

OUR VIEWS

Council gives wreaths a break

Farmington City Council members did a really nice thing Monday night, something that should improve downtown relationships all around.

A few weeks ago, we and other downtown businesses received a flier inviting us to decorate a wreath for the holiday season. Said wreaths were to be hung on the pedestrian walkway lamps, which to us sounded like a very spiffy idea.

Downtown merchants wanted to build on the success of their scarecrow promotion, and rightly so. The scarecrows added a special charm to downtown streets, they were all well-kept and promptly cleaned up when the promotion ended.

We had so much fun with our newspaper carrier scarecrow, in fact, that we were excited about creating a wreath.

The merchants association pre-selected a size, so that the decorations would be uniform.

They forgot just one little detail: Sharing the idea with the Downtown Development Association, who in turn would present it to City Council members for approval.

That procedure has been in place for some time. The merchants' association, however, has not.

As merchant Barbara Goins said, in a voice stressed by laryngitis, "We have no clue what we're doing."

Officials might have argued that they should. Instead, they chose to approve the plan to put wreaths near the top of the light poles, all facing the same direction. Their tone was respectful and encouraging, and they seemed genuinely excited about the prospect.

Maybe it doesn't seem like a big deal. After all, what were they going to do - play the Grinch this close to Christmas?

But given that we're always Johnny on the Spot when we disagree, it seems appropriate to applaud when they do the right thing as well.

McNamara probe needs public airing

On Nov. 22, FBI agents and Michigan State Police executed a search warrant at the Wayne County executive offices and the campaign headquarters of County Executive Edward McNamara.

Subpoenas were served on three McNamara aides to appear before a grand jury.

Though state and federal agents were tight-lipped on the reason for the search and subpoenas, it was generally presumed that they were searching for documents related to county contracts, especially those for new airport construction and maintenance, and a possible link between campaign contributions and the awarding of contracts.

McNamara's response: "We hope this is not politically motivated."

We share that hope. But we also believe that enough questions have been raised to warrant a thorough investigation.

McNamara has been a dynamic, politically aggressive and even visionary county executive.

But his administration has been stalked by charges of cronyism, intimidation of opponents, contracts for contributions and conducting public business behind closed doors.

He has also been accused of protecting himself by moving his associates into positions that would keep him from being investigated, including former county attorney Jennifer Granholm, now the governor-elect.

Accusations are easy to make and difficult to prove. But we believe this cloud over McNamara will have a damaging effect on Granholm's ability to govern.

If this is a response to state Senate hearings or to a report filed by Granholm with state police, then that should be made public.

If there is evidence of improper conduct, that should be made public. This investigation should not be allowed to drag on without resolution.

It is too easy to dismiss this investigation as "politics" when real concerns have been raised by Republicans and Democrats. But politics certainly is an element.

The public deserves a better explanation.

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.



The Wolter family of Farmington Hills and Elmhurst, Ill., began their shopping season at Laurel Park Place. Merchants enjoyed a better-than-anticipated season opener this past weekend.

LETTERS

Incensed by ad

So, voters are "tired of negative campaigns?" Well this gun-owning voter was incensed by the anti-gun ad by the Million Mom March in the Nov. 3 Observer.

So Joe Knollenberg "opposed assault weapon ban?" The terms "assault weapon," "AK-47" and "UZI" are generic and almost meaningless. The true full automatic military versions have always been tightly federally controlled, not that criminals are overly inconvenienced, only law-abiding gun owners.

So the "Brady Law has stopped nearly one million terrorists, criminals, etc.?" That figure is grossly exaggerated, there have been only a handful of prosecutions under that law. Most purchase denials are the result of system delay and error. I myself was delayed for two days recently.

There is no "Gun Show Loophole." The same laws apply at gun shows as anywhere else.

So "Knollenberg always voted with gun lobby extremists?" Joe Knollenberg has courageously defended the Second Amendment to the Constitution, the right to keep and bear arms, the bulwark of all our freedoms, and I say good for him.

John M. Patrick
Farmington Hills

Reactions to column

The Nov. 21 Observer mentioned chairman Phil Power "would be pleased to get reactions" to his column. Here are mine: "Universities can't match the lobbying muscle flexed by the labor unions or big corporations or the trial lawyers."

Educators have much support from classrooms and communities. Universities are politically correct and very popular with voters.

"Michigan spends an average of \$6,795 per student at our public universities. This is hardly generous." I graduated from Detroit's Cooley High in 1943, ineligible for scholarship funds because my father owned a small business. During the 60's and 70's my wife and I put three children through MSU and one through U of M. We paid an average of \$3,000 per student, including room and board. The combined earnings from our two jobs made them ineligible for scholarships.

"Cut state support and tuitions go up; increase state support and tuition increases go down." Deficits and rising tuition are newsworthy; I never read of surplus funds or tuition cuts. Budgets are adjusted to spend available money.

Students signing vouchers for the state to pay have little reason to reduce needless costs.

"Taxpayers are spending \$1.8 billion on honing our best and brightest kids in college" is not entirely accurate. Racial preference takes precedence over bright at U of M.

"\$30,000 per year per inmate versus \$5,795 per college student is a compelling sign that our spending priorities are seriously out of whack." Sending inmates to college might be the solution. Their parents don't earn too much, many are minorities and if they don't show

improvement give them a whack.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Farmington gem

Nestled deep in Farmington's downtown shopping plaza at Farmington Road and Grand River, hides a fabulous, clean and friendly eatery.

While the sign may draw those looking for a quick breakfast, Coney dog or salad, it's missing those who enjoy home style meals remembered from the days of a less hurried time.

The owners, Tina Kircos and Arden Bitri, take pride in their growing diner, often greeting their customers by name. Impeccably clean, cozy and reasonably priced, Tina's Coney Island adds to the charm and character Farmington is known for.

If you enjoy comfort foods such as stuffed cabbage, meat loaf with real mashed potatoes, beef tips with noodles, stuffed peppers with gently oven-roasted potatoes or spaghetti with meat balls, Tina's home style cooking is sure to please.

Included with the meal, it's tough to choose between the homemade soups or salad. The soup menu varies each day from cabbage, vegetable beef-barley, cream of potato and navy bean however, the delicious chicken noodle and lemon rice are always available.

FYI: the rice pudding beats the competition. Enjoy!

Dan and Toby Gosselin
Farmington Hills

Lend them applause

As a frequent attendee at North Farmington High School's theater productions, I felt it incumbent upon me to write in and laud the amazing production of "Lend Me a Tenor" I had the privilege of seeing.

I felt the directors took a potentially controversial play and presented it in a completely tasteful and frankly, hilarious manner. This successful interpretation is in no small part due to the fine performances of the actors, all of whom seemed appropriately cast.

Having seen several professional theater productions, including Broadway, I can honestly say that this play was easily as good as any out there, professional or otherwise.

The inspired direction of the Cobbs, coupled with the strength of a cast who no doubt have promising professional theater careers, have me eagerly awaiting the spring musical performance.

Jennifer Leigh
Farmington Hills

Make project elective

Last January the new graduation requirements were presented to parents for their input.

The parents readily agreed with the changes to English, science, social studies, math, etc. Most college-bound students were already meeting those high standards. However, parents had grave concerns about adding a senior project

on top of all the other requirements. Currently students attend school for more days and more hours than their parents did; and must graduate with 27 credits out of a possible 30. No study halls are available or allowed. Their course load of seven subjects is the equivalent of 21 college credits per semester.

Parents were adamant that the senior project be an elective. In February, parents were told the senior project was being "tabled." That was false. The senior project was presented to the school board behind the parents' backs, where it was approved.

Parents were again told (in October) that the district wasn't anywhere near ready to implement the senior project. Yet at the November 5 school board meeting, parents learned the senior project was being piloted next semester at ALL of the high schools.

Senior projects should be made an elective. Otherwise, the district's claim that they want input from the community and aren't trying to cram their agenda down anyone's throat is just another lie.

Patricia A. Alsopach
Farmington Hills

Right on the money

Mark Peters' recent letter "Concerned about downtown" was right on the money.

He said exactly what I have been thinking for some time now. I would like to add my two cents regarding the new Burger King on Grand River, this thing is an eyesore.

When given the golden opportunity presented by the complete demolition of the previous building, those with the power instead permitted this hideous example of trashy architecture to be one of the most prominent features of our historic downtown. The parking lot illumination is so bright I am sure it can be seen from geo-synchronous orbit. A very ugly corner of Farmington has become uglier.

Perhaps it is not the goal of the DDA and the Planning Commission to be more like Northville or Rochester, but more like Canton or Westland. What's next, vinyl siding for the Warner mansion?

Robert Rossi
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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QUOTABLE

"Make sure you leave in enough time. And be patient."

- Michigan State Trooper Cynthia Edwards