I did not run again.

I was inspired then and now by his integrity and deep commitment to rational discourse in all matters. I gave a eulogy at the Birmingham Unitarian Church the Sunday after his death.

George J. Fulkerson
Bloomfield Hills

■ The Farmington Observer welcomes longer articles as guest columns. Send them to the editor at 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI. 48335 or e-mail them to jhubred@oe.homecomm.net.

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full 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:
jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

Fax:
248-477-9722

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