

editorial opinion

Public should be heard on advisory questions

The Farmington Hills city council has seen fit to place two advisory referendum questions on the Nov. 4 ballot. It is up to the voters to take the initiative and learn as much as possible about these questions to make an intelligent judgment.

Voters are being asked how they would like to see a park system developed within city limits and if they would like to the city to sell bonds for road improvements.

Politicians have, in recent years, become sensitive to public sentiment either through polls or referendums. How residents answer the questions on the ballot will probably determine how these two issues affect city growth in the coming decade.

Unfortunately, voters have a tendency to stay away from the polls in drives during a local election. This is a mistake.

Although we have expressed our sentiments on the parks issue, our preference being a total system of one large park combined with smaller facilities, the important factor is what you the voter feels.

Last night the city administration conducted a public hearing to explain the two advisory questions. Another meeting will be Oct. 28 in North Farmington High

School. If you already haven't been to the public hearing, you should make the one on Oct. 28.

If government is to respond to the needs and wishes of the electorate, it must be cognizant of what the voters think. While politicians and government bureaucrats have taken a lot of hard knocks recently for being unresponsive, it isn't always their fault.

One objection that some local politicians had to the advisory referendums was that a true reading of public sentiment couldn't be made. It was their contention that few voters would turn out. In short it would be a minority opinion poll.

More than likely, they are correct. It is up to the voters to prove them wrong.

Every election is an important one. The more local the issue, the more important it is to Farmington Hills residents.

A president will get elected no matter how many persons turn out at the polls. But in 10 years when the streets are unpaved or there isn't any place for children to play or adults to relax, the blame will lay squarely on today's Hills residents.

Show that you care.

Eccentricities

There is always talk in Washington about closing the loopholes in the income tax laws. The conversations usually revolve around the parts of the Internal Revenue Code which allow the so-called wealthy to reduce the taxes they pay.

You hear about eliminating the oil depletion allowance and the preference on capital gain income, and taxing those wealthy people who avoid federal income tax through the use of tax-free municipal bonds or tax shelters in cattle or real estate.

But, if the people of the United States really want to close the loopholes in the tax laws and increase substantially the revenue the government receives from income taxes, they are barking at the wrong tree.

CLOSING OF THE loopholes for the wealthy may be an emotional cry, but because there are so few wealthy, the money gained wouldn't amount to a lot of dollars.

If you want to eliminate loopholes that would create significant revenue to the government, the first thing that must be repealed is the \$750 deduction per dependent that taxpayers are allowed to take. This is highly discriminatory because it favors large families, and we all know that the government should not be encouraging large families as we seek zero population growth.

Another area where there are huge loopholes is the non-taxation of welfare, social security and unemployment compensation benefits.

THESE PAYMENTS are made in lieu of earned income and the spirit of the tax law is that whoever people receive benefits that would have been taxed if they had received them in the ordinary way, the benefits should be taxed.

Another loophole that should be eliminated is the deduction for medical expenses. This puts the government in the medical insurance business

No more 'soak the rich'

and it discriminates against healthy people. Obviously, the loophole allowing home owners to deduct property taxes and the interest on their mortgage is highly discriminatory because it encourages a person to want to own his own home and discriminates against the poor who can't afford to buy their own home.

THE BIGGEST LOOPHOLE, of course, in our federal tax system, is the graduated income tax. When the United States Constitution was amended in 1913 to provide for the income tax, it was the intention of the proponents of the tax law that all people would be taxed on an equal basis with a flat rate of 1 per cent across-the-board income tax.

There is no place in the Constitution or in the documents of the Constitution writers that America should be built on the principle of 'soak the rich'.

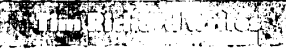
The principle of democracy is that all men are created equal and should be treated equally.

THERE IS A socialistic philosophy that government should give to the people according to their needs and charge the people according to their ability to pay.

It certainly is not a democratic principle. If we went back to the principle of a flat rate of say 20 per cent income tax on all income, we would eliminate all of the loopholes and tax preferences and bring in vastly larger amounts of revenue than are presently being collected.

The basic principle of loopholes and tax preferences, because they are politically motivated, has always favored the largest number of people and hurt the smallest number of people.

What the government would lose from not taxing the wealthy on a graduated basis it would more than make up by having everybody give some tax support to the government body that gives services to the citizens on an equal basis.



Water board rule: Only henchmen allowed

Robert A. Reid of Birmingham is a member of the State Carnival-Amusement Safety Board until July 10, 1976, and Joseph F. Davey of Bloomfield Hills is a member of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission until April 12, 1979.

Carol Murray of Livonia is on the State Cemetery Commission until March 9, 1976, and Irving W. Rozian of Plymouth will serve on the State Boundary Commission at least until Nov. 15, when his current term ends.

William M. Ellmann of Farmington has a term on the State Employees Relations Commission that runs until next June 30. Molly Ann Belkner of Southfield will be on the Workmen's Compensation Appeal Board until Feb. 1, 1977. George D. Yatch of Troy has a seat on the State Board of Chiropractic Examiners until at least June 18.

Arthur W. Saltzman of Franklin will be on the Oakland University board until next Aug. 11, and John W. Cartwright of Orchard Lake will be on the Saginaw Valley College board that runs all the way to 1981.

Edward H. McNamara of Livonia had a term on the Detroit Metropolitan Water Board until last week, when it expired at the whim of Mayor Coleman A. Young.

A STRANGE THING, that Detroit city charter. Almost every citizen board of a quasi-judicial or quasi-legislative body has staggered terms of office. One reason is to avoid having everyone's terms expire at once, creating a personnel staffing problem. Another reason is to have some continuity, some seniority, in boards that run interference between the public and the bureaucracy.

A secretary of state serves at the pleasure of the president, the state labor director at the pleasure of the governor, the public works director at the pleasure of the mayor or city manager. Those are administrative jobs, and the department head carries out the will of the top executive.

That's why it was extremely unusual to learn that Detroit's mayor could bounce one of seven members of the water board at the drop of a hat. A regulatory agency like the Metropolitan Water

Board isn't usually subject to instant political pressure in a normal political environment.

ONE EXPECTS that kind of bizarre procedure, however, from Detroit politics.

What is supposed to be a seven-member board exercising independent judgment turns out, instead, to be an arm of the mayor. One wonders why there is even a seven-member board. Under such circumstances, Detroit may as well let the DMRD director be an appointee of the mayor and forget the mockery of that puppet board.

McNamara got the old heave because he had been blowing the whistle on what he felt were faulty budget figures and a sewerage rate hike that would make suburbanites pay for internal improvements for the City of Detroit.

Whether McNamara was technically right or wrong is irrelevant at this point. More important are such questions as these:

1. If 91 communities are plugged into the Detroit water system, how do 90 of those communities get any fair representation on the water board when Mayor Young, under Detroit's charter, can fire a supposedly independent board member at will?

2. Considering that Detroit has only about a quarter of the tri-county area's population, where's the fairness in giving the non-Detroit area only three of the seven board members?

CLEARLY, WE ALL need an improved system for setting water and sewerage rates.

Is the answer to pass a state law repairing Detroit's hack charter?

Is it to place the DMRD under the state Public Service Commission, which regulates all other utilities?

Is the answer to set up truly regional system to provide a regional service, perhaps under the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments?

Whatever the answer, it's clear that folks dealing with a monopoly water and sewerage system are at the mercy of a mayor who has repeatedly made it clear he has no respect for most of them.

Observation Point

The new political reform law which was rammed through the Legislature this year by Common Cause is already creating a storm of criticism here in the suburbs.

The main problem lies in a provision of the new act which requires appointed as well as elected local office holders to disclose their finances as well as those of their immediate families.

Recently all members of the Southfield Planning Commission threatened to resign en masse rather than comply with the law. Three members of the Westland City Council this week expressed grave reservations about the invasion of privacy involved in the act.

Other suburban officials, both elected and appointed, have made no secret of their private feelings about the new law and of their reluctance to make public comment for fear of being stigmatized as "anti-integrity."

THE LAW is designed to regulate conflicts of interest and ethics of public officials, candidates and members of their immediate families.

Those covered must report the name, address and nature of any business service from which anything in excess of \$1,000 in income was received, detail all real property with a market value of more than \$1,000, and list the name and address of each creditor to whom more than \$1,000 is owed, and the terms of the obligation.

These are harsh provisions, and those advocating them argue powerfully that nothing less is required to insure that those in public office behave absolutely scrupulously.

They note, for example, that had the provisions of the law been in effect in 1974, former Troy city councilman and now Lt. Gov. James Damman would not have suffered the embarrassment he did when he and his investment partnership were charged with conflict of interest in connection with speculative land purchases in the city.

And they further argue that the terms of the new law treat directly the classical points of con-

Reform the 'reform law'

flict of interest abuse in growing suburban communities—planning commissions and city councils, which between them determine land use and thereby value.

THE ARGUMENTS against the present law are also forceful.

Critics charge that revealing the finances of immediate family members is an invasion of privacy of people who are not public figures except through the mischance of marriage or birth.

"I asked my mother if she owes anybody any money," said Westland Council President Robert Wagner. "She told me it's none of my business. So I asked her if she was going to reveal her finances, and she told me no."

Another criticism is that the law requires filings from office holders who receive no or little salary and who are in effect volunteering their time to help out their community. Local officials fear that with the reporting aggravation of the new law, capable people who might help their communities will simply decline to serve.

THE REAL problem is that the new law treats the vast majority of local officials who are honorable and honest as though they might be in the minority who are behaving inappropriately, and thereby increases the aggravation which any public servant undergoes. In the long run, this can only further reduce the pool of competent people who might become public servants, and thereby hurts us all.

On balance, I favor a tougher law to insure high ethics over a weaker law. Public confidence in office holders' integrity so critical to a democratic system that it validates a lot of aggravation.

However, it seems clear to me that the bureaucratic method of filing endless reports to calculate appropriate behavior of office holders is a substantial aggravation which is likely to drive more good people out of public service than not. Another method needs to be found.

From our readers—MACLD shows its appreciation

Editor:

In September we ran advertisements in your paper and appealed to several church groups for volunteers to assist youngsters in our preceptual motor development gym program and in our swim program.

The response we received was almost unbelievable. We are happy to share with you the information that we now have more assistance in these programs than we have ever been able to provide in the past.

Volunteers have come from all

types of people. The one factor that unites them is a sincere concern for youngsters.

In an age when society is so often referred to as insular and unconcerned about others, it is indeed gratifying to know that a great number of people will respond to a need when exposed to it.

We are proud of these people and delighted with the enthusiasm they have added to our programs.

HELENE GRUBER, President Farmington MACLD

Gill PTA plans a pancake supper

Gill Elementary School PTA will hold a pancake supper and open house Friday, Oct. 17, 6-8 p.m.

The supper, \$1.85 for adults and \$1. for children sixth grade and under, will be held in the school gym, between Eighth and Nine Mile on the west side of Gill Rd.

The supper is a fund raiser for the PTA.

Your ecology calendar

- FARMINGTON—A glass recycling center operates on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon at the west end of the Farmington Hills city hall parking lot. The city hall is at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake.
- SOUTHFIELD In the old city offices, 26000 Berg Road at Ten and One-half Mile, one block east of Telegraph.
- LATHRUP VILLAGE—At the Public Services Building, 19101 Twelve Mile Road, adjacent to the high school. Newspapers are collected 10 a.m.-2 p.m. by volunteers the first Saturday of each month.
- GROVES ECOLOGY CLUB—Bundled or bagged newspapers and cardboard will be collected from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday the second week of each month at the high school's front parking lot.

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DIVISION OF SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

STEVE BARNABY, Editor

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