

# Local ballot proposals best for Hills future

## editorial opinion

With the myriads of state ballot proposals up for voter scrutiny, Farmington Hills residents should remember local propositions No. 1 and No. 2. We believe voters should vote yes on both proposals.

Proposition No. 1 provides for a one-mill tax levy which will raise approximately \$500,000 annually for 10 years.

If passed, the millage would help finance 10 projects along the city's major mile roads. More importantly, money will be allocated for the widening of Orchard Lake between Twelve and Fourteen Mile.

Farmington Hills, one of the fastest growing communities in southeast Michigan, is in dire need of proper road development. Already the population has outstripped the capabilities of many of

the two-lane-dirt and gravel roads. Within just a few years, the situation only will get worse and become a veritable unending headache.

The problem with the present situation is that out of the \$1 million budget the city has to work with for roads, 7/8 is used for local road maintenance. Only \$287,000 is relegated to major road construction.

Adding to the present situation is that money

received from the state's fuel and weight taxes for such projects is based on the city census at time of incorporation five years ago.

And while the state must stick with its outdated census count, the population grows—as does the cost of road improvements.

If the major roads go unimproved, there will be a continuous drain on the road fund to just keep the roads glued together. This ultimately drains funds away from such other vital areas as ditch and

drainage improvements, and patching and replacing older existing asphalt and concrete roads.

Proposition No. 2 is a protection against the passage of the Headlee amendment. This would give the city council permission to sell \$2 million in general obligation bonds over the next year.

It costs the taxpayers nothing and allows the city government to serve the entire city. If voters turn down the bonding question, each subdivision project would have to float by its own credit. Interest rates would be higher and in all probability, bonds for some areas of the city just wouldn't sell.

Essential services would go down the drain. Every year the city sells approximately \$2 million of bonds. This would just keep business as usual.

## Ross best for 15th state senate position

Voters in the 15th state senatorial district have reason for optimism with the candidacy of Doug Ross.

Ross, 36, has waged a vigorous campaign aimed at reaching out to 15th district voters and attempting to restore faith in state government.

Voters can feel confident in casting their ballots for Ross. He is well-experienced in government affairs. He worked as a legislative aide for two U.S. representatives and one U.S. senator.

His adult life has been dedicated to public service. He served as executive director of Michigan Common Cause and was director of the Michigan Citizens Lobby. He is founder of Citizens to Save Small Business, a group formed to reform Michigan's single business tax.

Ross has vowed to open the windows and let the fresh air into the 15th district. He has committed himself to the formation of constituent committees to coincide with committees in the senate. We believe this is a good and progressive move. And we will hold him to that campaign promise.

If the Ross campaign organization is any example of how he will operate in Lansing, the 15th district constituents have reason to be very

hopeful. Ross's workers are full of genuine enthusiasm. His is one of the few candidacies in the state to create a flame of interest among voters and has drawn a virtual army of volunteers.

This same organization gathered forces to defeat incumbent Daniel Cooper in the primary. Although the run-off between Ross and Republican contender Markus Simon has been something less than a neck and neck race, Ross has remained intent on reaching voters by waging a continued ambitious campaign.

We like his spirit. We expect much from Ross as a state senator and will be disappointed if he lets down the electorate.

## McDonald

Oakland County Commissioner John McDonald (R-Farmington) deserves another term in Pontiac representing the 27th District.

The 38-year-old commissioner sees the job for what it is—a chance to dedicate a portion of time to his neighbors without sacrificing his family or professional life. McDonald, a lawyer, has no wish to be anything other than a county commissioner when it comes to political activity.

Yet he spends considerable time with his county duties, takes them seriously and enjoys the challenge of aiding in corralling the county's multi-million dollar budget.

In the past four years Oakland County has gone through a period of incredible growth and change within its governmental structure. A burgeoning budget, along with fractionalization between County Executive Daniel Murphy and assorted commissions have made the process less than an enjoyable experience.

But through it all, McDonald has kept a cool head and has focused on the issues facing the county rather than becoming embroiled in the personality conflicts.

Southfield and Farmington area residents living in the 27th District can feel comfortable voting for McDonald.

## Brotherton

A key to being a good representative is keeping in touch with the constituency. Over the last four years Southfield, Farmington and Farmington Hills residents living in the 6th state house district have had just such a legislator.

Wilbur (Sandy) Brotherton (R-Farmington) deserves an affirmative vote from his constituency. Brotherton has shown an interest in all 6th district residents.

He has gained a reputation for responsiveness. He responded to complaints about the single business tax by working tirelessly for revisions. He responded to the needs for improved roads and public transportation by supporting the key elements of "Trans-pak." Many districts aren't blessed with such representatives. In Farmington and Farmington Hills, Brotherton has been an institution for years, serving as a Farmington councilman, mayor and an Oakland County commissioner.

His reputation for reliability is quickly spreading throughout those portions of Southfield which he represents.

Since his election to the state house, the opposition has been unable to find a competent candidate to challenge him. Although we find it regrettable that the two party systems seems not to function well in this area, we believe that Brotherton can adequately handle the job.

You may not always agree with him, but you can bet that Brotherton will listen.

## In good Circuit Court field, 3 candidates stand out

Six candidates are seeking three new seats on the Oakland County Circuit Court bench. This is the court of general jurisdiction which handles most criminal felonies, major civil cases and divorces.

Other counties should be as lucky as Oakland is in having such well-qualified candidates.

Nevertheless, choices must be made, and we think these three candidates stand out:

Gene Schnelz, 45, chief judge in the sprawling 52D District Court, likes hard work, keeps his case-load up to date and doesn't pussyfoot about pointing to problem areas on the circuit court. The Walled Lake jurist has a valuable background in municipal law to bring to the circuit bench. He showed it in his deft handling, as a visiting judge, in the Ann Arbor secret caucus case.

Schnelz strikes us as a good-humored, humane man who will take an interest in helping persons who run afoul, and not just slam down a gavel after passing sentence. He knows how to unleash the talents of court staff members.

Hilda Gage, 39, has an impressively bright, quick mind. Like Schnelz, she is candid about what's not quite right on the circuit bench, such as postponements and interruptions of trials, as well as lack of "negotiating" space.

Mrs. Gage, of West Bloomfield, has a background in criminal law, family law and personal injury cases. We would expect her to pay particular attention to divorce cases, which many judges tend to shunt aside.

Robert C. Anderson, with six years on the 51st District Court bench, knows how to cut through the fog of legal talk and the "son" of defendants. He sizes up a situation quickly, concisely.

"After you're out there for a while," he told us, "you get to know the pros."

Where Mrs. Gage would offer new ideas for court arrangements and procedures, Anderson is a plain, hard-working kind of guy. They, along with Schnelz, would bring a blend of talents and three impartial judicial minds to Oakland Circuit Court.

## 'Yes' twice for transportation

**M** PROPOSAL TO allocate at least 90 per cent of gas tax revenues for general road purposes and the remainder for other transportation purposes and to replace State Highway Commission with a Transportation Commission.

This constitutional amendment, which merits voter support, is part of the total transportation package of bills passed earlier this year by the Michigan Legislature.

One portion updates the constitution by renaming the highway commission as the "Transportation Commission." That is altogether fitting because that department oversees money for public transportation, shipping ports and airports, too.

The department director would be appointed by the governor rather than by the six-member commission, thus providing for clearer accountability to the public.

We are less enthusiastic about freezing the portion of the transportation fund at 90 per cent for roads. We would prefer to give the legislature responsibility for allocating money among various kinds of transportation.

That provision, however, was necessary to win the support of highway people, who have legitimate interests.

The people of Michigan can join the legislature in making balanced transportation progress by voting YES on proposal M.

**R** PROPOSAL TO authorize creation of a Railroad Redevelopment Authority to make loans to railroads with track in Michigan and to authorize authority to issue general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$75 million.

Michigan railroads need a lot of modernizing—new road beds, loading facilities, yard facilities, truck-train facilities, data processing.

But the rail companies are earning only five per cent on invested capital while it costs 10 per cent to float bonds on the market. A Railroad Redevelopment Authority could use proceeds from a state bond issue (at lower, tax-free interest rates) to make loans to the rail companies for modernization.

That would help a form of transportation that will grow in importance to Michigan as truck fuel prices soar and small cities struggle to hold industry.

Michigan, unfortunately, handles no "bridge" traffic between the East Coast and the Midwest. Thus, Michigan doesn't get the same priority in the rail companies' investment plans as do more heavily traveled states such as Ohio and Indiana.

If we want railroad improvements here, we'll have to offer some inducements.

Proposal R can provide such inducements. It deserves a YES vote.

## Turn down parole, bail plans

**K** PROPOSAL TO grant authority to courts to deny bail under certain circumstances involving violent crimes.

Here is another hard-nosed proposal to chip away at constitutional rights—the right of an accused person to be free on bail bond while awaiting trial.

It disturbs us.

The Michigan Constitution now says all persons are entitled to bail unless accused of murder or

treason. Proposal K, by State Rep. Paul Rosenbaum of Battle Creek, would expand that non-bail list.

We're old-fashioned enough to believe a person isn't guilty until he has been proven guilty in court.

Proposal K isn't really necessary. If a judge, with access to modern records, sees it would be risky to let a person with a history of violence out on bond, the judge can set bail high enough to protect society.

Accusing someone of crime isn't the same as convicting him. Many a man who will later be found innocent could lose his job or suffer a broken home if denied bail.

We like our constitutional rights the way they are.

We recommend a NO vote on Proposal K.

## Double protection for troopers?

**G** PROPOSAL TO allow collective bargaining with binding arbitration for Michigan State Police troopers.

State employees don't have collective bargaining rights. This proposal is aimed to help one currently popular group—the state police. If this plan becomes law, we can expect a barrage of similar requests from other state employees in the future.

If it passes, troopers would have double protection—civil service and collective bargaining, too. To give them collective bargaining seems a bit much.

The real fishhook in Proposal G is binding arbitration. We all should have learned the bitter lesson of Wayne County, when an arbitrator's award to the sheriff's deputies threw the budget wildly out of balance and caused the board of commissioners to seek layoffs of hundreds of other employees in order to pay off the deputies.

An arbitrator doesn't have to worry about balancing a budget or asking the voters for a tax increase. He can recommend anything.

The argument that state police are paid less than city cops falls to sway us. City police deal with all sorts of vicious urban problems that state police rarely encounter.

We recommend a NO vote on Proposal G.

**B** PROPOSAL TO prohibit the granting of a parole to a prisoner convicted of certain crimes involving violence or injury to persons or property until at least after the minimum sentence has been served.

From the pen of Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, this proposal won't do what Patterson says it should do.

It should be defeated.

It's aimed at "good time" laws. A judge today sentences a criminal to (say) 5-10 years in prison. If the convict behaves himself in prison, he can earn time off for good behavior and get out in about 3 1/2 years. The prison warden has a carrot to dangle in front of him.

Proposal B would eliminate that carrot. The convict would have to serve the five-year minimum sentence, at least.

But wait! The judge already knows the convict can get out in 3 1/2 years, so he takes that into consideration when handing out the sentence. In other words, the judge really intends to hand out a 3 1/2-year sentence—if the convict behaves himself.

If "good time" were eliminated, judges would adjust by meting out shorter sentences, where possible.

## McConnell

Robert McConnell, the Republican 25th District Oakland County commissioner, serves his constituency well. He deserves to be re-elected.

We believe that McConnell (R-Farmington Hills) has a firm grasp on county issues. He shows the same determination as a county commissioner as he did when serving the City of Farmington Hills.

Farmington Hills residents recall the job, the fine job, McConnell performed as mayor, a councilman and as the old township's supervisor.

He calmly examines a situation and then attempts to forge a workable solution with his colleagues, all for the county's improvement.

McConnell enjoys politics and understands that government only functions properly if those participating are willing to form rational compromises. His work for an alternative to M-275 showed his multi-town leadership.

McConnell is the type of politician who may someday seek a higher office, not necessarily for his own aggrandizement, but for the benefit of those constituents he represents. County government takes on a saner light with the likes of Robert McConnell around.

Someday he may bring the those same sensibilities to a wider constituency. It would be sensible to vote away his potential.

## Moffitt

Lillian Moffitt is one of the finest representatives on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. She has performed in an exceptional manner and deserves to return to office.

She has represented the 15th district since 1972. This district includes western Bloomfield Township, Franklin, Bingham Farms, Western Beverly Hills, northeastern Farmington Hills and northwestern Southfield.

Dedicated, sincere and hard-working are the words to describe Mrs. Moffitt. She does an extensive amount of research and study when she is approaching an important issue facing the county board.

Although she is rarely involved in the loud disputes that take place in open meetings of the board, she does some of her best work quietly in committees. She has been a strong advocate for a parks and recreation program in the county.

Mrs. Moffitt also has been a supporter of the county executive form of government and County Executive Daniel Murphy.

Lillian Moffitt is a bright, effective legislator and should be returned to office.

A Division of  
Suburban Communications Corporation

Philip H. Power  
Chairman of the Board  
(on leave of absence)

Richard D. Agnion  
President  
Chief Executive Officer

**Farmington Observer**  
"Successor of the Farmington Enterprise"

Steve Barnaby  
Editor

23710 West Nine Mile  
Southfield, MI 48075  
(313) 352-5400

John Reddy, General Mgr.  
Thomas A. Flordan, Executive Editor  
George J. Hagan, Advertising Director, Fred J. Wright, Circulation Director