

# OPINION

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Thursday, May 30, 2002

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## Farmington Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

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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 Bibile, 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 set of uncertainty, with the departure of Superintendent Tom Tatman.

Tatman is expected to be selected as the new chief of Waterford Schools, and his departure will leave a void that 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 Tatman, 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 point of view, but as someone who considered teaching 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.

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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 Bosley, 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, break-even, 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 our 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 what neighboring communities plan to do. It was not a "no brainer" or a "done deal", and at this time we are recommending that the district not implement a later start time.

It seems every year, more communities are getting involved and trying to encourage more 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 that we do 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 volunteer or at least take some time to consider how important these rivers are to the health of our communities.

Happy River Day!

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 very 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, infuriously, 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-cheek 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.

Slowly, 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 never 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 flag. 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 their fallen comrade.

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

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 Sun Marino Golf Course to 18 holes.

Meanwhile, the Farmington school district has a \$6.2 million deficit. Is the Farmington school board that unknowing about the value of the property it owns?

My suggestion to the City Council that the money rightfully belongs to the public school was met with incredulous indignation. This Eleven Pines 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 acres across Halsted, 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 that 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

### Memorial Day

I wanted to share with your readers an email I received this week. Out of the goodness 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 much more than a day off, cook outs, family get-togethers, the ability to take a long needed nap; it is a time to express our thanks to all those who have made it possible to enjoy the aforementioned.

There is much discussion about Proposal A and how it should be changed to reflect newer 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 \$1,016,000? This occurred on March 22, 1999. The City then turned around

and 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.

### Mall:

#### Letters to the Editor

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