

In Our Opinion . . .

Pay Hike Proposed In Township, But The Reasons Remain Obscure

In a two-page single-spaced typewritten report, a salaries and pensions committee has recommended a pay increase for Farmington Township's three top elected officers. At the very beginning, it recommends a salary of \$12,500 for the supervisor plus \$1,500 expenses; \$11,000 for the clerk plus \$1,500 expenses; and \$10,000 for the treasurer plus \$300 expenses.

Thereafter, the committee's report becomes obscure.

The first noticeable defect is that the current salaries aren't listed, so one doesn't know how much of a raise the committee is recommending. (Supervisor Curtis Hall provided the missing data on current pay — \$10,000 plus \$1,200 expenses for himself, \$8,500 plus \$500 for the clerk, and \$8,000 plus \$300 for the treasurer.)

The committee then says it has taken certain "matters into consideration" in arriving at its recommendations. Perhaps it did, but there's no proof.

For example, the committee finds that "positions of comparable responsibilities and work in private industry and commerce" get higher pay. And just what are these "comparable" positions? Is the supervisor comparable to a gas station manager, a plant superintendent, or a division general manager? Is the clerk comparable to the secretary of a real estate corporation, an advertising agency or Ford Motor Co? Is the township treasurer comparable to the treasurer of Metropolitan Bank of Farmington, National Bank of Detroit, or Chase Manhattan Bank? The report fails to say.

The committee argues that current salaries, set six years ago, have been reduced in inflation. Interesting, and true. But how true? How much has the price index risen in the last six years, and how does this compare, in percentage terms, with the recommended salary increases? It could be that the proposed salary increases are still too little; or it could be that they go beyond anything needed to keep pace with inflation. Unfortunately, the committee fails to offer a single fact or statistic.

"This committee strongly feels that a citizen should not be required to sustain a severe financial loss if elected to public office," the report says. And just what is "the financial burden of public office" in dollar terms. The committee fails to offer a single fact, guess or even opinion.

The committee says the increase proposed for the supervisor "is in line with the salaries and expenses paid supervisors in comparable townships."

What is a "comparable" township? Which ones are they? The committee doesn't say.

A couple of years ago, the voters rejected proposed salary increases for township officers. (The committee fails to say so, but the proposed new salaries are less than the ones beaten by the voters.)

Salaries are, then, a sensitive political issue. Therefore, the committee public report's failure to justify its recommendations with a single fact is doubly disappointing. It fails to inform the public, and it puts the township officers in a weak position.

Until the committee begins putting a few facts in its official report, it will be impossible to form a valid opinion on its pay increase proposal.

The Fault Isn't The Assessment But The Property Tax Itself

Like every other municipality in the state, the City of Farmington is undertaking a reassessment of property for tax purposes. Farmington Township is scheduled to do the same in 1968.

Sometimes, as in the City of Detroit, the occasion is accompanied by long and loud wails of protest. In the Detroit case, two council members—political figures—have jumped into the act with ideas about how assessing should be done.

We liked the Detroit Free Press' Feb. 16 editorial analysis of what the squawks were about and what really ought to be done about it. Detroit's city government is unusual because the council itself sits as a board of review; in most cities and townships, the board of review is a separate body. Other than that, most of what the Free Press said can be applied in any area.

Excerpts:

"Detroit Common Council has inherited from some more primitive time the role, once a year, of a board of review for property tax assessments. This year, because of sweeping reassessments, it's a particularly mad scene.

"The outcries of citizens are understandable. They should be upset. But too many are outraged for the wrong reasons and too few are disturbed for the right reasons.

"In the first category, whether a property owner's assessment has risen 10 percent, 30 percent, or even 60 percent isn't relevant. The test is whether it's set at half its fair market value. The assessors say they've got the right figure. They may be wrong. If they are, it should be changed. But a large increase isn't proof. It may be the taxpayer's been getting off cheap.

"Also, the hardship of the taxpayer, unfortunately, shouldn't lower an assessment. Fairness, not charity, can be demanded of the tax collector. . . . If it does otherwise, the council will become the forum for an endless number of hard-luck cases.

"In general, though, complaints should not be directed at the assessment, but at the property tax itself. It is this tax which is unfair and, though this opinion is widely expressed by government leaders, little is being done about it.

"But the new assessments are only part of a more complicated story.


"To understand the rest takes a trip into the exotic land of state equalized values (SEV). The city last year taxed all property, real and personal, at an assessed value of \$4,386 million. The State Tax Commission, under mandate from the Constitution to fix assessments at half their market value, said that this was not high enough."

Looking Back in the Files

5 YEARS AGO MARCH 1, 1962	10 YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 28, 1957	15 YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 28, 1952
Groundbreaking Groundbreaking ceremonies were held last Friday for the new Detroit area branch office of First Federal Savings of Detroit.	Larger Lots A proposal to increase the minimum lot area, particularly in Residential Three and Four Zones was discussed in detail before the Township Planning Board at its regular meeting Thursday evening.	Zoning Inspector Justice Thomas Tardy was elected temporary zoning inspector by the Township Board with full power to act under the provisions of the new Zoning Ordinance. According to the ordinance, the inspector must, within 10 days after receipt of building plans, either approve or disapprove them.
Mills for Industry A proposal will be placed to vote of Township residents later this year asking for an approval on a possible cpl millage pledge in order to make it possible to bring water and sewer facilities to the Township.	Bar Building A proposed resolution to the effect that the Township Board go on record as doing everything possible to discourage building in the Township until adequate water, sewer and social facilities are available.	Farmington Road Workmen are putting in a new culvert drain pipe across Farmington Road north of Colfax in preparation for the highway widening and resurfacing of Farmington Road.

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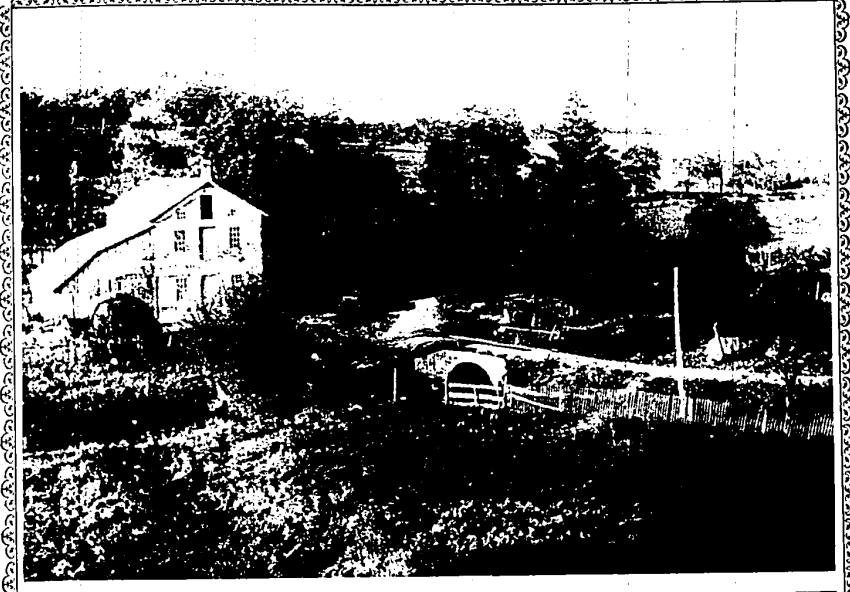
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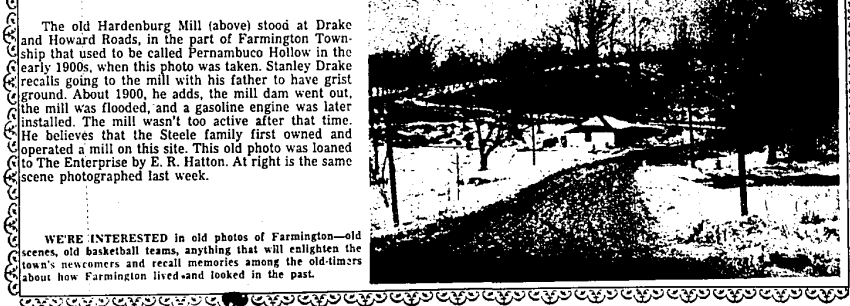
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The old Hardenburg Mill (above) stood at Drake and Howard Roads, in the part of Farmington Township that used to be called Pernambuco Hollow in the early 1900s, when this photo was taken. Stanley Drake recalls going to the mill with his father to have grist ground. About 1900, he adds, the mill dam went out, the mill was flooded, and a gasoline engine was later installed. The mill wasn't too active after that time. He believes that the Steele family first owned and operated a mill on this site. This old photo was loaned to The Enterprise by E. R. Hatton. At right is the same scene photographed last week.



WE'RE INTERESTED in old photos of Farmington—old scenes, old basketball teams, anything that will enlighten the town's newcomers and recall memories among the old-timers about how Farmington lived and looked in the past.



163'S FIRST EAGLES—Sporting 21 merit badges each are Mark Ots (left) and Bill Borgan, who were awarded the Eagle rank, Scouting's highest, at ceremonies last week in Wooddale School. They are members of Troop 163, sponsored by Antioch Lutheran Church, and are both sophomores at North Farmington High School. Mark is the son of Mr. and Mrs. George Ots of 5529 Normanhurst, and Bill is the son of Mr. and Mrs. William C. Borgan of 28090 Hawberry.

'Death Of A Salesman' Tough-Type Theater

By SHIRLEY BERGER

When the Farmington Players decided to do Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," they hacked off a tough piece of theatrical meat to chew. But at least one Farmington theater buff expressed the opinion that he never wants to see the play again because nothing could top the performance he saw Saturday night at the barn.

It is difficult to "like" this play. Someone can absorb the tragedy of "King Lear" or "Medea" much more readily than the one of Willie Loman. It is too immediate and probes the contemporary psyche much too painfully.

George Britton is Willie Loman. He establishes his fact early on, and never for a moment departs from the characterization. He brings to the part an additional quality not detectable in the television portrayal of Lee Cobb, for instance, an inner core of sweetness in the man which keeps cropping up regardless of his gambits from frustration to futility and back again.

HE HAS LOTS OF ABLE assistance from the cast. Bessie Hannan plays the long-suffering wife and tremulous, un-questioning loyalty but sparks moments of fire when she feels that Willie is seriously threatened by his son Bill's antagonism and Hap's indifference.

Jim Blovis is Hap and William Salisbury as Biff, besides being incredibly swift with their costume changes, entrances and exits, turn in highly convincing and consistent performances.

Cliff Dickson's amazing accomplishment with the tri-level set deserves special kudos. He utilized every square inch of space on the limited stage, and that coupled with George Nahstoll's and Betty Craig's lighting effects, sustains the proper mood and tempo of the play.

Joe Papp and Jan Salisbury may take the bows as co-producers.

Dennis Broadhead effects a credible transformation from bespectacled young egghead to horn-rimmed mature

County Rejects Mailbox Claims

The Oakland County Road Commission has disclaimed responsibility for mailboxes located on public rights-of-way that are knocked down during snow removal.

The Road Commission made a formal public statement on the matter because of what it called "excessive invalid claims and complaints." The full text:

"When a mailbox is knocked down in the process of snow removal or seasonal maintenance work, it can be assumed we are acting in the best interest of the public and the damages are unavoidable.

"As such, neither the public or the Road Commission, acting on behalf of the public, is liable or responsible for any damages.

"In many cases, the mailboxes are in poor condition to begin with, improperly located, or so old has been improperly placed within the right-of-way.

"Therefore, effective immediately, the Oakland County Road Commission's policy will be they will not repair damaged mailboxes, replace or recognize any similar claims.

"Mailboxes, sod and grass are allowed on the public right-of-way for the convenience and benefit of the public; therefore, the Road Commission cannot assume any responsibility for any damages to them.

"The Road Commission will continue its past policy in taking every precaution it can with regard and respect for the property of others within its right-of-way."



Miss Edith Fradt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Fendt, 22835 Maple, Farmington, was one of the seven finalists for the title of Miss Heartbeat of 1967 at the annual Heartbeat Ball at Cleary College, held February 25 in Ypsilanti. Miss Fendt is a first-year student at Cleary.

Local News

By MARIE LONG
GR. 43114

Luther E. Duell, of Orchard Lake Road, is expected home soon from Botsford General Hospital. He is showing decided improvement according to Mrs. Duell. Mr. Duell is president of the Pioneer Golden Age Club of Farmington.

Mrs. Robert (Joan) Styrke has returned home from Botsford where she underwent surgery recently. We all wish Joan the best in her convalescence. Joan is the daughter of Bob Rothenbom, our local Standard dealer on the corner of Powers Road and Grand River.

M. L. RICE, manager of the Farmington Theater Court, is hospitalized at Botsford.

Mrs. J. Paul Charron, of Powers Road, underwent major surgery at St. Mary's Hospital, Livonia, on Feb. 14. Amy is in room 523.

Mrs. Bessie Manley, of Midland Road, has been ill this past week. Mrs. Manley is a Senior Citizen.

Several new people were present at the Pioneer Golden Age Club luncheon on Feb. 22 at St. Alexander's Social Hall. All senior citizens are welcome to attend our meetings on March 8 and 29. Call the Jaycees for transportation. Meetings are held the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month.

MRS. LINWOOD Chambers, of Farmington Road, is enjoying a vacation in Florida. While Mrs. Chambers is away, her son and his family, of California, are caring for her home.

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Exam Set In Fatal Case