

Wylie Gerdes writes

Participation doesn't mean unending dialogue

One of the issues in the Farmington School District election occurring today is how a school board should operate. How should participation in government be encouraged?

A slightly different slant on the same issue surfaced at a recent Farmington Hills council meeting. Members of the audience were concerned because information about the Farmington Hills budget was not as readily available as they would have liked.

Newspapers and others engaged in watching governments tend toward paranoia when withholding information is inferred. Some governments seem to have similar, usually unfounded fears, when it comes to releasing information.

From both sides, it's clear what is wanted is not information but reassurance—reassurance there is no hanky—panky being committed.

THE CASE of the Farmington School District is a good example of the type. The school district and its board have developed a reputation for shiftness, even though school districts traditionally are more open about information than other governments.

Farmington school officials are neither more nor less talkative to the press than officials in other districts. However, the information available seems to be in a less than useful package.

It's not information of various kinds that people want, it's interpretation.

The school board itself has bent over backwards to involve people in its meetings. It's the wrong kind of involvement, though. What should be encouraged is observation and comment, not the back-and-forth byplay which is a feature of school board meetings.

The Farmington Hills city council ran into the same problem at its budget hearing. There was a dialogue between councilmen and members of the audience over specific items.

FARMINGTON HILLS mayor Fred Lichtman and other councilmen engaged in dialogues with members of the audience over specific comments. Lichtman at one point commented he wanted to make an immediate reply so the answers would be available to reporters at the same time as questions.

Several times during the school board campaign, various candidates have stressed the board's credibility problem. All meetings must be open or some meetings must be closed or meetings should be closed in special instances, the candidates have argued.

It becomes a question of appropriateness. Every resident should have the right to comment on issues before the school board or other government body. Residents, however, should not have the right to argue or engage in direct dialogues with officials during meetings.

Meetings should be held to conduct the business at hand, not endlessly argue political philosophy.

ONE WORKABLE arrangement is to have no item considered on a regular business meeting agenda unless it has been first on a study meeting agenda. Residents can comment at the study sessions but not at regular meetings without special consent.

Then those with interest in a single issue need not bore an entire roomful of people with their ideas. And officials with a particular axe to grind can grind it at a study session rather than a business meeting.

Pernick Drain meeting

An important informational meeting will be held on Thursday in the Southfield Civic Center on the hotly-disputed Pernick Drain.

Many homeowners who live in the Telegraph—Twelve Mile roads area are attempting to stop the installation of a drainage system in the upper Rouge River basin.

The dispute centers around whether this section of the city requires a drain system for excessive flooding conditions.

WE ARE DISAPPOINTED in the composition of the panel which will provide information on the Pernick Drain. All three members support the construction of the drain.

Frank Burn works for the consulting firm of Hubbell, Roth and Clark. The firm will engineer the drain if it is finally approved.

The second panelist is Dr. David Drown of Swanson Environmental Associates. This group has been retained by Hubbell, Roth and Clark. For obvious reasons, they also want the drain built.

George Kuhn will be the final panelist. He is also a backer of the project.

Despite the bias of the panelists, Thursday night's meeting should be interesting. It should give those attending a precise idea of why these people support the construction of Pernick Drain.

Interested citizens should make a point of being on hand for the meeting.

terested citizens a chance to ask questions before a decision is made.

Are diet pills addictive?

(The following column was prepared by the Farmington Area Council. The organization operates the Rap Line crisis intervention telephone service, youth and parent counseling service, and substance abuse education service.)

Are diet pills addictive?

Diet pills usually contain amphetamines or amphetamine-like drugs "uppers." No controlled clinical studies have ever demonstrated evidence of physical dependence upon stimulants. However, a high degree of tolerance rapidly develops to amphetamines, demanding higher doses to produce the same effects.

These drugs are strongly alluring. They can reinforce the user to continue use both because of an added feeling of being able to "get things done" and to avoid depression and exhaustion after the effects wear off. People who use diet pills over a long period of time often fall into a trap of psychological dependence.

What is the new type of venereal disease that is being seen more frequently?

A new venereal disease, called Herpes Simplex Virus Type 2, is being diagnosed in rapidly increasing numbers. Currently it attacks twice as many people as syphilis. The HSV-2 is immune to all known antibiotics. Presently there is no cure for the disease, but research is intensive in an effort to find an effective treatment. HSV-2 is a venereal disease spread by sexual contact.

In men, it appears in a series of painful fluid filled blisters on the skin of the male organ. In women, the tiny blebs are usually internal although they may appear on the external genitals as well. In either sex, there can be areas of blistering over the skin of the thighs, buttocks, and pubic area.

Even without treatment, the vesicles dry up and crust over, finally disappearing within a week to a month. However, the infection lingers in the person's body and may produce a vigorous recurrence at any time.

If a pregnant woman is infected with the virus, there is a one in four chance that her child will die or be seriously damaged. According to one survey, a woman who has had HSV-2 of the cervix is eight times more likely to develop cancer of that organ than a woman who has never been infected.

Your questions are welcomed. Mail to: FAAC, 22000 Freedom Road, Farmington, Mich. 48024; or call RAP LINE — 477-6000.

editorial opinion

The cases of the Farmington School Board and the Farmington Hills city council contrast sharply. The school board tries to accommodate everybody and comments from each of the board members. The Hills council works on keeping a low profile.

After listening to city manager George Majors describe the Farmington Hills budget, there was not one comment from the councilmen about it. It would seem incumbent on elected officials to make short statements on important issues. If they don't have views on important topics, why did they seek office?

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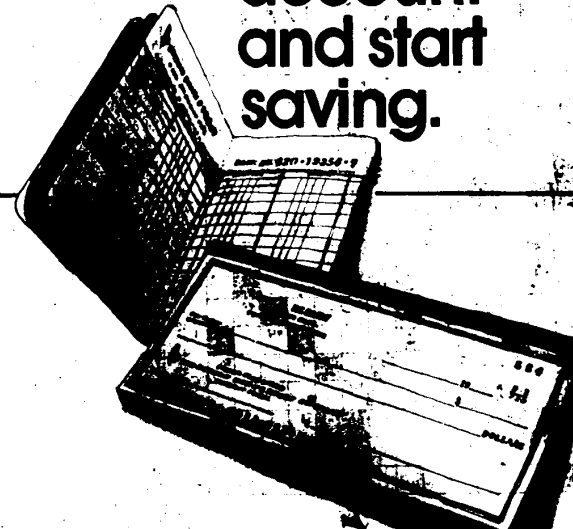
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