

## 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.

## Oakland millage will benefit local districts

We'll start by saying we support Oakland Schools' request for two small millages that will support special education and vocational or "career-oriented" education.

Why? Because the intermediate district hasn't asked for an increase in funds for those two causes in decades, while costs have soared.

Because Farmington School District's share of this millage will provide adequate reimbursement for more than \$3 million already shelled out for special education — which still won't resolve issues surrounding the state's failure to adequately fund those programs.

Because our business community cries out desperately for skilled tradespeople and kids who choose skilled trades as a career need the facilities to prepare them for jobs at which they can make a living wage.

And that's just for starters. The biggest reason to support both requests is that the funds they generate will be distributed to individual districts. Farmington would receive special education funding of \$3,572,932 and \$348,640 for vocational education.

Farmington Schools has had to dip into general fund revenues to pay for special education. While the Durant fight continues, legal action takes years — and the need for funding is immediate.

Career-oriented programs could also use a shot in the arm, because the world has changed a great deal since 1987, when the last millage was approved. Half of the funds will go toward upgrading technical centers used by all students in Oakland County, including about 100 from Farmington Schools. As Superintendent Dr. Bob Maxfield points out, funds

received by individual districts could be used to create cooperative programs that share facilities like Farmington Schools' printing and publishing lab.

While we believe "yes" is the right answer to both these questions, we do have some reservations. Although the millages themselves aren't monumental, they have no expiration date. We believe those who tax us should be held account-

**We believe those who tax us should be held accountable on a regular basis.**

able on a regular basis. We're not intimating Oakland Schools will spend money irresponsibly. It's just that times change, needs change and educational programs and paradigms must change with them.

Unfortunately, that's the way these taxes are set up. So we encourage Oakland Schools to go above and beyond the call when it comes to providing taxpayers with information about how these dollars will be spent.

We also urge Farmington School officials to make sure voters know how the dollars they'll receive will be spent. Maxfield told us they'd like to restore cuts in staff development and teacher training and take on roof and parking lot maintenance postponed because of budget shortfalls.

This won't solve the district's financial problems, but it will allow officials some breathing room. With a battle looming this fall over potential cuts in state funding, they'll need all the help they can get.

## Remember the ABCs of back-to-school safety

As the 2001-02 school year begins, local police and others remind motorists to remember the "ABCs" of auto safety. AAA Michigan is conducting its School's Open — Drive Carefully campaign, and police also have traffic safety reminders.

There are new school speed limits along Newburgh for Churchill High School and Holmes Middle School, said Sgt. Wes McKee, who heads the Livonia Police Department traffic bureau.

Also with new school speed limits during certain hours are the roadways near Stevenson and Franklin High. "Motorists should be aware of that," McKee said.

He also encourages drivers to keep an eye out for school buses, noting some motorists say they didn't see a bus. "They need to be more alert." Children should always cross at the crosswalk, McKee added.

"Our biggest problem is parents in the parking lots and around schools," said Sgt. Peter Brokas, McKee's counterpart in Westland.

School lots were often built many years ago, he said, and become clogged easily. Parents are urged to be patient and stop on the street to let the child out, and park and walk for pick-up.

"That would unclog some of these parking lots," said Brokas, who cited the "road rage" mentality and belief that rules don't apply.

He also encourages drivers to watch for school bus amber caution lights and the following red lights, which require traffic to stop both ways. The fine for disobeying is heavy, Brokas noted.

AAA Michigan is also preaching traffic safety.

"A great burden is on the motorist to take extra precaution when driving in areas with school-age children," said Richard J. Miller, AAA Michigan Community Safety Services manager. "Some of these kids have very little experience in dealing with traffic situations."

Since 1998, 237 school-age pedestrians have died in school bus-related crashes. Half of those were between the ages of 5 and 7, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Last year, 105 children under age 16 lost their lives in traffic accidents in Michigan, and 11,267 were injured.

The state of school is a hectic time, Miller said, and families don't always put traffic safety at the top of the list.

For example, AAA's recent survey of 20 elementary schools in lower Michigan shows that safety belt compliance for drivers and passengers at school drop-off and pick-up points is sadly lacking.

"While the overall safety belt compliance there are new linchpins at about 80 percent, compliance by drivers and young passengers in a school setting was only 63 percent," said Miller. "When we looked at the safety belt compliance by young passengers alone, the percentage dropped to a dismal 56 percent. Since most serious crashes take place within a few miles of home, this is a real cause for concern, which we will discuss with schools, parents and children as part of our School's Open campaign this year."

In the campaign, AAA also emphasizes that driving carefully begins even before you leave your driveway.

"The key is to expect the unexpected," said Miller. "There could be kids walking or biking to school right behind you as you back out of your driveway. When driving in school zones, near playgrounds, or in neighborhoods where children play, expect a child to dart out into the street on a bicycle. That way, you'll never be taken by surprise and you will be able to stop in time."

During the campaign, the Auto Club is encouraging drivers to remember that children are not small adults. It could be more difficult for a child to judge traffic situations than an adult.

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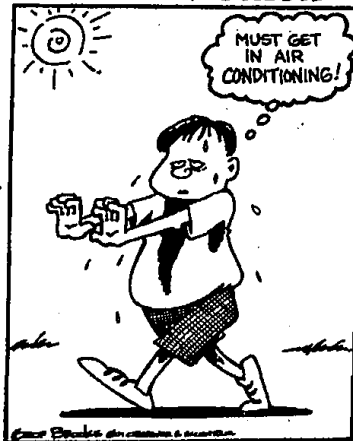
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## SUMMER SWEAT



## SUMMER SWEAT REDUX



## LETTERS

### A little advice

I found it interesting that you ran an editorial entitled "We need your advice." The first thing that I would advise your paper to do is tell Mike Malott to take a second look at the reality of Detroit Metro Airport.

It seems that every other week either the Detroit News or Free Press runs a front page article detailing the cronyism, corruption and incompetence that goes on at an airport that all of us rely on. Unfortunately Mr. Malott chose to write a column that reads like a press release from the Michigan Democratic Party. Any frequent traveler can tell you that there is something very wrong with DTW, but your writer would rather have our fellow citizens act like ostriches on this vital transportation issue.

I've had the opportunity to travel through a number of different airports in my life, and I can safely say that Detroit Metro compares favorably to most third world airports. The best solution that I can think of is to take control of the airport away from Wayne County. That is a good public policy choice for the long-term. It is simplistic to view this as a Democrat vs. Republican thing. Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport is run by an independent airport authority and that would provide an excellent model for us to use as a starting point for designing our own comparable airport authority.

Furthermore, labeling a review of the airport as "just another political battle" strikes me as an attempt to obscure the true issues. To have a journalist pretend that there's nothing wrong with Detroit Metro is comparable to the FBI telling us that organized crime does not exist. In my eyes it reflected poorly on the Observer that such a piece was published.

**Christopher M. Cummins**  
Farmington Hills

### Questions program

After reading your article about the Farmington Youth and Family Services Program, I have many unanswered questions.

One question, and most important, is what empirical data does Ms. Bates draw upon to reach her conclusions regarding the success of this program? For instance, can we conclude if we did not spend tax dollars "early on" for this youth program, as Ms. Bates stated, that we would be spending money supporting David Kinchen in jail or some other law enforcement program for troubled youth?

Shouldn't David's mother get at least some credit for raising a fine young man? Do we need to spend tax dollars on a "city" Youth Program in a community where youth programs are in abundance, such as the YMCA, various church programs, and the Farmington Hills Recreation Department — to name a few.

The Farmington Hills community offers parents so many opportunities where they can involve their children in after school activities that I find it mind-boggling to see we are spending tax dollars on a "city" youth program. Secondly, the citizens are currently spending tax dollars on the public schools and the schools already have after school youth programs. How many more do we need?

Ms. Bates has fallen off a horse; she appears to be raising a white flag. The bureaucracy in Farmington Hills and straying into areas that the city has no

business being involved in. Is this youth program going to turn into some kind of city-run social services program where they start doing home inspections etc.?

Ms. Bates has lost the fundamental concept of running a city. How much of our valuable resources are going into the Farmington Youth and Family Services Program that could be better spent on other important issues that plague our city such as, over development, the environment, utilities and the Eleven Pines debacle.

It's time Ms. Bates stops spending our tax dollars on her "pet" projects and starts doing what she was elected to do — run our city and leave the raising of children up to the parents.

**Cathy Struble**  
Farmington Hills

### More on 'carnies'

Mr. McAllister should be both embarrassed for himself and frightened for his children.

He should be embarrassed for admitting he is a classist snob perfectly suited for his predictable suburban culture. It is exactly his type of classism that the United States has been trying to escape for hundreds of years.

Mr. McAllister should also be frightened for his children, as they will grow up with a role model that lacks both character and spirit.

To put into effect Mr. McAllister's plan to "rid our city of this low-class trash and utilize the area for something more enjoyable and 'classy,'" Farmington should summon all doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and Ph.D.'s (with teeth preferably) to travel from town to town putting up and taking down carnival rides for minimum wage.

If it is the safety of the rides that Mr. McAllister is afraid of then he should have critiqued the lack of federal and state regulations rather than the class and number of teeth of the workers.

**Erin Kenney**  
Farmington Hills

Robert McAllister of Farmington is upset with the "class" of the carnival workers. What happened to all this diversity that's been so bandied about? Carnies are people, too.

**Louell R. Roue**  
Farmington

### Thanks to Colonial

I am a fairly regular customer of the Colonial Car Wash in Farmington and I have always been impressed with their friendly and efficient service.

Recently, on one of the hottest days of the summer, I stopped in to get my bug-laden mini-van washed and, despite the intense heat, they worked hard on my car until all the bugs were removed. The manager himself came out to lend some elbow grease to the cause. He is not one who stays hidden in the office doing paperwork. The young people that are employed there are very hard working, clean-cut, and polite kids.

I would like to publicly thank Colonial Car Wash for their community and customer service. They raise money for local people in need (i.e. leukemia and head trauma patients), they excite children with their Halloween and Christmas displays, and they treat every customer as if he/she

were their best customer. When a business is this well run, it is easy to tout its virtues and be a dedicated customer.

**Mary Kay**  
Farmington Hills

### Unrelated issues

Bill Smith (not to be confused with the husband of the former Farmington Hills mayor) just can't seem to separate fact from fiction. In his Aug. 16 letter to the Observer, Smith tries to defend his political ally State Rep. Andrew Raczowski's announced decision to move out of his district to run for Congress by diverting the discussion to an unrelated issue, the 11 Pines golf expansion.

Representative Raczowski is on record as of a few weeks ago that he was looking to move to another city so that he could run for Congress and that he had raised \$100,000 for that race. The Observer noted that fact by writing a critical editorial dealing with his planned move, as I did, because he would be abandoning his present constituents long before his term was over. In recent days, Mr. Raczowski has abandoned that notion and for that I applaud him.

Mr. Smith has learned that when you can't defend a position, switch to something else, which he did when he claimed that then Councilperson Nancy Bates and myself pushed through the purchase of the land that is planned for expansion of the golf course, development of any office complex and other amenities.

The last time I checked the city charter, it requires that at least four votes are needed to pass anything and that decision to purchase 11 Pines was unanimous, 7 to 0.

That decision was in the best interest of Farmington Hills, will be paid off completely through the sale of a portion of the property to the office developers and could end up making money through the receipts of the proposed driving range.

It is also a fact that the city is in the best position to address the question of the pond and will be held to a higher standard than a private developer. When the project is completed the city's taxpayers as well as the thousands of golfers will benefit.

**Aldo Vagnozzi**  
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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