

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.

Youth council ensures all voices will be heard

It's official: Young people have a voice in Farmington Hills local government.

City council members passed an ordinance Monday night that will establish "Youth Councils," charged with bringing their views on issues large and small to their adult counterparts. The City of Farmington probably won't be far behind, having politely deferred consideration because the movement to establish the councils began in Farmington Hills.

First, let us say that kind of cooperation and attention to protocol is nothing short of refreshing in our dog-eat-dog world. It doesn't really seem to matter much who gets top billing when these two cities put their heads together, so long as the job gets done. If they're carping about ego-based issues in private — and we don't believe they are — both communities and the school district have publicly shown a remarkable talent for working as a team, especially on issues as important as this.

Nothing is more critical than the careful management of a community's resources, and our youth have to be considered a most valued treasure. Their energy, dedication, fresh and vigorous approach to life sheds a different kind of light on the decisions for which city officials are responsible.

This ordinance also accomplishes the equally important feat of showing young people how important it is to take an active part in their communities. The ordinance memorializes the need for their contributions. The Youth Council is charged with the authority and responsibility of making recommendations to the City — telling kids in no uncertain terms their voices are as

important as anyone else's.

George Bernard Shaw was wrong when he said, "Youth is wasted on the young." The truth is, too many adults waste the talent and energy young people have to offer by making assumptions about them or simply brushing them aside.

After our recent article about the dangers of "club" and "rave" drugs, we received a letter from a young person who had a lot to say about rave parties themselves. The teen pointed out that

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not all young people who attend raves take drugs; some just enjoy the trappings — like techno music, light sticks and other toys.

While she didn't want it published, we appreciate that kind of feedback from kids and encourage others to do the same. No newspaper's coverage of youth issues is complete without the youth themselves.

The same is true with local government. No city is complete without representation of and from all of its citizens, even those who aren't quite old enough to vote.

We urge the City of Farmington to end what began in the Hills, a movement to ensure every voice, no matter how small, is heard.

Aberthoght: Lots of kids are looking forward to this year's Fishing Derby, sponsored by the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, as well as select local businesses. Held on April 28 at Shawnee Park in Farmington, the event allows kids a little guaranteed success, as the river is fenced off and about 600 fish are dumped into that area. Kudos to both communities for giving parents and children an opportunity to share this entertaining and enjoyable activity. And shame on those adults who try to horn in on the action with the idea of filling their freezers off the eaged bounty. We urge anyone who sees an adult breaking the rules to help organizers by speaking up or reporting the unsportsmanlike conduct.

Time for the 'odometer tax' concept is never

Few issues cause as much rancor among Michigan residents as the condition of our state's highways. It's almost become a lesser-of-two-evils type of question: Which do you despise more, orange barrels or potholes?

Even given the tremendous need for the funds necessary to bring our system of state and county highways up to date, the recent talk of an odometer tax levied against drivers on state roads seems like one of the silliest notions to come out of Lansing in a long time.

In case you missed news coverage of the proposed odometer tax, here's how it would work: The state Department of Transportation would somehow create its own global positioning satellite network, which would then track the number of miles driven by each vehicle and calculate a tax based on those miles.

So far, state officials have agreed to contribute \$20,000 toward a \$700,000, two-year study of the concept. The University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota that seeks to identify alternative road funding sources. Eight other states are participating in the study.

Currently, state residents pay 19 cents tax on each gallon of gasoline they buy, which raises \$943 million for the state's roads. That's admittedly a small portion of the state's \$1.5 billion road budget.

The idea of taxing people an equitable amount for the services they use is a fair one. But with the gasoline tax already in place, those who drive more frequently than others do pay a greater share — especially persons who drive gas-guzzling SUVs and other vehicles that get poor gas mileage.

No, the concept of being creative to generate more tax dollars for roads is fine on the face of it. It's the Big Brother mentality behind an odometer tax that should cause everyone to take pause.

There's no doubt that between the government and countless communication businesses, the technology exists to track movement across the globe or, at the least, across the United States. What with cell phones and pagers and the like,

it's probably not all too difficult to keep tabs on many people right now.

But just how do government officials plan on equipping vehicles with a device that would allow such tracking? Sure, a microchip could easily be installed that would send a signal to the GPS network. The question is, who does the installation and, more importantly, who pays for it?

It would be a giant leap to ask automakers to become partners in such a venture. Countless other mandates have emanated from the government over the years concerning safety and energy conservation issues. Of course, those costs have been simply passed on to the consumer.

And who could forget the emissions test that was a requirement for vehicles in southeastern Michigan in order to obtain a new automobile registration each year? For several years, drivers were forced to take the time and expense to get a "D-Bloomfield Township" ordering MDOT to spend no more money on the program. Senators accepted the amendment without opposition before passing the budget proposal in a 35-0 vote.

We've told our legislators time and again that the state's road network should be a top priority. Anything less attracts from Michigan's ability to attract new residents and businesses.

But an odometer tax is a concept whose time is never. State residents are taxed heavily enough when it comes to living out the credo of the Motor City.



LETTERS

Level playing field

Growing up in the metro Detroit area introduced me to many cultures. I grew up with many African-American friends and even attended a school in a predominantly black neighborhood.

I observed Black History Month with the rest of my school and considered myself aware of racial issues, but then I started the college process. I thought that based on my GPA and ACT/SAT scores, that would determine if you got in a school or not.

Yet when many of my friends with high respectable scores attempted to get into big schools like the University of Michigan and others, they were not accepted. Why not? Because of affirmative action. The schools had found other non-white applicants that have lower GPAs but, because of their ethnicity, they were accepted.

I understand that colleges and universities desire to make their campuses culturally diverse, yet the extremes taken to do so sometimes fall out of line. Schools should accept based on grade point and ACT/SAT scores strictly, but that will not happen. Minorities claim that they are in a cultural void. This is a way for them to get out of it. True, so why not just try hard in school in the first place and be accepted on a level playing field?

Affirmative action is an excellent idea of trying to help falling minorities rise out of the rubble, yet when this idea is in fact discriminating against other majority races, it is contradicting itself.

Sarah Bucy
Farmington Hills

Intelligent design

Talk about folly! On Thursday, March 28, Phil Power wrote an editorial discrediting state Rep. Robert Goselin, R-Troy, and his efforts to amend the science standards in the state model school code.

As someone who is supposedly interested in disseminating truth in the public media and education, Mr. Power is woefully off course in publicly condemning a legitimate scientific theory and encouraging others to join in.

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Even with the most conservative numbers, the mathematical probability that humans could have evolved by random mutation is a statistical impossibility. The argument of irreducible complexity from microbiology argues convincingly that cells, organs and bio-

logical systems cannot have been created by the process of evolution. They cannot have been formed by mutation, or genetic change, at a time. If even one part of the whole is missing or different, the entire thing cannot function in any capacity and no evolutionary path could, therefore, have led to it.

There are many other serious problems with the theory of evolution, such as the apparent extreme proliferation of complex species in fossil form in the Cambrian era, and the question of how life can evolve from nonliving substances at all.

This is why evolution remains a theory, which by definition, is unproven. It should be presented along with other competing scientific theories of our origins, such as the plausible and elegant one of intelligent design.

Holly Giannola
Farmington

Reverse the trend

It was distressing to read James Nash's article, "New self-centered attitude will bring the nation down," because its intelligence is blowing into the depths of citizen indifference, laziness and lack of understanding.

Isn't it remarkable that there is no public outcry at the very public reports of the new White House actions to despoil our water, atmosphere, environment; to gift the wealthy, the banks and credit carders. On and on, all telling us "You're gonna do nothing, so we'll do as we please." As a lawyer (retired), I was disgusted by the five justices who sold the U.S. Supreme Court into the sewer of politics, but I can understand the public not comprehending what this will mean.

As to the practical matters such as drinking arsenic, it would be wonderful to see our citizens join in demonstrations, town halls, some public outcry to force the lobbyists' playpals in Congress to prevent and reverse the anti-citizen program of the White House. That's just a nonsense dream of mine.

Albert Best
Farmington Hills

Rules take kids back

The Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education (MDE/OSE) gave itself seven long years to formulate their Proposed Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education.

They are now giving the rest of us, the taxpayers, a six-week public comment period. The MDE/OSE decided to throw out most of the rules that have been relied on to regulate special education in Michigan. This will most likely have a negative effect on parents, advocates, teachers and most of all... the children.

I suspect that Intermediate School Districts will be weakening their plans for special education to compensate for the possible further inadequate funding that these proposed rules indicate. Parents and advocates will be forced to become better familiar with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). I suspect that within the next few years, we will see a steady increase in complaints, mediations and due process hearings. The responsibility of enforcing Federal law is being shifted from the state level down to the individual Education Plan Team meeting, involving the parents.

The philosophy behind these proposed rules is a good one... to no longer service a child based on his/her "label." IDEA states that special education is specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of the child. The problem comes in when what is "appropriate" for a child is left to argument.

Student/teacher ratio will now be left up to the Intermediate School District Plan or more disturbing and most probably, teacher contract.

Now let's look at Michigan who blames its non-compliance on the federal government. Governor Engler, could you please fill us all in on that billion dollar pot of educational funds that you won't let anyone touch?

Next, the Intermediate School Districts who blame the state for lack of funding for programs. Are the Intermediate School Districts forgetting that special education funding is mandated to come from more than one place?

In some instances, we, too, would have to look at the local school district. They say, "All we get is whatever trickles down from the Intermediate School District." So... here's the question: Who's pointing the finger at the child? Of course, no one is. Yet, children with disabilities are the ones paying the price for the failure of the system.

The Proposed Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education are a giant step backwards. Michigan is one of six states that the National Council on Disability has found to be non-compliant in every area of Federal law. Please visit <http://www.igonline.net/lapeerfoundation/> for more information and to learn what you can do. The Public Comment Period ends on April 16, 2001.

Kim Murphy
President, Lapeer Foundation
for Special Learning

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.hometown.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.

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