

editorial opinion

Facelift badly needed for Farmington board

The Farmington school board is in pathetic shape.

In case you haven't forced yourself out of the easy chair on Tuesday night to wander over to a school board meeting lately, you should be advised the board is in need of a major facelift.

Readers are going to be hearing a lot from me about the board in the coming weeks. With election of two school board members and a millage increase on next month's ballot, residents should know as much as possible about how things stand in the district.

YOUR KID'S EDUCATION IS AT STAKE. As the board presently is constituted, it suffers from lack of leadership, petty personal conflict and little, if any, direction.

The administration is all right. It's your elected board members that make the district the laughing stock of the community.

This week's board meeting was typical of the ridiculous shenanigans that continually plague the board. You've got to feel sorry for the administrators who have to respectfully sit there and listen to all that nonsense.

While board members treat serious board matters as some kind of lark, administrators are faced with the everyday drudgery of figuring out how to get out of a mess. Meanwhile, trustees go on their blissful way.

The board is so riddled with dissent that it can't even make up its mind on a new superintendent to take over for the next school year. The decision was supposed to have been made at the end of last month.

WE'RE STILL WAITING. Sure, trustees tell us it's because they want to get the best guy for the job. But there are plenty of "best" guys for the job. The real reason a new chief administrator hasn't been tapped is because the board is unable to make timely decisions.

A presentation by a member of the Citizens Reaction Committee at this week's meeting summed



it up. The board has lost its credibility. Meanwhile your kids suffer.

So, do yourselves a favor and take a good, hard look at what's going on at the top of the hill over on Shawassee and Power. Then go out and vote in June.

Hornets attack 'open meetings'

They descended like a nest of hornets on the House Towns and Counties Committee last week, and when they were done the "open meetings" bill had been stung with 41 proposed amendments.

"They" are the city councilmen, school board trustees, township, village, county and community college board members who like to hold meetings where such troublesome persons as voters can't watch them.

"I'm really for open meetings, but for our particular group, we need this exception..." they say.

Actually, Chairman Tom Brown (D-Westland) and his committee have done a surprisingly good job in drafting a new bill to require our governmental bodies to hold their meetings and discuss their big decisions in public.

The exceptions are minimal. An employee or a student facing discipline may ask to hold a hearing in closed, and a governmental body would still be able to set its collective bargaining strategy confidentially.

But if the enemies of open government have their way, the only thing boards will do publicly is vote. All debate, all information, all major hiring decisions, all machinations with developers, all serious planning would be done behind closed doors in so-called "executive" sessions.

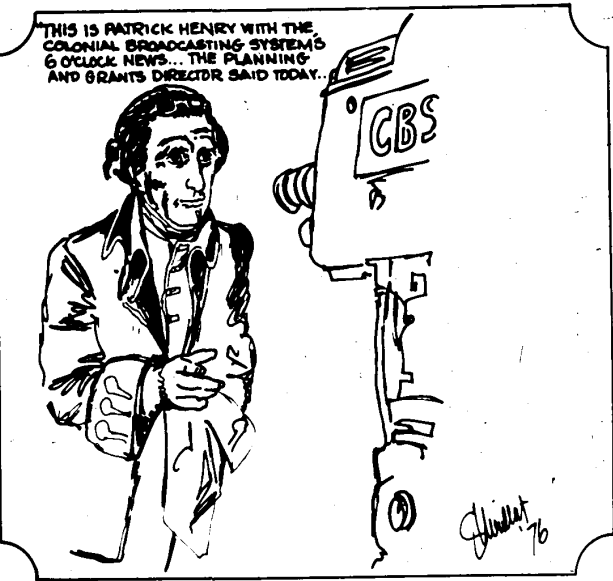
The enemies are lobbying hard with Brown's committee to shoot the bill full of stings as poisonous to our faith in government as a hornet's sting is to human skin.

The problem with all these exceptions is that once a governmental body meets in secret to discuss one topic, it doesn't know when to quit. Pretty soon, all decisions are rehearsed.

If you care about openness in government, tell your state representative not to tamper with the House substitute for Senate Bill 920 as it was discussed in the Brown committee as of May 11. Your letter will be a good antidote to the poison of secret meetings.

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If planners had run the Revolution...

Horrible! Soul-chilling! Ghastly! I dreamed I was cast back in time 200 years and landed in the press gallery of the Virginia House of Burgesses, where a sharp-faced, shabbily dressed lawyer named Mr. Henry was concluding a passionate speech "... give me liberty or give me death!"

Separation, rebellion, revolution were in the air. But with my advanced journalistic techniques, I wouldn't be content simply to quote the rhetoric. No, our paper would want a more sophisticated report, detailing just how the separation from Great Britain was to be carried out.

Mr. Henry and the other burgesses adjourned to Raleigh Tavern to host a few, so I collared John Snerd, the colonial government's planning and grants director. "When," asked I, "can we expect the separation to take effect?"

THE PLANNER nodded to a work flow chart in parchment on his wall. "We're working on that now. We're at the first step in our planning and implementation process—right here," he said, pointing.

"We have appointed a task force representing all segments of the community in order to achieve the widest possible input in our program. Neighborhood groups, gossip clubs, syndics of merchants, planters and guilds of artisans all must be involved prior to public hearings," he said.



"Meanwhile, the staff will be making an inventory of our existing facilities, such as ammunition plants, crop forecasts, state of road repairs, potential cache points and all the rest of the facilities that an effective rebellion must have to carry us into the 19th century."

"In the distance I could hear muffled drums. The British!"

"BUT WHAT IS YOUR timetable?" I asked. Snerd smiled indulgently. "A lot will depend on our feasibility forecasts..."

"Feasibility forecasts?" He could see the bewilderment on my face. "You see, we must make an economic forecast on the impact of separation on the New England maritime colonies—trade volumes, price projections based on a state of hostilities, alternate sources of supply," Snerd said.

"The frontier mustn't be overlooked. We will make a calculation of the westward migration of families and factors that into possibly downward adjusting prices of land in the east, then multiply that by the average property tax rate to see how revenue projections will be altered. You know our cash position is too underdeveloped to make a sales tax system feasible."

"Marching troops' British boots' The sound was unmistakable."

"MY ASSISTANT here is making a computer model of our military impact assessment," Snerd went on, unruffled. "We'll be able to take 18 different points of British attack and delineate the appropriate mix of foot, horse, artillery and naval stores we'll need for proper implementation of the rebellion."

"I saw red coats out of the corner of my eye. You have to do that, you know, for your grant applications. New Helvetia failed to do its application properly, went unfunded, and now isn't even heard from any more. Even a committee of correspondence endorsement can't speed up your grant application if your environmental impact statement is inadequate—awk..."

A British noose slipped round John Snerd's throat and his explanation ended with a horrifying abruptness.

"I awoke in a cold sweat."

Intriguing quiz has one good answer

What state has the headquarters of all the major automobile companies in the United States and produces more motor vehicles than any other state by far?

What state ranks first in prepared cereals; office furniture; machine tools; non-ferrous castings such as magnesium, zinc and lead; hardware for motor vehicles; furniture; buildings; and conveyors, plus 14 other manufacturing and processing categories?

In what state do three of America's top five industrial corporations and 21 of its top 500 businesses have their headquarters?

What state is the leading exporter among the 50 states?

What state has the largest limestone quarry?

What state is the nation's top salt producer?

What state has the world's largest cement plant?

What state has a greater variety of minerals—metallic and non-metallic—than any comparable area in the world?

What state was the first to establish roadside picnic tables?

What state has a larger variety of commercial tree species than any other state?

WHAT STATE LEADS the nation in the number of state parks and prepared campsites?

What state in 1929 established the first state police radio system in the world?

What state has more than 11,000 inland lakes and more than 36,000 miles of streams?

What state ranks number one in the nation in the production of six crops—red tart cherries, sweet cherries, dry edible beans, cucumbers for pickling, fine Eastern white soft winter wheat and rhubarb?

What state has the largest commercial deposit of native copper in the world?

WHAT STATE HAS the largest limestone quarry?

What state is the nation's top salt producer?

What state has the world's largest cement plant?

What state has a greater variety of minerals—metallic and non-metallic—than any comparable area in the world?

What state was the first to establish roadside picnic tables?

What state has a larger variety of commercial tree species than any other state?

What state is the largest grower of Christmas trees in the nation?

IN WHAT STATE was the first auto tunnel built between two nations?

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Guest viewpoint Write to the supreme court

By ARTHUR E. MOORE
Oakland Circuit Judge

There seems to be a great deal of public interest in judicial opinions concerning adult bookstores, adult motion picture theaters, etc.

The U.S. Supreme Court in Washington is so far removed from the average citizen that in all probability few in Oakland County know that a key decision of the U.S. Supreme Court will soon be emanating from the Detroit case of *Gribbs vs. American Theaters*.

The issue being argued in that case is the constitutionality of a Detroit zoning ordinance which limits the places where adult bookstores, adult motion picture theaters, etc., may be established under a restrictive zoning ordinance of Detroit.

The U.S. Supreme Court decided previously in *Village of Belle Terre vs. Boraas* (416 US 1) that zoning could be used to promote family values and other goals important to the community.

Thus, the issue before the supreme court in the



What state was the first to provide in its constitution for the establishment of public libraries?

What state started the first land grant college?

What state has the first state university established by vote of the people through their constitution?

What state was first to guarantee every child the right to tax-paid high school education?

What state has more freshwater coastline than any other state?

IN WHAT STATE are there locks through which more tonnage passes in an eight-month navigation season than through the Panama Canal in an entire normal year?

The answer to each of these questions and many similar ones is: Our own Michigan.

This is Michigan Week.

"Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam, circumspice." If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.

Detroit case is whether the Detroit zoning ordinance—and, for that matter, zoning ordinances throughout Michigan—may be used "to protect residential areas from the intrusion of undesired influences and to check the emergence of 'skid row' areas, which attract criminals, depress property values, and injure children from the standpoint of immorality."

Representatives in Congress hear from their constituents and heed to the viewpoints expressed.

The public has this same right of communicating their views and needs by mail to the members of the supreme court. Every citizen has the right to express his viewpoint to the courts, whether federal or state. This is one way to bring the supreme court closer in touch with the needs and desires of citizens.

To the extent you believe this issue is important and of public concern, I suggest that the citizenry write the supreme court and express your views accordingly.