

## OUR VIEWS

## Candidate debate needs voices

Rumor has it the Farmington Area Republican Club already has a candidate debate planned for the upcoming Farmington Board of Education election.

While they're not ready to publish the specifics, it does speak to the issue of immediacy. The filing deadline for the June 9 election is 4 p.m. on April 7.

Only one candidate, community activist Karen Bolsen, has officially launched her campaign for the seat vacated by Linda Enberg, who currently serves as board president. While Bolsen is a very worthy candidate, we hope more district residents will step forward and make this a true race.

Why? Because so many education issues cry out for an active community forum. Campaigns raise consciousness, they bring forward debate and discussion on topics like open enrollment for out of district students, special education costs, diversity, school security and all manner of challenges facing Farmington Public Schools.

We're all faced with the realities of war, of a downturned economy, lost jobs and a frighteningly insecure future. Whether or not they're able to voice their concerns, many of our children are truly afraid, and that's unfamiliar ground. In a post-9/11 world, finding comfort and a sense of ease grows more and more difficult — and schools should be a safe haven, a place where kids believe they are cared for and protected.

As its communities build out, Farmington Schools faces steady or even declining enrollments, vacant student desks and fewer resource dollars, no matter what the folks in Lansing decide about state aid. The bottom line, district officials have said, is quality education for our kids — but what does the word "quality" mean?

These questions and concerns deserve more than just a cursory glance in a campaign brochure. They should be discussed honestly and vigorously in public forums, and we urge FARC and other local groups to follow through with sponsoring such debates.

But these events can't go forward without committed people willing to put forth the time and effort, to bring their ideas and thoughts to the table. We urge anyone who has the heart for public service and for our community's children to step forward.

Don't put off making this decision. The clock's ticking.

## Bipartisan sprawl council good idea

Comedians would likely suggest the only thing stopping Detroit and southeast Michigan's development sprawl is Ann Arbor, Brighton and Port Huron.

The issue of smart land use has caught the attention of several governors, including ours. Jennifer Granholm has convinced her fellow Democrats and the Republicans across the aisle that — on this issue, at least — their interest can coincide.

She has appointed a 26-member Michigan Land Use Leadership Council. Their first meeting is Monday in Lansing, and more meetings will be held in our area in late April. Co-chairs are former Republican Gov. Bill Milliken, and former Democratic Attorney General Frank Kelley, both strong politicians with real-world savvy.

"The ... Council will be instrumental in developing a cooperative, common sense approach to how we use our land. There is a tremendous need to protect our forests and farms, prevent the unplanned and unwise growth that chokes suburban communities and threatens our water quality, and to breathe new life into our cities and older suburbs," Granholm says.

We agree there is a need. But watching governments try to control sprawl is an achingly painful process because so much of what government does creates or gives birth to sprawl.

There have been some phases in our suburbs, projects like the redevelopment in Redford at the Volney Smith school site, and the denser housing planned in downtown Plymouth for the Wilcox and Daisy building projects. Cherry Hill Village in Canton has owners of pretty expensive homes swapping bigger yards for parks, and for a "small town" feel with unobtrusive shops and a community theater.

We will watch with interest as the council takes up this issue. To what extent are they willing to take part in dispelling the American myth that "all growth is good?" The larger myth may well be the very idea that government can stop sprawl at all, because the real discipline will start there.



BILL BRISLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

When it comes to the concept of "Paying It Forward" — remember last year's Everybody's Reading project? — Phil Hall and Eric Shapiro provide a fine example. Eric's idea to make inspiring banners for his wrestling teammates was given a real boost by Phil's willingness to not only let Eric use a \$7,000 machine, but teach him embroidering basics.

## LETTERS

## Site condo error

The article by Mary Ann Bernardi in your Feb. 9, 2003, New Homes section addresses the issue of "sprawl" in a superficial way, but her conclusions are not far off base.

However, I must correct a serious error in her mention of site condominiums. The land on which units are placed is not owned in common, but is exclusively the property of the unit owner with the same rights and potential restrictions as in any subdivision.

Maintenance responsibilities for the common areas of the development are also the same as in a traditional subdivision, but are more easily enforced. Roads in a site condominium may be private or public.

Ms. Bernardi should check her facts before maligning a very beneficial method of dividing property.

Norman Finkelstein  
Farmington Hills

## Power of prayer

Let's pray for our enemies and ourselves, and possibly avoid war; saving thousands of lives.

War is part of a fallen and imperfect world. At the same time, governments like the U.S. also have a responsibility to protect innocent people from domestic and foreign criminals, terrorists and weapons of mass destruction.

We also have responsibility to free the repressed and persecuted people of Iraq. But let's not forget that God is also greater than all our efforts.

When we ask, we must humbly realize that we in the U.S. don't ultimately deserve his protection just because we are Americans. Why? Because none of us are truly righteous in our individual motives and behavior as a nation or as individuals.

If we humbly ask for mercy for Saddam and for ourselves and if God grants our request, He will get the Glory (not we or our nation).

The Bible says...that "the heart of the king (or the enemy's king) is in the hand of the Lord" and "when a person walks uprightly, even his/her enemies are at peace with them."

If we pray first and Saddam doesn't lay down his arms, then we will, in a fallen and imperfect world, have to fight to defend ourselves. I pray Saddam will step down and we won't have to wage war.

Barry Malek  
Farmington

## No OOD choice

As a taxpaying resident of Farmington for the past 14 years and a parent of a Farmington Public School student, I feel very uncomfortable granting the Farmington School Board my permission to give away my hard-earned tax dollars

to somebody else who doesn't live in Farmington/Farmington Hills and doesn't pay into the Farmington School District. In fact, the school board does not have my permission to do so.

That being the case, not only do I expect, but I require the Farmington School Board to vote NO on section 105 out of district school of choice.

Annalee Morrison  
Farmington

## Open government

I first met Aldo Vagnorzi the same way most Farmington Hills residents have, by him knocking on my door while running for office. And again, like most local residents I came to like and respect him as a community leader concerned with the issues I feel are important.

In fact it is Mr. Vagnorzi who, through his inspiration and example, led me to run for Oakland County Commissioner last year. I took his example and knocked on about 4,000 doors and talked to many of my neighbors about what I believed and wanted to do in office.

Though my walking can't compare to the over 15,000 doors Aldo knocked on, it was appreciated by the folks I talked to. The name I heard positively mentioned more than any other was Aldo. Many folks told me I was only the second candidate they had ever met, with of course Aldo being the other.

Today I received notice of a town hall meeting Aldo has organized to discuss the issue of prescription drug costs and access. Anyone who cares about the issues that Lansing will decide in our current times of economic and budget uncertainty must try to attend such meetings and/or call Aldo here or in Lansing.

In America we are the government, and our representatives must not only work in our best interest but also keep in close contact with their constituents. Aldo is doing this the same way he did in local government, by opening up government and constantly talking to his constituents at every local event he can.

I could not ask for a better representative. Thank you, Aldo.

Jim Mash  
Farmington Hills

## Here to stay

So Farmington Hills resident "B" Woods thinks my family and I should pack up and leave the area.

While your friends at city hall may have successfully run the formidable Jeannie Jones Audette out of town, that simply will not be the case with my family. If you recall, "B," Ms. Audette's home filled with the toilet paper that you flushed from the toilet at your home. When her complaints fell on the deaf ears of our fine council, she sold her home at a loss and left town.

When my family bitterly complained to council of the incompetent actions of city

employees in extinguishing the fire at our home and the subsequent retaliation, once again, we witnessed nothing but institutional denial and deafness.

Sorry "B," we're here to stay. And when it's your turn for disaster to strike (trust me, it will), always remember that we are listed in the phone book. We will be happy to help you and your family recover from your loss.

Mark T. Gordenier  
Farmington Hills

## Snobbery

I was appalled to witness the collective snobbery displayed by some parents at the public forum regarding Schools of Choice on March 4.

When Mrs. Willard, a parent from out-of-district, spoke to support the pilot "schools of choice" project, she was publicly humiliated by a group of parents. After she expressed how excited she would be to have the opportunity to send her children to Farmington Public Schools, the group in the audience collectively muttered "well, just move (into Farmington!)"

Be honest, that group was saying "Unless you can afford to live here, stay out of our schools. We don't want you here." What intolerance!

I was ashamed to witness that ugly behavior, and I am appalled that Mrs. Willard was publicly demeaned. If I had been at that meeting, instead of watching it on TV-10, I would have been compelled to stand up and say "For Shame!" to that group. I for one would welcome Mrs. Willard and her children into our district.

Those muttering parents need to examine their behavior and think about what it says about their real sense of "community."

Carolyn Das  
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

"I feel positive that we will keep the schools safe."

— Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer

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