

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.

Long, strange trip to 11 Pines was worthwhile

"What a long, strange trip it's been."

That's the assessment of Albert Ludwig, a construction manager who has followed the 11 Pines/San Marino Golf Course project long enough to know the truth in that statement. Since purchasing the property four years ago, Farmington Hills city officials have gone from pitching a thriving, bustling community of 325 apartments, 80 condominiums, a 120-unit assisted living facility and a nine-hole golf course expansion, to plans approved most recently that drop housing to just 80 units altogether.

It's been a long four years for elected officials, full of acrimonious public hearings, disgruntled residents, charges of conflict of interest regarding the 11 Pines land deal and even a brouhaha erupting from the revelation that then-council member Terry Sever had signed on as a consultant with Phoenix Land Development, which was pitching an 11 Pines proposal.

Not everyone is happy, but even the most strident critic has to admit the city has bent pretty significantly in the direction of citizens' wishes for this 92-acre property. You may think we're about to congratulate the City Council - and you'd be wrong.

Our hats are off to the residents who dogged this project from the beginning, who held officials' feet to the fire, who gave up countless hours in public hearings and neighborhood meetings, who petitioned, who protested, who demanded something better for this property than just more housing.

We commend those who passionately argued for the environment, who pleaded for more open space and everyone who made a suggestion, who asked a question, who expressed an opinion during this process.

No one is perfectly satisfied with this final outcome. The city is left to scramble

for revenues, because the project simply won't generate enough revenues to cover anticipated costs. Residents are still concerned about the impact of an expanded golf course on the environment and the

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loss of trees and natural habitat.

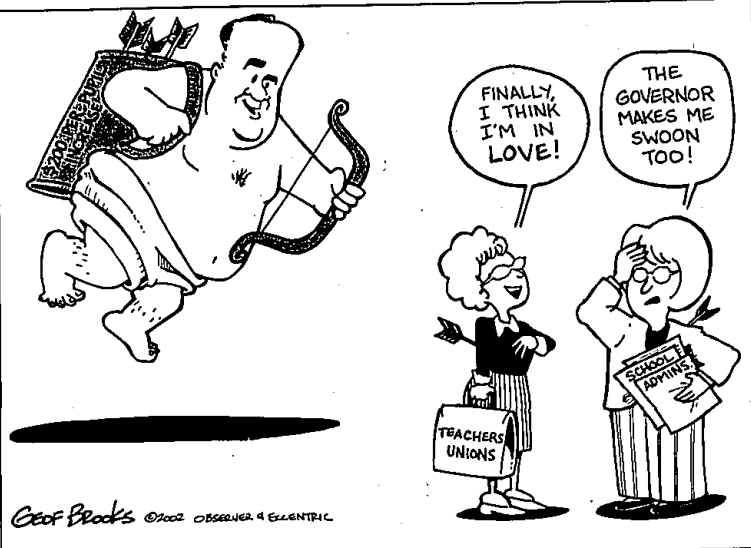
There are also hurdles yet to overcome. Although documents regarding project funding were pulled from a development agreement approved Monday night, the writing's on the wall: officials have bought down density, and now it's time to pay the piper, to the tune of \$17.3 million in total project costs.

In a study session held before the meeting, officials clearly steered away from taking \$2.1 million out of the general fund. However, they also make the point that for the past five years, the golf course has contributed its profits to parks maintenance. Recouping those dollars - in essence, making the golf course pay for itself - is not unreasonable.

No doubt residents will weigh in with their opinions, and they should. During the history of this project, no one could argue residents haven't had their say. And no one could argue city officials simply turned a deaf ear.

We trust this relationship will continue, and that the 11 Pines project will stand in this city's history as a testament to active citizen participation and a shining example for future generations to follow.

Yes, it has been a long, strange trip. But we believe it has also been a worthwhile journey, for residents and officials alike.



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LETTERS

Sever's vote?

I was disappointed to read in the Friday (Jan. 25) Detroit Free Press, Oakland Section, that our County Commissioner, Terry Sever, left the County Commission meeting on Thursday (Jan. 24) so he wouldn't have to vote on the controversial annexation in Bloomfield Township.

I would like to know, if Commissioner Sever had stayed in the room for the vote, would he have voted "yes" or "no" to override the veto of the County Executive. Our elected officials face many controversial issues in their jobs, but I expect them to face these tough issues rather than leave the room.

The annexation of land in our neighboring Bloomfield Township by Pontiac is certainly a high profile issue. The 80 acres of land in question is the proposed site for a \$2-billion development. A development this large will not only affect Bloomfield Township and Pontiac, but also neighboring communities such as, West Bloomfield and the Farmington area.

Commissioner Sever is the Republican Caucus Chairman of the County Commissioners and gave a wonderful invocation before Thursday's meeting on "doing the right thing." I hope he doesn't really believe "doing the right thing" means leaving the room before a scheduled vote.

Valerie Knol
Farmington

Run for office

Ever thought about running for public office? With term limits creating vacancies in many public offices in Michigan, this is your opportunity to learn the workings of campaigning for office.

A workshop for candidates in 2002 and beyond will be held Saturday, March 2, at the Southfield Center for the Arts. Under the sponsorship of the League of Women Voters, National Association of Women Business Owners and the Women Officials Network, the workshop is for those who have already decided to run, those thinking about running, those who might run someday and want to know what is involved and those who want to work on a campaign now or in the future.

Keynote speaker is Tim Skubick, a senior capital correspondent based in Lansing. Tim is the Lansing Bureau Chief for WWJ-950 radio and for nearly 30 years has been the producer/anchor of *Off the Record* a weekly public affairs show on PBS. Mr. Skubick's topic will be *How Not to Handle the Media*.

Early registration is \$40, after Feb. 16 registration increases to \$50. If you have any questions or wish to enroll in the workshop, call the League of Women Voters at (248) 647-1350.

Jan C. Dolan
Farmington Hills

Kudos for candlelight

Kudos to the efforts of everyone involved in the organization of the second Candlelight Walk in honor of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It sends a strong message to our community that we are intentional about making people of all races and religious find welcome in the Farmington area.

Tom DeWard
Farmington Hills

Linda Kennedy
Farmington Hills

Start time perspective

I am in the middle of putting my third child through Farmington High School so I speak from relative experience in regards to the later school starting times having an impact on the grades.

I have no doubt that a later start time would benefit learning, but just to suggest that the teen "go to bed earlier" will not work. When my children took the bus to school, they had to BE AT the bus stop by 6:35 a.m. because the bus was scheduled for 6:40. So to backtrack... they needed at least five minutes to walk to the stop, they needed at least 30 minutes to wake, dress, eat and get ready for school.

So to ask a 15-18 year old to go to bed before 10:00 p.m. to get the full eight hours is a little ridiculous, don't you think?

The best solution is a later start time of 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. It is true that the younger the child, the earlier he wakes up, so why not have the kindergartens start earlier and the high schools start later? Just another suggestion that has the same impact as sending my teens to bed at 9 p.m.

Sharon Forgue
Farmington

Sign of thanks

A special thank you to the person or person(s) who returned the "now registering at Antioch Lutheran Preschool" banner that blew away on the very blustery snow day of January 31, 2002. We appreciate you taking the time to leave it on our door step.

Sharon Dettler
Preschool Director
Farmington Hills

Why on the front?

Perhaps I missed something. The Farmington Observer just ran an editorial basically commending itself and the media for their journalistic discretion.

While it was commendable for the TV and radio media to refrain from covering an unfortunate event as it unfolded, why did the Observer then find it necessary to give this story front page coverage?

Didn't the story suggest that if the individual saw the story on TV that she would follow through on her threats? If the threats were real, why did the Observer continue to push the envelope and print any of the details? We can only assume that if the individual didn't want any live TV coverage, she obviously, wasn't interested in a follow up story in the local paper.

Perhaps good news doesn't sell newspapers, but I firmly believe there are some stories that just don't have to be told. That's journalistic discretion and something the Observer should start to practice.

Tom DeWard
Farmington Hills

Flaws with school trade

I was both confused and then incensed as I read the article regarding the use of public school teachers at Our Lady of Sorrows school.

Our daughter does not attend OLS, but rather she is a student at St. Fabian Catholic School. Some Catholic parents may feel that it is an opportunity for our tax dollars to be spent for our own children. While in concept it may seem like a good idea, upon reflection I realized that there are many flaws with it.

To begin with, while the public school teacher is present, all religious symbols and specific religious references will not be allowed in these classrooms. Second, what will happen to the current teachers, whom I assume are qualified instructors, will they be terminated?

If there is no opportunity to discuss religious beliefs in ALL of the classes offered at a Catholic school, then we are short-changing the students who attend, as well as defeating the purpose of sending our children to a faith-based institution in the first place!

At St. Fabian, the teachers in the music, physical education and art classes are skilled in their area of expertise as well as Christian examples to the students. Our talented music instructor teaches secular as well as liturgical songs to our students; our committed physical education teacher speaks to the students about treating each other in a Christian manner; our gifted art teacher is allowed to make religious references in her classes. In a Catholic school this makes perfect sense!

Why would the administration at a Catholic school believe that "saving a few bucks" is more important than the opportunity to express faith-based principles in all of their classes? Why would parents allow this change to take place? It is beyond me!

Carol A. Kirkland
Farmington

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your 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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