

# Opinion

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## Time to act Roads are nightmarish

**T**HE CORNFIELDS are long gone. But the antiquated roads remain.

Make no mistake: the near-gridlock traffic conditions at several intersections during rush hour are together the single greatest threat to the quality of life Farmington Hills residents now enjoy and boast about.

So the city council is on the right track in proposing a one-mill tax boost and a \$7-million bond issue exclusively for road improvements.

That's undoubtedly a course the council should have taken years ago instead of maintaining an artificially low property tax rate at a time when traffic was worsening and roads were crumbling.

The council proposes a tax boost and bond issue to help finance \$14 million in badly needed road improvements over three years. The city's share would be \$9 million.

Other anticipated revenue sources include the county, developers, highway grants, special assessments and the neighboring communities of Novi, Farmington and West Bloomfield Township, which share roads scheduled for upgrading.

**EARLY SIGNS** point to this approach as a prudent way to go about making Farmington Hills' road system safer and more efficient.

Consider: The city's charter tax limit is 10 mills. That means voters have given the council authority to levy up to 10 mills for operations.

Typically, special voted millages are hard to come by until a city's charter limit is reached or unless the reasons for approval are compelling.

That's why when a charter limit hasn't been reached, residents voting on a special millage request often cast a suspicious eye toward their city council. They're wary because even with a yes vote for a special millage, the council could still raise taxes further.

Regardless of whether a city is at its charter limit, higher taxes aren't neces-

sarily justified. There's always the chance waste or extravagance can be culled from the existing levy, freeing up already approved dollars for a long-standing need or a new project.

**UNDER THE** latest plan to upgrade Farmington Hills' roads, the burden lies squarely where it should, on the council, and the obligation lies squarely where it should, on the taxpayers.

The three-year road improvement program lists annual priority projects — roads selected because they cry out for widening, paving, resurfacing, beautifying, repair or other general or safety improvements. The work also would improve drainage.

Wise! Major improvements to Northwestern Highway, Haggerty Road and 12 Mile Road are not part of the program. The state and the county are responsible for assuring those thoroughfares are in tune with the times. Including them in the city's program could skew the division of responsibility.

A one-mill increase in 1986-87 would generate \$1.2 million for Farmington Hills. That would be combined with \$750,000 in the existing city road budget to produce \$2 million for the first year's road improvement outlay.

**THE TIME** is long past for pay-as-you-go road improvements. Using just the one mill, it would take roughly seven years to do all the desired projects.

Bluntly put, these projects should have been completed yesterday. They're pivotal if the city hopes to even begin to keep pace with its relentless development.

Meanwhile, the city's road-related liability mounts with each passing day. Roads are so bad in some areas that they could actually cause car accidents — scary maybe, but true.

If you can't get around the city because of nerve-racking traffic, it doesn't matter how nice your house looks, how good the schools are or how terrific the shopping is. You're more apt to scream than smile.

— Bob Sklar



## Cooler deposits: up to us

**WE CAN'T** count on the Michigan Legislature to do it. We shouldn't sit back and assume the Michigan United Conservation Clubs can do it alone.

The job is to get wine cooler bottles out of our yards, parks, beaches, roadsides and farm fields.

It will take a petition drive which will force the Legislature either 1) to require a 10-cent deposit on wine coolers and the new canned mixed drinks, or 2) place such a proposal on the ballot.

Voters followed that route 10 years ago, passing a law requiring a 10-cent deposit on cans and 5-cent deposit on bottles of beer and soft drinks. The law took effect in 1978, and almost overnight the amount of litter was drastically reduced. And if there was litter, at least one had an economic incentive to pick it up.

**BUT WINE** coolers (mixtures of wine and fruit juices) and mixed drink (whiskey and pop) are new on the market. They aren't covered by our 1976 law.



Tim Richard

A new law is necessary. Either the Legislature or the voters must pass it.

A joint legislative rules committee shot down the state Liquor Control Commission's rule to require deposits on wine coolers. As the Litter Lobby (our term for those firms which fight deposits) chortled with glee, the legislators rejected the attorney general's advice that LCC really did have that power. Lawmakers, while professing to hate litter, repeatedly taunted backers of the deposit rule to add whiskey and catsup bottles to the list.

So we can't count on the Legislature.

**A WORD ABOUT MUCC** for those unfamiliar with this statewide collection of clubs.

It's more than a hunting-fishing group. It takes a strong interest in nature and the environment. With its camps and programs for kids, it has a strong family thrust.

Lots of groups worked on the 1976 deposit law campaign, but MUCC provided the leadership and coordination. It's ready to do the job again.

MUCC has petition forms ready to collect the 245,000 signatures of voters required to force action on an expanded deposit law.

Call MUCC in Lansing at 517/371-1041 and it will send you two forms.

Follow the simple instructions, and get your friends and neighbors to sign the petitions.

Then mail them back — pronto. Time is running out. There are legal deadlines to be met.

The Legislature is unlikely to act. MUCC can't do it alone. It's up to ordinary, busy citizens to complete the cleanup job which voters so nobly advanced in the 1970s.

## Poppies

### They help repay a debt

**DAFFODILS, TULIPS** and roses are my favorite blooms. But in mid-May, bright red paper poppies wake up my every sense.

This week, you're going to get an offer that's impossible to refuse. For a contribution of your own choosing, you'll buy a bit of a non-sectarian, color-blind program that commemorates the service and sacrifices of American men in time of war.

Buying a veteran's poppy isn't the same as buying a box of Girl Scout cookies. When you plunk down your coins for the Scouts, you're making a bet on the future of some nice young girls, opening up the vistas to give them a better handle on life.

Buying a veteran made poppy, as you surely will this weekend, you'll be reaffirming the past and repaying a debt. You can't really put a price tag on service to our country in war time.

**AFTER ALL**, the result of that service may be some raucous war stories told and retold over the years, with a sigh over the adventures of youth.

But it may also be the loss of a limb or limbs, an eye or even the mental vigor of a person that started out in full health and paid an incalculable price for his or her military service.

You may have never visited a veteran hospital, but just minutes away are two that house service personnel who fought our battles for us and now may never leave those hospitals.

Witness the fact that right now in May 1980, our state lawmakers are debating whether Michigan will join a number of other states providing aid (not financial) for ex-GIs who were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

**WHAT PRICE** can be put on having

your children born with birth defects as a result of military service?

Even in the so-called peace time situation of today, we have seen young Marines die en masse in Lebanon and lose their lives in Grenada and over Libya. When the headline stories have faded, most people forget, but not the veteran groups pledged never to forsake those who served.

Poppy sellers over the years have a firm hand on seeing that veterans get a fair shake and a little extra. In this area, they know the roads to Allen Park, Battle Creek and Ann Arbor very well.

You'll see them out in force today through Saturday. They are men and women, Catholics, Protestants and Jews, and other religious persuasions. They are persons of every race.

Aside from an occasional military cop, they wear no uniform.

**SOME** of their poppies have tags that say Jewish War Veterans, American Legion and Disabled American Veterans. As a longtime poppy seller, I can tell you, this is the time to ignore the labels and buy generically the first poppy you find.

Those giving service never ask a hospitalized veteran which church he attends. And every poppy is made by hand by an American veteran in Michigan.

It's true. You can't eat a poppy like a Girl Scout cookie, but you can reflect upon the symbolism of the bright red paper flowers that first bloomed in 1921.

And you can wear yours with pride.

— Shirlee Iden

Shirlee Iden is a special editor with the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

## Too worried or too short?

**A NATIONAL** ad agency conducted a survey of 2,000 citizens to measure their attitudes about themselves and their likes.

According to the agency's summary, what we have is "a split image. On one side a nation plumed on the rack of worry and discontent; on the other a nation of optimists and dreamers."

My question is: Are we a schizophrenic nation because of our governmental leaders, or do our leaders merely reflect their constituents?

Maybe it is significant that the ad agency survey was taken while political campaigns are going on in just about every state and many boroughs. Those seeking public office are busily fanning the flames of worry and discontent, while those struggling to hold onto office are warning us about the worry and discontent we will suffer if the outsiders become insiders.

At the center of power is the greatest optimist and dreamer to serve as president in modern times. Actually, he alternates between stirring up worry and discontent and soothing our brow with optimistic, pablumized television speeches.

**HE KNOWS** we love to be soothed by television because he reads the results of polls and surveys, such as the one taken by the advertising agency.

It's claims, among other things, our greatest pleasure is watching TV. Some 88 percent of the respondents said so. Other pleasures: spending time with friends, 61 percent; helping others, 59 percent; and being on vacation, 58 percent.

You have to worry either about the



Bob Wisler

state of the nation or the accuracy of the polls when something to do with sex doesn't even come up in the top four answers.

I have a hunch that people who are asked questions in surveys take the easy way out. They give the answer they think will make them sound good to the interviewer instead of giving the answer they know will make them sound like a bozo.

**IF THE SURVEY** were really accurate, you wouldn't have 59 percent of the people saying their greatest pleasure is helping someone else, which sounds good but doesn't play in Peoria.

What you would have is 88 percent saying their greatest pleasure is eating "good stuff" — steaks and baked potatoes overloaded with butter and sour cream, fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, cream puff hot fudge, chocolate chip cookies, eclairs, well, you get the idea.

Eating good stuff has to be a top concern or you wouldn't have in the same poll 88 percent of the women wanting to lose weight.

Heck, it's hard telling from this poll whether we are a nation of worriers or

people who are dissatisfied with the amount of space we occupy or fail to occupy.

**WHILE** 88 percent of women would like to lose weight almost half — 48 percent — of the men want to be taller.

There's something incongruous about this and the fact that most men asked who they would like to look like picked Robert Redford, who is probably about 5-foot-8. The reason I know he is only 5-foot-8 is that in "All the President's Men," Redford is a couple of inches higher than Dustin Hoffman, who has to be about 5-foot-5, since he played "Tootsie" in heels and still was shorter than the 5-foot-7 Jessica Lange.

As a matter of fact, the preponderance of evidence would indicate that most men should yearn to be shorter, not taller. Most big-money male movie stars are 5-foot-9 or under. Gov. Blanchard is only about 5-foot-8, and the vast majority of the world's geniuses were short.

It may have something to do with the fact that people of smaller stature try harder because they feel they have been shorted (eh) on natural attributes. The only demonstrable place taller is better is pro basketball and since you have to be 6-foot-6 to even consider such a lofty aspiration, I suggest that such a life is beyond the reach of 99.9 percent of us.

We would be better off dreaming about winning the lottery, which is what 70 percent of the U.S. does each month by spending \$1 or more on tickets. Who said we're dreamers?