

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.

In Clarenceville, we choose Garrison, Meili

In a small community like Clarenceville, it can be difficult to find people willing to give up the amount of time and energy it takes to serve on the school board.

This year, three candidates are vying for two open seats in the June 10 election, and we'd like to congratulate all of them for stepping forward. After talking with Gary Garrison, Evonne Meili and Kim Bink, we feel confident voters simply can't make a bad choice. All three are dedicated, active in the school community and passionate about a district they believe is already on the right track.

We believe, however, that Garrison and Meili are best prepared to lead the district into a coming sea of uncertainty, with the departure of Superintendent Tom Tattan.

Tattan is expected to be selected as the new chief of Waterford Schools, and his departure will leave a void not easily filled. Selecting his successor will be the most important task the new board undertakes, and we believe members must be independently objective and ultimately unified in order to make the right choice.

Garrison was on the board when the district hired Tattan, who by all accounts has

turned Clarenceville around over the past six years. Garrison has the process experience invaluable in the next search. Additionally, he has a proven track record of asking tough questions and not backing down until he gets answers that satisfy him. That's an important quality in times of success; it's just too easy to let things slide because everything's going well.

Meili's entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen will also serve the district well. She has clearly scoped out the position she wishes to hold and speaks knowledgeably about school issues at the elementary and secondary levels.

Meili has listened to parents and knows what concerns they have, what they feel is going well and what they hope the future holds.

As a fairly new resident, Meili brings an important perspective to the board. She has a genuine interest in education not only from a parent's perspective but as a profession. We believe Garrison's long tenure in the district and Meili's experiences in other communities will both serve Clarenceville residents well.

River volunteers are making a difference

Saturday is River Day.

It was 16 years ago that volunteers first gathered to clean up the Rouge River. The river was polluted with chemicals and blocked with debris. Volunteers dressed in waders and long rubber gloves climbed in to drag everything from tree branches to automobiles from the sluggish brown water. Every year since, the Friends of the Rouge has gathered volunteers in Wayne and Oakland counties to work at making the Rouge a healthy waterway. The concept has expanded to take in the Huron and Clinton rivers in what has become an annual celebration of our vital water system.

Recent concerns about attempts to channel Great Lakes water to distant locations and the harvesting of Michigan ground water by Perrier, have made us more aware of just how important our water system is.

The Rouge, Huron and Clinton rivers have been the lifeblood of our industrial development but they are also important for recreational use and for sustaining plant and animal wildlife.

This year, an estimated 1,600 volunteers will participate at 24 sites along the Rouge in Wayne and Oakland counties. The success in clearing out the river has shifted the focus for some areas to other projects such as streambank stabilization and the

introduction of native plants along the river. In recent years some non-native plants such as the beautiful but strangling purple loosestrife have taken over the area. Volunteers will be removing these invaders and replacing them with native plants.

Other programs planned for this year include bird house building, storm drain stenciling, parkside clean up and environmental education programs.

Volunteer work and government programs have helped turn the fortunes of the Rouge around. Once regarded as one of the nation's most polluted river systems, the Rouge has shown dramatic improvement in water quality and the ability to sustain fish and wildlife.

"It seems every year, more communities are getting involved and trying to encourage as many volunteers as possible to come out and clean up the Rouge," said Carolyn Foster, managing director of Friends of the Rouge. "The communities are recognizing the Rouge does have problems, and it needs our help."

We have long supported these efforts and urge everyone to take some time on River Day to either clean up the Rouge or at least take some time to consider how important these rivers are to the health of our communities.

Happy River Day!

CHUCK'S OPINION

FARC process flawed

In recent weeks, an editorial in the Observer criticized the Farmington City Council for not allowing open discussion and debate in their decision to appoint its newest member. The same criticism should be aimed at the process by which the Farmington Area Republican Club endorsed Valerie Knol in the State House of Representatives race.

The endorsement decision was made by a mere five members of the club - a board that sought neither the opinion nor the input of other club members. Furthermore, the endorsed candidate herself sat on the very board that would later endorse her. She never bothered to recuse herself from the decision process. In addition, the president of the club made it well known both publicly and privately that she strongly supported the endorsed candidate - before the decision process ever began.

Had there been a vote before the entirety of the club membership - had our voices been heard - we have no doubt that John Akouri would today be FARC's official candidate of choice. John Akouri has been an active, longtime, above-paying member of the club and is deeply involved in the Farmington area community.

John Akouri, former Press Secretary to Congressman Joe Knollenberg, was first elected as a Republican precinct delegate in 1988 and since that time has won more votes as a delegate than any other candidate in two subsequent races. He has participated in local, state and national Republican conventions and served as a congress-

sional district committee member from Farmington Hills and as a county committee member. Not only is he visible each and every day in all corners of the community, but he has also called our town his home for more than 30 years.

His record of leadership and accomplishments are accentuated by his passion of service to the people of Farmington Hills. His past appointments to city boards and commissions by three separate mayors attest to that fact. No one is more qualified and more ready to represent Farmington and Farmington Hills in Lansing, Le.

Like any civic-minded organizations that seeks to influence public affairs, FARC should value a system of open and honest decision-making in its candidate selection process. In the future, FARC should remember that democracy begins in our towns, in our city halls and in our political clubs. Democracy should not end there.

Christopher McRae, Mayor Pro-Tem of Farmington Hills; Richard Corey, Chairman, Farmington Hills Zoning Board of Appeals; Dr. Chuck Kadado, President, Lincoln Republican Club; Abe Ann, Community Activist; Jim Maunna, Business Leader; Judy Soronen, Former Mayor of Farmington Hills; John Anhalt, Chairman, Farmington Hills Economic Development Corp.; Terry Deichert, President and Executive Director Longacre House; May Arvo, Director, Farmington Musicals



ROUGE RIVER CLEAN-UP, JUNE 1

LETTERS

Start-time response

I am writing as a member of the high school start time committee who attended every meeting, all subcommittee meetings, and the town hall meeting.

I find that many community members have misinterpreted the task force and the facts surrounding it. William Boskey, in his editorial, had the wrong impression of the task force. Contrary to his idea, the task force was convened to determine whether or not a later start time was a good idea and, if so, could it be implemented in the Farmington Public Schools and how.

He also states that the committee readily admits that whether or not we could afford it wasn't our responsibility. I believe that this is a misinterpretation. When the group initiated its study, there was not a budget crisis and we did not know whether a later start would be a cost-saving, breakeven, or costly measure.

It was our research efforts that showed it would cost our district money to accomplish a later start. No one on the committee ever thought that we should not pay attention to the cost, but that the start time should be evaluated first for its own merits.

At our final meeting, the committee concluded that our district was not ready for this change due to lack of community support and the expected cost in a difficult financial time. Some committee members will continue to keep abreast of ongoing research and want neighboring communities plan to do it. It was a "no brainer" or a "done deal", and at this time we are recommending that the district not implement a later start time.

Personally, I see the benefits of a later start. I believe the studies about later shifted adolescent circadian sleep patterns. Sure teenagers can function as is, but these are children who are learning and growing. It doesn't mean we are pampering them by changing the start time.

Maybe it means that they will function better, which may not show up as testable improvements. It may show up as less stress, decreased absenteeism, less stress and grouching, improved alertness and well-being, etc. It is a shame that the major objection (after money) is that the late start will interfere with after-school activities. Very few of these activities (sports, school clubs, etc.) are directly related to the student's future employment.

The current system isn't broken. It works better for some than others. But we need to remember that there is always room for improvement.

Debbie Peven
Farmington Hills

Memorial Day

I wanted to share with your readers an email I received this week. Out of the hundreds that I did receive this past week, this one is quite poignant. For those veterans past and current, Memorial Day is something we do not take lightly. It holds a meaning most will quite never understand.

For those civilians, family members and all Americans that take time out to remember the veterans of yesterday and today, we say thank you very much. Memorial Day is something we do not take lightly. It holds a meaning most will quite never understand. For those civilians, family members and all Americans that take time out to remember the veterans of yesterday and today, we say thank you very much. Memorial Day is something we do not take lightly. It holds a meaning most will quite never understand.

liberties, and for our freedom, and our way of life.

EAGLE BASE, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Army News Service, May 22, 2002) - It was raining "cats and dogs" and I was late for physical training. Traffic was backed up at Fort Campbell, Ky., and was moving way too slowly. I was probably going to be late and I was growing more and more impatient.

The pace slowed almost to a standstill as I passed Memorial Grove, the site built to honor the soldiers who died in the Gander airplane crash, the worst redeployment accident in the history of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

Because it was close to Memorial Day, a small American flag had been placed in the ground next to each soldier's memorial plaque. My concern at the time, however, was getting past the bottleneck, getting out of the rain and getting to PT on time.

All of a sudden, infuriatingly, just as the traffic was getting started again, the car in front of me stopped. A soldier, a private of course, jumped out in the pouring rain and ran over toward the grove.

I couldn't believe it! This knucklehead was holding up everyone for who knows what kind of prank. Horns were honking. I waited to see the butt-checking that I wanted him to get for making me late.

He was getting soaked to the skin. His BDUs were plastered to his frame. I watched as he ran up to one of the memorial plaques, picked up the small American flag that had fallen to the ground in the wind and the rain, and set it upright again.

Then, slowly, he came to attention, saluted, ran back to his car, and drove off.

I'll never forget that incident. That soldier, whose name I will not know, taught me more about duty, honor, and respect than a hundred books or a thousand lectures.

That simple salute - that single act of honoring his fallen brother and his flag - encapsulated all the Army values in one gesture for me. It said, "I will never forget. I will keep the faith. I will finish the mission. I am an American soldier."

I thank God for examples like that. And on this Memorial Day, I will remember all those who paid the ultimate price for my freedom, and one private, soaked to the skin, who honored them.

CPT John Rasmussen, 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, Kentucky (Note: Capt. Rasmussen is now a chaplain with Multinational Division North in Bosnia.)

Major Mark Borman
Farmington Hills
Executive Officer, 210th
Military Police Battalion,
Michigan Army National Guard

Investigation needed

There is much discussion about Proposal A and how it should be changed to reflect never realities surrounding school funding. That sounds very well and good, but it is important to know some things about which the general public is not informed.

For instance, how does anyone explain the sale by the Farmington Public Schools of 20 acres of prime property at 11 Mile and Halsted to the City of Farmington Hills for \$1,015,000? This occurred on March 22, 1999. The City then turned around

and sold the property to a developer for \$3.9 million. The City intends to use its \$2.8 million dollar profit to expand the San Marino Golf Course to 18 holes. Meanwhile, the Farmington school district has a \$5.2 million deficit. Is the Farmington school board that unknowledgeable about the value of the property it owns?

My suggestion to the City Council that the money rightfully belongs to the public schools was met with incredulous indignation. This Eleven Pine project is, I believe, a scandalous misapplication of taxpayers' money. Members of the Farmington Hills City Council seem to think that they made quite a deal for themselves.

This City Council is tapping every fund it can get its hands on for this golf course. They took \$4.5 million from the Northwest Pressure District (Water) and \$1.5 million from the Parks and Recreation Millage. The Parks and Recreation money was used to cap the 23 acre landfill, included in the 92 acre Halsted project, which the City purchased for the golf course. They spent \$1.5 million for dirt to cap the landfill while the Farmington school district faces a huge deficit.

Last month, the City Council approved \$9 million in general obligation bonds, backed by the full faith and credit of the City of Farmington Hills. The Observer published a small notice, in which citizens who wanted a referendum on this issue were given an absurd 45 days to gather the signatures of 10 percent of the registered voters of Farmington Hills. What a travesty.

Last, but surely not least, 2,000 trees will fall, wetlands will be filled and maintenance buildings will be built directly over a possible source of methane gas. And 27,000 gallons of water per week will be wasted on a golf course.

It's about time someone did something about this waste of precious resources. Surely the education of children and the preservation of the environment is more important than a golf course. Especially when it involves an estimated \$18.4 million diversion of our taxes. Even that amount is questionable and keeps rising ever higher. So far I haven't seen figures for the tunnel under Halsted.

All of this is for the exclusive benefit of a minority of the citizens of Farmington Hills. Something is clearly wrong here and needs to be investigated.

Mary Johnston
Farmington Hills

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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