

OUR VIEWS

Here comes that rainy day feeling

City officials might want to sit down before reading this, likewise school board members.

We're about to pay them a compliment. In a day and age when state and federal government funds have been cut back to bare minimums, when all around us, cities and school districts are laying off staff, closing facilities and using the word "bankruptcy" with alarming frequency, the people who run our local governments have kept financial pain here to a minimum.

Taxpayers often question large fund balances in public coffers and wonder why their hard-earned contributions are left sitting in bank account when officials could use them to ease the tax burden.

Although the effort goes largely unrecognized, area residents are seeing a benefit from this practice. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, local officials have wisely increased their financial stores in order to help smooth the transition from boom times to burn times.

We're not saying local governments should boost property taxes to increase their savings accounts, and that's not what's happened here. Instead of making what would have been popular tax cuts, officials held the moderate line.

In the City of Farmington, for example, about \$100,000 of fund balance money will be used to offset enormous increases in employee benefits, the direct result of a poor economy. As a result, there are no proposed changes in the level of service provided to residents and no anticipated layoffs.

Considering officials estimate the restrictions of Proposal A cost them more than \$400,000 annually - because housing turnover and the resulting increase in property tax revenues is slow in this small city - and state revenue sharing has dropped like a stone, the city's budget balancing act is no small feat.

Similar stories can be told by officials in Farmington Schools and the City of Farmington Hills, although Hills officials also have the benefit of a very large tax base. But everyone's still sounding the alarm, because there's no end in sight to the hard times.

A fund balance isn't the cure for anyone's financial woes, and residents should be prepared for additional belt-tightening and talk of tax increases in the coming years. Still, we applaud officials for having put money aside to ease the transition.

There's absolutely no question that rainy day they've saved for is here.

Time to clean up state's waste laws

We all create waste. The more we consume, the more waste we create.

Area residents have been outraged to discover that Toronto is sending all its trash to a Michigan landfill in Sumpter Township.

Attempts to ban importation of trash from Ontario and neighboring states have met with a constitutional roadblock. Federal courts have ruled that trash is an interstate commodity and interstate trade is constitutionally under the jurisdiction of the federal government. In addition, the North American Free Trade Agreement allows for the importation of trash from Canada.

Federal and state legislators and Gov. Jennifer Granholm have proposed several initiatives to deal with this problem.

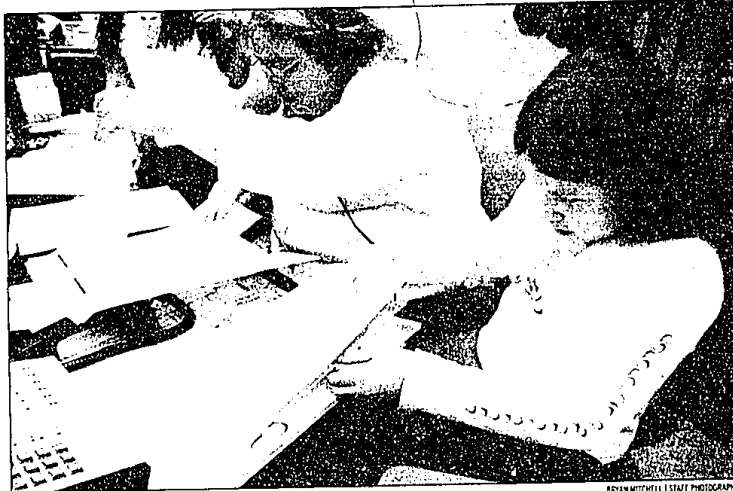
Sen. Debbie Stabenow has proposed that importing trash from Canada be stopped until the trash meets existing environmental laws and passes Environmental Protection Agency inspection for hazardous materials. (Michigan also exports some hazardous waste to Canadian landfills).

In a letter to Wayne State University students for a report on importing trash, Granholm wrote: "While out-of-state waste is a serious problem, 80 percent of the total trash put in our landfills comes from Michigan, and we must work to reduce the amount of trash we create."

To that end we support the governor's proposals to clean up our own trash disposal policies.

We agree with the governor that the Department of Environmental Quality should increase its inspections of landfills to be sure that the landfills do not accept items prohibited by Michigan law such as motor oil and car batteries.

We also support a proposal to expand the state's bottle and can deposit law to include more categories. The fight for a clean environment begins with us.



Ten-year-old Sarah Mazuchowski works with her aunt, Debbie DePriest, at Republic Bank on Northwestern in Farmington Hills during Take Your Child to Work Day. Many local businesses participated in this effort to give kids a realistic look at what goes on in the business world.

LETTERS

Shoreline

Most of my friends have heard me speak in depth over the years about the need to manage and improve the quality of the Great Lakes.

Furthermore, I'm a strong believer in riparian rights. For the last few years we have had the lowest water levels in my memory, and that will probably be the case again this year. Property owners on the lakes often have to contend with eelgrass, zebra mussel shells and plant debris. To be honest our beaches are a mess.

The State House just passed a common sense bill, HB 4257, which would allow property owners greater flexibility to groom these beaches. One of the Detroit papers recently wrote an article on it. My heart's desire is that this bill becomes law.

From a local perspective, I was curious how our own State Representative voted.

Oops! Vagnozzi voted against it. He voted against good public policy and sound property management. Based on how the vote went, it's not like it was a straightline party vote for either side, so this can't be dismissed as Aldo being a grumpy partisan hack.

Maybe he doesn't like property rights, or perhaps he despises the tourism industry. My concern is that he may be so provincial that he doesn't understand the nature of life on our lakes - and that's not acceptable for anyone serving in Michigan's government.

Back in February, your newspaper published a guest column by Aldo entitled "Now is the time to stop the trashing of Michigan." It's disappointing that he won't apply that philosophy to our shorelines.

Christopher W. Cummins
Farmington Hills

Outraged

In an April 20 letter titled "Appalled," Mr. Ibrahim suggested that State Rep. Aldo Vagnozzi is unpatriotic and doesn't support our troops. That's an outrage. For one, Vagnozzi is himself a veteran who served our country in WWII. He supported the Michigan House resolution which pledged support for our troops.

Also, he was the only legislator present at the Support the Troops rally in Farmington Hills held on April 12. Additionally, he has called on area organizations to raise money to benefit our troops and their families. I applaud Vagnozzi's efforts and I will be proud to march in uniform with Aldo Vagnozzi in the upcoming Memorial Day parade.

Ken Murray
Farmington

Thanks

Several months ago my wife, Linda, and I returned home from open house at North Farmington High School to find our youngest of four, our baby, downloading and filling out college applications. It was at that point I realized that this, our 21st year of being Farmington Public School parents, was to be our last.

Since that night, I have much time to reflect on these past 21 years. Many of the Board members as well as administrators

will attest to the fact that I have never been shy about confronting issues that I disagreed with. These same people will hopefully also recall the times that I acknowledged my support of policies and programs, although, regrettably not as often as I would have liked to.

I look back at the learning and social experiences that we, as a family, benefited from during those years at Forest Elementary, Warner Middle School and North Farmington High Schools and appreciate the efforts of the many fine people who make up our school district. The smorgasboard of curricular as well as extra-curricular opportunities, coupled with the superb staff behind them, have allowed each of our children to explore and develop their individual interests in a safe and caring environment.

As the wording on the bumper sticker states, we are truly proud parents of Farmington Public School students and would be honored, one day, to be proud grandparents of the same. To the dedicated men and women who sit on the Board of Education, I offer my sincere thanks for the quality experiences that they have provided and continue to provide for our children as well as the entire community. My children's successes in life are largely due to their tireless efforts in providing exemplary leadership to the thousands of team members that make up the Farmington Public School District.

Steve Kaplan
Farmington Hills

Solution

Here is a solution to the Reverend Brewer's complaint:

If you are a resident of the City of Farmington and should come across a non-domesticated injured or sick animal, just drop it off at his Valley View Circle doorstep. Certainly the Reverend is keeping the secret as to a more humane way to dispose of such a tragic situation. Give him a call, he's listed in the local telephone book.

V. Ziegler
Farmington Hills

Attitude adjustment

While I agree with you and many others that something may need to be done about parking in Farmington, I don't think improved signage will work. We are dealing with signs that vary clearly state that there is "no parking, standing, or stopping" in the fire lane in front of the stores that stretch from Great Harvest to Bargain books and yet there are those motorists who park there while they "just run in to mail a letter" etc. Go to Shawansee Park and even though there are numerous signs that state that all dogs must be on a leash you can find owners who let their dogs run free on a daily basis. Until people realize that the rules apply to everyone, including themselves, all the signs in the world won't help.

We are dealing with the same people who will gladly park their cars a quarter mile away from the entrance to Twelve Oaks Mall and yet will not walk more than 100 feet in downtown Farmington. What is needed is an attitude readjustment.

Robert W. Kirkland
Farmington

Job opportunities

Like many of us I've missed and have worried about the future of former Iraq Information Minister, Mohammad Said al-Shahhat, a.k.a. Baghdad Bob.

Thinking long and maybe not too hard I've come up with some job possibilities for him.

President of:
The World is Flat Society
The Elvis is Alive and in Kalamazoo Club
The Dewey Won Newspaper Editors' Society

The Moon Landing Was Faked Club
Press Secretary for:
Emcee
Russia
The Dixie Chicks
Peter Arnett
Mayor of:
Brigidoun
Roswell, New Mexico
Truth Or Consequences, New Mexico
Hell, Michigan

Ginny Green
Farmington Hills

Huggin' and kissin'

What's with all this huggin' and kissin' in Baghdad? The Iraqis are free and most seem very happy about it.

The liberals, leftists, and protesters have nothing to celebrate having denied the war's efficacy and necessity. They can't share in the reception for the troops' homecoming or demonstrate their appreciation of the efficiency of our servicemen and women in the Iraq conflict resulting in the freedom of the Iraqi people.

The liberals and leftists are looking for the next crab after trying for dissent among the American people with criticism of our troops' too rapid deployment and overland progress in the early days of the war, followed by complaints that the troops were bogged down in desert sands, the possibility losing the war, that an errand-bomb demolished a distant outhouse.

Nothing seemed to go right with the "American" liberals. But isn't that always the way when left-thinking socialist mentalities back the despot, the terrorist, those who would deny peace and freedom to those who love freedom and will fight for it?

Neil Goodwin
Livonia

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

"Art doesn't come out of thin air, but it starts with the first stroke of the brush, the first song, the first dance."

- Lowell Bolleau, Farmington Area Arts Commission

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