

## Farmington Observer™

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

## Don't forget local need

Late last month, a group of Farmington Hills firefighters led by organizer Jim Etzin raised thousands of dollars for victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist tragedies by walking from the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit to the Brooklyn Bridge in New York.

As they passed a firefighter's helmet through hundreds of long miles, organizers here were scrambling to put together another fund-raiser for local charities, one they weren't even sure they ought to have.

After Sept. 11, the idea of holding the Cornucopia Ball, a formal social event that includes a lavish dinner and dancing, seemed somehow out of place. While these two charity events may seem light years apart, they symbolize the challenge faced by everyone who makes charitable contributions.

Local charities don't want to put themselves in competition with fund-raising efforts designed to help victims of the most deadly terrorist attack on American soil. But they still have to take care of an increasing number of men, women and children affected by the economic impacts of that event.

The more than \$500 million donated to the American Red Cross alone provides ample evidence we have all given generously. In the weeks following the terrorist attacks, New York City faced an avalanche of donated goods and so many volunteers, some were turned back.

Has the need disappeared? Of course not. It will take billions of dollars and countless compassionate acts to restore what was destroyed and bring some semblance of peace into the lives of survivors.

We applaud the ingenuity and efforts of Farmington Hills firefighters, and especially Etzin, in being part of that effort with the Bridge to Bridge walk. By putting their hearts into this week-long

march from Detroit to New York City, they demonstrated solidarity with their brothers and sisters who gave so much — many, even their lives — in rescue efforts.

We also appreciate the Farmington Hills/Farmington Family Foundation's decision to go ahead with the Cornucopia Ball. This may not be the party anyone expected, but it does make a strong statement about our community's ongoing needs.

The foundation provides \$125,000 of vital financial assistance to after-school youth programs, as well as support for Farmington Families in Action E.A.B.E.S. after school program, Generations Responding to Issues & Problems parent-student seminar, the Multiracial/Multicultural Committee Council and YMCA for summer camp scholarships.

In a time of economic downturn and uncertainty, these programs will be needed more than ever. The Salvation Army will need more bell ringers to raise funds that help families heat their homes and put food on the table. The Goodfellows will need more help wrapping Christmas gifts and delivering baskets to local folks who probably wouldn't have much of a holiday season without them.

Local residents should be proud of the way they reached out to help those in need at Ground Zero. But the world is full of Ground Zeros, and local charities face that fact every day. While the various Sept. 11 funds are doing their best to care for victims of the terrorist attacks, local charities face the constant challenge of caring for the second wave of victims, those hit by economic hard times.

In this time of national crisis, as we watch the seemingly endless pain hundreds of miles away, let's not forget the needs of brothers and sisters in our own backyards.

## Our council, mayoral picks

### Bates deserves re-election

It isn't often that residents have as clearly defined a political choice as the one for Farmington Hills mayor. Incumbent Mayor Nancy Bates and first-time mayoral candidate Ron Oliverio have been on opposite sides of the union for so long, someone ought to establish a "Neutral Zone" between them.

We endorse Bates' bid for re-election to her final term. During Bates' tenure, city officials have faced some tough issues. While there have been tense moments, she has generally shown a capacity for patience, tolerance and understanding.

She conducts a dignified formal meeting, with a civility that's vital to the business of good government. Anyone who feels she's part of a council that speaks with one voice ought to sit through a study session, meetings open to the public but off-camera, where discussions are often strident but, again, respectful.

Bates has proven herself a gracious and well-spoken ambassador for her city, and her reputation of involvement on the national level gives Farmington Hills a better shot at getting the ear of our state and federal representatives.

### Ellis, Grant, Oliverio and Bruce would serve City well

In virtually any election, incumbents have a distinct advantage. They've got track records, a sense of history and established relationships that make doing business a little easier.

The race for Farmington Hills City Council is no exception. Jerry Ellis, Jon Grant and Cheryl Oliverio have a solid record of service to the community that includes the first real progress made in the 14 Mile/Northwestern corridor — the decision to establish of a tough, legally defensible cellular phone tower ordinance and a community in which only about 6 percent of residents are dissatisfied with their quality of life (DMG-Maximum Citywide Management Study, 2001).

We have no reservations about endorsing them for the three open council seats, and here's why:

We haven't seen any real evidence that council members have been "closed" to the people they serve. We read the city's newsletter, we visit the city's Web site and we have representatives at council meetings and study sessions. That's our job.

If there is collusion in "executive sessions," which aren't open to the public,

we'll never know. We have to trust that those seven people, whose lives are always in the public eye, are intelligent enough to know elected officials who play fast and loose invariably get caught.

And we're convinced the combined experience Oliverio, Grant and Ellis bring to the table are well worth trusting. They provide a continuity vital to two of the largest and most fragile pieces of this city's development puzzle: 11 Pines and the 14 Mile/Northwestern/Orchard Lake "Triangle" project.

Ellis demonstrates a good understanding of the community and a confidence in the citizens of Farmington Hills. His 30 years of experience in negotiations have proved invaluable in getting this city the best possible deal in the Triangle, and he always provides a cogent narrative to explain his toughest decisions.

Cheryl Oliverio is very approachable and in study sessions often comes up with thoughtful, citizen-driven questions and suggestions, even though she can be relatively quiet at council meetings.

Grant says this is probably his last term. He always didn't run and seems the least involved among the three incumbents. His 12 years of experience provide a sense of history that keeps everyone on track. We appreciate his decision to spend one more term following through on 11 Pines and the Triangle, because we know it isn't easy to subject himself to harsh criticism for doing the job as best you can.

However, 12 years is a long time. We recognize citizens are looking for fresh voices, and they couldn't find one better than that of Randy Bruce, chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Bruce gets our vote because he favors development of 11 Pines that will provide a return on the city's \$10 million investment.

He's also looking for answers to the kinds of questions that have bothered citizens all along, regarding price and process in acquiring the 92-acre property.

Bruce also demonstrated corking initiative in developing a Web site that details Zoning Board of Appeals agendas and activities, after council members turned down his request to televise meetings. He's shown a willingness to work "outside the box" for something in which he believes strongly — informing citizens.

We hope no matter what the outcome of this election, those who aren't successful will remain active and involved, and those who are elected will see to it their interest in public service won't go unnoticed.



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## LETTERS

### Time for change

We have called Farmington Hills home for our family and our business for six years. During that time we have had many occasions to attend council meetings and interact with the police, fire, building, zoning, assessing departments, etc. In our opinion, it's time for change.

During the past year my family has taken the time to acquaint ourselves with most of the new candidates for mayor and city council of Farmington Hills. These courageous individuals will provide our city with a fresh and energetic new perspective.

With Ron Oliverio as mayor, we can be assured of true statesmanship and undaunted perseverance in the fair pursuit of expanded community services with fiscal responsibility. With Ken Massey as councilperson, we can expect thoughtfulness matched with impressive analytical skills and a thorough understanding of the wide range of matters that our community must deal with.

With Randy Bruce as councilperson, we can look for continued professionalism and compassion for citizens and their full range of concerns as he steps up from Chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

With Jess Elson as councilperson, we can be certain of the diverse and unique local issues that he brings to the table as well as a heartfelt concern for the variety of issues that every citizen faces.

On Nov. 6, let's change the way our local government treats our citizens and business owners.

Mark and Jean Gordaner and family  
Farmington Hills

### Candidate solutions

Several problems have been identified in regards to programs and developments in Farmington Hills. Here are the solutions I would propose as mayor.

Regarding the Youth Program, let's have an independent audit done of how many kids use it, and fund it accordingly. This would save a lot of money and restore the credibility of a good program that aids parents working outside the home.

Regarding controversial issues such as Eleven Pines, a citizens advisory committee composed of two-thirds local residents and one-third residents at large should be formed to advise council and concerns which they may be unaware and get more residents involved.

Regarding questions of ethics, reinstating an ethics committee. Whereas council's action should be above reproach, they would have nothing to fear from a group of citizens looking over their shoulder.

Regarding citizen anger at not being helped or listened to by City Hall, appoint an ombudsman as a liaison between residents and city government, who would help cut through the red tape and represent residents, as it can be intimidating and overwhelming dealing with city government at times. Hot issues have been children's safety at bus stops, traffic, tax assessments among others.

Ron Oliverio  
candidate for mayor

### Can't see it

The Observer's editorial Oct. 18

states that challenger for Farmington Hills office of mayor Ron Oliverio says the right things about issues and committees that runs government and that the paper likes his idea.

But because he points out the faults of his opponent Nancy Bates, the incumbent mayor, that's negative campaigning and that the paper can't endorse him for doing so?

Hey, isn't that what politics is about? Candidates pointing out what the other has or has not done and what they can do that's better? All for the enlightenment of the voters? So they know what's going on?

Now as of yet I don't have a choice in this race, but the convoluted logic the Observer uses to disparage Ron Oliverio is making me take notice. To me, being mayor is not just about being civil and dignified as the Observer describes Bates because being so can hide shortcomings, attitudes and the lack of really doing something other than being a prominent person.

I urge voters to pay close attention to what's going on in the race and to not make their choice based on personality alone but on hard facts and issues. The fact your taxes are used demands that.

For the Observer to dismiss the Eleven Pines issue by saying what's done is done is somewhat shortsighted. To me, what that land is used for is moot. What bugs me is that it has been said that it was once a landfill, or part of it was. There have been countless landfills that people thought were safe that all of a sudden start to emit toxic things that were dumped in them illegally without common knowledge.

Could that be a risk here? Who knows? We don't want the EPA telling us we have to spend X amount of dollars to clean it up, do we? Did the city bail someone out?

Tom Murphy  
Farmington Hills

### Who is Ron Oliverio?

Okay, this is the final straw! Who is this Ron Oliverio guy running for mayor? Who lowers our property taxes? We ought to thank God for our high property taxes. It means our property is worth a lot, right?

Improves public safety... What is that? Just because our neighbors in Livonia have a record of being one of the safest communities in the country and we don't, so what? We have a higher tax rate than Livonia.

And who needs an ombudsman mayor to help citizens with problems? I happen to like being told how to live and what to do by the city and we all should be thankful for that. Who needs more parks? All that does is take our kids out from in front of the TV where they belong and promote overpopulation of birds and squirrels.

Who needs ethics, especially in local government? If Oliverio thinks our city government isn't good enough, maybe he should just move to a different community. Who likes do-gooders anyway?

Kenneth Kemp  
Farmington Hills

### Supports Oliverio

In my humble opinion, Ron Oliverio is the better candidate for mayor of Farmington Hills.

He is right in saying city government works in too much secrecy. To be sure, some of the subject matter discussed by city council is sensitive and needs to be treated discreetly. But

being discreet does not mean hiding it from the public.

Oliverio brings to the table intellect and honesty with a sincere desire to serve and inform in an even-handed manner all citizens in the community.

One thing I have noticed under present and previous Hills government is the disturbing manner in which citizen complaints about unethical and illegal behaviors of police officers are handled. If our police officers misbehave, the complaining citizen is never informed of any negative findings or of any actions taken to reprimand or punish the offending officer. This does not bode well for citizens. We have our own little police state going here.

It is my opinion Oliverio has the fortitude, intellect, desire and ability to lead Farmington Hills with a new sense of integrity in leadership.

Joan Smith  
Farmington Hills

### Council not cliquish

Candidate Ron Oliverio says the present mayor and council are "cliquish" and not open enough to the public, they "have not been up front," they've been "deceptive," they are united like a crystal (whatever that means) and, so forth.

I want to point out that in assisting us with various issues in our neighborhood, we have found the council to be totally up front, open, non-deceptive, 100-percent cooperative and very helpful — particularly Mayor Nancy Bates. The neighborhoods where I live are "socially behind her."

Obviously Oliverio is talking universally popular themes when he mentions "creating more parks," and according to his campaign folders, "cutting taxes." He overlooks that we presently have about 500 acres of public parks, including Heritage, a 211-acre pristine, forested jewel that is the envy of our neighboring cities. He ignores the fact that... almost all open land with park potential is gone. Even if it were available, how do you create parks when you cut taxes?

Starting out by blasting everyone in campaign goals (dog parks?), we are left to consider whether Oliverio has any real knowledge of this city or its government. I particularly think Oliverio should be embarrassed, regretful and ashamed of himself for his cheap shot at Mayor Nancy Bates, "She's got the Queen Complex." (Again, whatever that means.)

Fred Welch  
Farmington Hills

### Share your opinions

We welcome 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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