

CROWLEY'S

McGosh's Column

Boards and Business



This column is being written in one of those limbo periods, the day before a local election and shortly before a critical appointment is expected to be made by the school board.

It is no coincidence both these bodies are in the midst of a bit of soul-searching regarding their true function.

Why would anybody run for an office with only a fuzzy idea of what the job involves? Or better yet, why would a city council or school board make its first order of business a debate concerning the powers, role, and range of activities proper to the board?

It has long been apparent to this columnist that the main business of local government is overseeing the efficient administration of an ongoing service.

A city council in a rapidly developing, largely vacant area, must make plans for that growth. A school board in a similar area must also look to the future.

But regardless of the need for planning, most of the business before a council or school board is routine, the same this meeting as last, and about the same as what you would expect next week.

One sometimes wonders if the public is willing to accept

this humdrum view of local affairs.

The public clamors for a critical, activist role regarding the city administration.

But the Farmington City Council has traditionally had a clear idea of its role, generally moving through routine business with aplomb, indulging in debate only on matters like zoning, the need for new ordinances, etc.

One might contrast this with the school board, which has, on occasion managed to kill 30 minutes tangled in parliamentary procedure.

This is not to criticize the basic motivation or sincerity of the board members.

But it appears much of what has passed for "conflict" on the school board is actually a basic lack of understanding of what the "business" of the board really is.

One would hope the new board member would be someone who would encourage the school board to act in a straightforward, routine manner on routine matters.

Other criticism aimed at the notion the current council does not take a critical, activist role regarding the city administration.

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County Planning Monster Drain?

By DAN MCGOSH

FARMINGTON
A preliminary study project for a mammoth tunnel to collect all the storm drainage and sewage now running into the Rouge River is being considered by the Wayne County Drain Commission, Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman told the city council Monday.

While he emphasized "years of study" would be necessary before construction could be started, he said Farmington is listed with 22 other communities which could receive immediate benefit from the project.

The Wayne County drain office has filed an application with the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources for federal and state aid for the project.

The concept of the project is to pick up all overflows that discharge directly into the main branch of the river. The county drain commission has identified 44 locations along 33 miles of the river dumping directly into the river.

They believe the project would consist of a huge tunnel 15- to 45- feet in diameter, which would serve as a flood control structure as well as retaining the overflows.

The water would eventually be piped to the Detroit waste water treatment plant for processing.

Estimated cost of the project is \$228 million.

Farmington is currently applying for state and federal money to assist the separation of the combined storm sewer system in the city.

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Respectfully,
Halter C. Sundquist

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