

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.

Bark up the right tree

Some might argue there are larger issues in Farmington Hills than whether to create a dog park.

But this is no tempest in a doggie dish. The problem created by irresponsible pet owners who leave behind little presents at North Farmington High School's athletic fields is plenty serious.

Pet owners say they have no choice but to use the open fields, because the city of Farmington Hills prohibits dogs in all its parks. Members of Parks for Urban Pups, who use the North Farmington fields and advocate for dog parks, say they're responsible but can't be expected to police the actions of those who are not. City officials don't want the liability and expense of a dog park, which would require staffing to make sure all the doggie doo is picked up and could embroil them in a lawsuit should someone be injured on the property.

School district officials want to be "good neighbors," so they haven't actively chased off dog owners. But the first concern has to be the safety of the students they serve.

Board president Cathy Webb told us, "I would have concerns in an area specified for kids to be running. It's unsanitary and unhealthy to have dog droppings there."

Anyone who has ever tried to clean up after a dog knows it isn't always a completely clean experience. Residue clings to blades of grass. And there are things dogs do that can't be picked up.

We don't want to belabor the more disgusting aspects of this issue, but the fact

is, people have no business letting their dogs "go" on athletic fields used by young people and adults. It's simply a matter of common sense and common courtesy.

Creating a place where people can let their dogs run, a place that isn't used regularly by athletes young and old, also seems to us a matter of common sense. The city of Farmington Hills has all the ingredients for a successful dog park — more than 620 acres of park land, a dedicated cadre of dog lovers ready and willing to volunteer and a reputation for providing its residents with high-quality amenities.

The burden shouldn't fall entirely on the city, however.

Local pet supply stores and dedicated dog owners could team up for some kind of promotion that would benefit them both. Volunteers could form a clean-up crew to police the park on a regular basis. The city could even charge dog owners a small annual fee to defray costs.

The school district could help by making it very clear that their property is not to be used as an informal dog park. The district's good neighbors will understand.

Our point is, whatever obstacles stand in the way can be overcome with a little teamwork and a lot less resistance by the majority of our elected officials.

Maybe it's wrong for pet owners to walk their dogs at North Farmington athletic fields, but it's also wrong for officials to know that and do nothing about it.

Can't we all get along?

Today, the Meinke family, operators of Tree House for Earth's Children on Mooney, is expected to be in court to defend against four citations issued by the City of Farmington. It's the second time the parties have met before a judge, and we really hope it's the last.

Cities get reputations for being out of touch with residents just this way, when everybody digs in their heels. Some have alleged the Tree House has been singled out for attention because the business is a little off the beaten path — offering organic products, massages and a holistic philosophy.

We don't believe anybody's picking on the Meinkes.

No matter how benign their intent, the family violated city ordinances by putting up concrete block planters without getting their plans approved. The Meinkes were told they could submit revised plans, but never did. They don't think there's anything wrong with what they're doing.

Likewise, city officials believe there's nothing wrong with asking a business owner to comply with city ordinances. They just want the Meinkes to do things their way — and therein lies the rub.

Somewhere along the line, this got to be more about personalities than issues, more about power than what's right.

In the weeks since the first ticket was issued, neither side has gone the extra mile. Now there are four more tickets.

The Meinkes' ideas for improvements shouldn't be dismissed out of hand, just because they don't fit with the letter of the law. City officials can find a position that addresses health and safety issues, while giving the Meinkes some creative freedom.

The family must be prepared to compromise as well. We all have to live with rules we don't like.

We know this: Issuing more tickets, no matter whether they were justified, did absolutely nothing to help bridge the gap between the city and these citizens.

Time for water action

All you need to understand about why water use has become an issue for our communities is this:

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department pumps water to nearly 3 million suburban residents, three times the population of its city customer-base. Its service area covers 1,011 square miles, 86 percent of which fall outside Detroit limits.

It does this through nearly 1,800 miles of water mains, 78 percent of them inside Detroit limits. Treated water from the Detroit River and Lake Huron is pumped as far north as 52 Mile Road in Inlay City and as far west as Livingston County's Augusta Township.

(Suburban municipalities are responsible for maintenance of local water mains and some counties, like Washtenaw, run their own pumping stations and treatment plants.)

Pretty simple, huh? Now add in a summer dry spell, aging infrastructure in the city and inner suburbs, suburban sprawl. The only thing left to ponder is what took so long for the water department to burst.

We note that the water department is planning \$4.3 billion in new projects and renovations during the next five years — including the installation of new filters at the Lake Huron pumping station that will increase its capacity by a third. But we wonder if that will be enough to push water further and faster to outlying communities.

While numbers make the problem easy enough to grasp, the solution is anything but simple. Money, politics and regional cooperation — never a strong suit in metro Detroit — all play major roles. Let's start out by saying we're not

advocating a takeover of the water department. The water distribution system in southeast Michigan has been in place for more than 150 years and has won high marks for quality and efficiency.

But the Observer believes some suburban representation on a water board that makes decisions for an eight-county region is a good starting point. It's also a key element for building support for new revenue streams — road tax increases — to pay for improvements in the system.

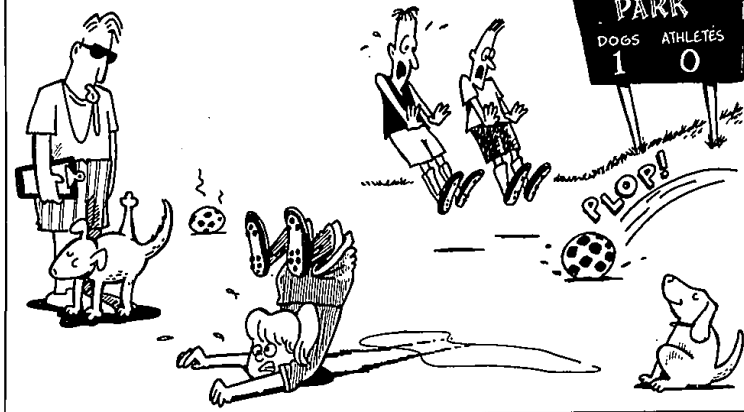
Sounds to us like a good topic for a Big Four (chiefs from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties and the mayor of Detroit) powwow after the November election.

The sprawl factor needs to be addressed — not just as it relates to water use. The reality, though, is that people will always seek affordable housing and more space. For many, short commuting time isn't a deterrent, especially when the majority these days are going from suburb to suburb or even to outer counties like Livingston and Genesee.

Maintaining a supply of good, clean water and satisfactory water pressure are more than just conveniences. It's a health and safety issue second to none. Just ask the people in Wixom who lost their apartments last year when firefighters had trouble hooking up to an adequate hydrant; or the folks in Garden City using swimming pool water to flush their toilets.

Now is the time for action — before outside watering restrictions turn into something more serious.

Dear Books
Dear Farmington Observer



LETTERS

■ Public trust

Come on, State Rep. (Andrew) Raczakowski, your claim to be concerned about your constituents flies in the face of what you are planning to do: abandon the residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills by moving to another community so you can run for Congress.

The moment you move out of Farmington Hills and Farmington, your seat is automatically declared vacant, according to state law. At this point, the voters of Farmington and Farmington Hills will lose their representation in the state house. Thus, your avowed concern for your constituents does not include the nearly 95,000 residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills who could be left for months without representation depending on whether a special election is called by the governor to fill the vacancy you created.

The fact that your Republican colleagues in the legislature would not create a congressional seat you can run for is no reason to punish the people of Farmington and Farmington Hills. You have already shortchanged our district by spending time outside of it and using your present position to raise money for a purpose that would not serve our two communities.

A candidate who runs for office and is elected is obligated to serve for the full term of that office unless he dies or is otherwise incapacitated. That is not the case with Rep. Raczakowski. Any move he makes to leave his district voluntarily to run for another office is a betrayal of the public trust.

Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills

■ CCW fears

The hysterical fear about the supposed increase in the number of people legally carrying concealed weapons under the new law would be comical if these people weren't so serious.

Of course there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Carrying a Concealed Weapons applications, that's the whole idea. The process has been opened to all law-abiding citizens, not just the politically connected and favored or those fortunate to live in enlightened communities such as Macomb County.

So Wayne County Prosecutor Mike Duggan, Oakland County Prosecutor David Goyens and other anti-gunners are resigning from their county gun boards? That's wonderful news! Presumably their replacements will honor the people's applications instead of dictating to them.

Mr. Aldo Vagnozzi, one does not need a concealed weapons permit to possess or carry a gun in one's home. If one is paranoid enough or simply just cautious enough to greet the police with gun in hand, they have always been able to do so. I'm not aware of this happening except in the case of criminals, such as drug dealers, whose guns are illegally owned anyway. And wouldn't it be nice if Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, Police Chief Bill Dwyer and other officials concentrated on their assigned duties instead of lobbying for special interest groups?

John M. Patrick
Farmington Hills

■ Party thanks

On June 3, following their graduation ceremony, the class of 2001 of Harrison High School had the annual "All Night Party."

These yearly events are organized by senior parent committees to give the graduates a fun and safe environment to celebrate the end of their four years of high school studies and the beginning of new things to come.

We wish to thank all the individuals, businesses and organizations in Farmington, Farmington Hills and surrounding communities for their donations of cash, gifts and food. The "All Night Parties" would not be possible without the continued support of people who believe in rewarding our young people for working hard and finishing their high school education. It takes a great deal of planning and fund-raising each year to give these special nights to the graduates and donations are so important to its outcome.

Thank you all for your generosity and support for the "All Night Party" and throughout the past year. We also want to thank all the parent volunteers that gave their time to serve in committees and participate in night's festivities.

Harrison High School class of 2001 and the Parent Committee for the All Night Party

■ Clean up 'carnies'

As satisfying as it was to see the return of the Farmington Founders Festival and how many improvements were made over the previous years, I am continually disappointed in one area, the "carnies." I am speaking of the children's rides along the street next to the center shopping mall.

I am disgusted by the level of filth of the equipment, potential danger of extension cords everywhere, the class of the workers, the cheap rides, and ridiculous expense. I don't think this kind of image and activity is necessary for our downtown festival.

In the eyes of my child, a moon-walk always looks like a lot of fun and is very enticing, but to this adult, my experience of watching the kids take their shoes off and walk across a strip of old shag carpeting soaked from the water running along the curb or draining from one of the food trailers made me want to throw up and leave.

And where do they get these ride operators from anyway? My child had more teeth than they did. I saw my little girl hand the \$2 ticket to a squealing "carnie" with a cigarette dangling from his lips while he lectured each and every kid on the rules as they sloshed over the carpet in their socks and climbed in.

Two years ago at the same festival, I witnessed an accident as one "carnie" walked in front of the spinning rides and was hit; it flung a child from the ride out onto street, which resulted in medical attention, a disturbing memory. I can't believe I got talked into going over there again.

Let's make a big improvement to the festival in 2002 and rid our city of this low-class trash and utilize the area for something more enjoyable and "classy."

Robert McAllister
Farmington

■ Power Road

I read with interest Mr. Kenneth Kemp's recent letter to the Observer, particularly his comments about Power Road.

As a longtime resident of Power Road north of 11 Mile Road, I too, am most enthusiastic of our area's natural features which attract so many of our neighbors looking for a quiet low-trafficked road where it is safe to jog, to walk strollers or dogs, ride bicycles or horses or just take an evening stroll.

The shady canopy of trees attracts all kinds of birds, and it is not uncommon to see deer walking gracefully from one wooded area to another.

Truly, as Mr. Kemp noted, it has an "Up North" feel to it but the same can be said for the areas adjacent to Power Road: Holly Hill Road, Pillsbury and Biddestone, all gravel roads and have much the same appeal. There are two differences however, that set Power Road apart from the others, one is that it is a dead end road, which makes it a safe place for walking and two, it is slated for development.

Very soon construction will begin on the installation of a sanitary sewer for a 27-lot subdivision planned for the west side of Power Road, located at the top of the first hill on 23 acres of woods and streams. Our gravel road north of 11 Mile Road is scheduled to undergo a "dewatering process" which removes the area's ground water so that the sanitary sewer can be installed.

During the construction, the dead-end area leading to O.C.C. is to be opened up to allow residents ingress and egress however, this is only a temporary measure and as soon as the road construction is completed, supposedly the road will be closed off again to through traffic.

Residents have asked the City to protect the tree canopy as much as possible by not allowing the heavy construction equipment to travel beyond the northern border of the development and also to protect the roadside vegetation of this natural beauty road but somehow, even if these measures are taken, we all know that Power Road will never be the way it is today. You can't add paved roads and 27 new houses to this area and not change it drastically.

So, to all the nature lovers who enjoy their walks on Power Road, bring your camera along the next time you come and take a long look around you because Power Road, as we all know it, will never look the same again.

Irene Kermick
Farmington Hills

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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