'We need to work to get more of our federal dollars back. With a Republican governor, at least we'll have an entree into the federal government.
— Richard Chrysler

'It seems like we (local units) do a better job at everything else. Why can't we do as good a job at controlling our own money that comes from the feds? The state ought to be putting more money down for local roads.
— Daniel Murphy

'I believe I have the integrity to be governor. It's difficult for me to duck an issue. I feel I should be honest and forthright. It would be a refreshing change for the state. The people would know where I stood.
— Collen Engler

GOP candidates tackle election issues

By Tim Richard
staff writer

IMAGE-MAKING time was over. Now the Republican gubernatorial candidates were being asked tough questions about complex suburban and state issues.

The issues are roads, toxic wastes, paying for special education, the death penalty and negotiating with state workers represented by the UAW.

Daniel T. Murphy, Colleen Engler and Richard Chrysler — who are asking GOP primary voters Aug. 5 for the chance to tackle Democratic Gov. James Blanchard on Nov. 4 — faced the editorial board of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers for more than an hour last week.

"Bill (Lucas) missed a great opportunity to discuss the issues," Murphy said. Lucas, the Wayne County executive, said through a spokesman he had schedule conflicts for both alternative dates posed by the editors.

Q. Roads have become a nightmare in suburban Oakland County and western Wayne County as they've become urbanized. The solutions boil down to money. Whose responsibility is it to solve it — the community, the county or the state?

MURPHY, the Oakland County executive: "Road monies come from the state and are passed back out on a formula. It's a problem the local units and state have combined.

"The last (federal) money that came to the state came with the idea that if the state wanted to return 30 percent to the local units, they could. Well, the state highway department doesn't turn 5 percent to deal with our local roads.

"It seems like we (local units) do a better job at everything else. Why can't we do as good a job at controlling our own money that comes from the feds? The state ought to be putting more money down for local roads.

"That doesn't mean in the near future that new corporations opening up near a main highway aren't going to have to put their own roads into their own business. That's what's coming."

ENGLER, state representative from Mt. Pleasant: "The road problem is critical in all parts of the state.

"I think the road problem is both a state and local one. A number of things can be done. We're looking at cutbacks in terms of federal funds. We have some options. The Cobo Hall expansion tax — the hotel tax — could go to roads (when the project is completed).

"The only option for local units are the property tax and income tax. We're going to have to give more options to local units.

"There's a problem with the state transportation fund. Groups such as snowmobilers want more for snowmobile trails, others want port development, others for public access to lakes. The governor will have to take a hard stand against those groups, saying 'we want the money in the transportation fund for roads. I'm sorry, but that's what the gasoline tax was established for.' "

CHRYSLER, owner and chairman of Cars and Concepts: "We need to work to get more of our federal dollars back. With a Republican governor, at least we'll have an entree into the federal government.

"Our highways are built (under contract) by private sector companies. They should be maintained by the private sector, too. We could cut the cost 25 percent."

For comments on candidates in the GOP primary race and to read our endorsement, please turn to the editorial page in this section.

Chrysler advocated allowing local option taxes to be approved by voters.

Q. What is your plan for continuing the cleanup of toxic and hazardous wastes in Michigan? What kind of impact will your proposal have in the overall cleanup?

CHRYSLER: "When we're talking about clean air and water, we do not play politics. We can't have the governor meddling with the appointment of the head of the Department of Natural Resources.

"Obviously some things have not been cleaned up in the environment. If we're going to pass laws, we should have the ability to enforce them."

ENGLER: "I've been very dissatisfied with the time it's taken to clean up toxic waste sites. Instead, they (DNR) were doing studies of banning brines on roads.

"As we move toward the next century, our problem is going to be toxic waste cleanups and also new sites for solid waste disposal. It's very, very expensive.

"I've favored a ballot question for a general obligation bonds to be split between state and local units, a cap on landfills, and also the establishment of disposal facilities for solid wastes. Sen. Connie Binsfeld (R-Maple City) proposed it (bond issue) two years ago, but the DNR has been dragging its heels."

MURPHY: "I agree with Colleen. The Legislature should start doing something. It would help Oakland County. We have our program in place for the next 20 years, but around the state it isn't done.

"The state saw the solid waste problem and created an act for local government to be involved. If you do the same with toxic waste, you're gonna get them (local units) more concerned.

"When we found the toxic waste drums in Rose and White Lake townships, the state came down and said they would put money to clean it up, but they didn't have the money to put a road in to get the drums out. We (county) put a road in. We got involved. The drums are out of that area now."

Q. What about suing offenders — is that realistic?

MURPHY: "It's a proper way unless they're in bankruptcy."

ENGLER: "We've found some companies were overassessed for the fund."

CHRYSLER: "The people that made the mess gotta clean it up." Chrysler said the state "played politics" by using the election year to reimburse farmers who lost cattle in the PBB poisonings of several years ago.

Q. Several school districts are suing the state, saying it isn't providing enough for special education. How should these categorical items be funded?

ENGLER: "Categorical aid is extremely important to out-of-formula school districts (those that get no general operating aid from the state). We're very much underfunding categoricals. It's a tragedy the school districts had to go to court.

"One of the problems is with the formula itself. It's desperately in need of revision. In many northern Michigan districts, people have a high SEV (assessments for property taxes) and very low income levels, and can't afford to vote for millages.

"I would propose a median income standard test as well as the SEV test, in terms of allocating state aid.

"In the future we should look at tax base sharing. Yes, that was proposed in the '70s, and a lot of people didn't like it because they feared loss of local control. If we looked at a 10-year phase-in — there's a proposal right now (by Sen. Dan DeGrow, R-Port Huron) — that might be a serious option."

MURPHY: "The formula needs to be worked on. A lot of districts get a slight increase, and it puts them out of formula.

"People want to have the local district control education and set policy — if they can put in a swimming pool or art program, they do it.

"Now some of us have said maybe there should be a single school district in Oakland County, spread out the money equally. But you're not going to sell that to the Farmington School District, to Birmingham, to Bloomfield Hills.

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Speeding

Education reduces problems

By Joanne Maliszowski
staff writer

Education is most often the best solution to speeding or what neighbors perceive as speeding in Farmington Hills subdivisions.

That's the advice offered by Sgt. Ray Cranston of the Farmington Hills Police Department's traffic division.

"We have to educate people that problems with speed can be best addressed by looking at subdivision residents. If everybody did everything they were supposed to, speeding might not be a problem," Cranston said.

As is typical in the summer months, police have been receiving complaints about speeding in subdivisions, as well as requests from neighbors for beefed-up traffic enforcement in the residential areas.

"If speeding is a problem, we don't have accident statistics to show it is. There are a lot of things to indicate that there isn't a problem," Cranston said.

POLICE RELY on accident data to determine whether a particular area is having problems with speeding. For example, if a subdivision has had a disproportionate number of accidents, the next step is to determine why because "in many subdivisions, accidents are not caused by speed," Cranston said.

Despite the lack of data confirming many subdivisions' alleged speeding problems police are, within the availability of resources, conducting selective enforcement — randomly placing patrol cars — on residential streets in attempt to modify motorists' behavior.

"We respond on a rotating basis in subdivisions," Cranston said. "The theory is that if police are there, people will tend to slow down."

Yet police are also looking to subdivision residents for help in curbing traffic and speeding problems in residential areas.

Because police use accident data to help determine the nature and degree of traffic problems, subdivision residents should report all accidents, even minor ones. If police do not have accident reports or data for a particular area, they assume traffic problems are minimal. "Events that are reported — that's all we can base our data on," Cranston said.

'We respond on a rotating basis in subdivisions. The theory is that if police are there, people will tend to slow down.'
— Ray Cranston, Hills sergeant

RESIDENTS SHOULD also ask police to speak at subdivision association meetings to explain the potential for traffic hazards, accidents and injuries on residential roads.

"The potential for harm is greatest in subdivisions," Cranston said. That's because of increased pedestrian traffic, roads that are not designed for speeding, and obstructions, such as mailboxes, that dot the roadway.

Parents could be instrumental in reducing the number of accidents and injuries of children either bicycling or walking through a subdivision by reminding their children about safety. Although police talk with children at school about bicycle and pedestrian safety every year, the safety tips are forgotten by summer's end.

"Parents need to get involved. Parents need to do things by example far more than by what they say. Parents have to show altered attitudes (about safety) too," Cranston said.

In large measure, attitudes can change for the better when neighbors get to know each other. "The more people are involved with each other, the less likely they are to offend each other," Cranston said.

WHILE EDUCATING residents about traffic safety and hazards in subdivisions can go a long way in reducing problems, residents are also being asked to check their own speed while traveling residential roads.

"If you are not part of the solution, you are a part of the problem," Cranston said.

Almost without knowing many motorists tend to pick up speed when they approach a familiar area — home, Cranston said. Although motorists may be familiar with the roads in their own neighborhood, that familiarity doesn't change the fact that it's difficult to stop when necessary at high speeds.

Many motorists also forget that the speed limit in residential areas is posted at 25 miles per hour — the lowest legally allowed, Cranston said. Though many residents have asked for reduced speeds in subdivisions, the only cases in which a 15 mph limit can be posted are in controlled access areas, such as schools.

A car traveling 25 mph can come to a full stop in 59 feet. But as speed increases so does the amount of space needed to come to a stop. A car traveling 30 mph needs 80 feet in which to come to a full stop. And a car traveling 50 mph needs 183 feet in which to stop, Cranston said.

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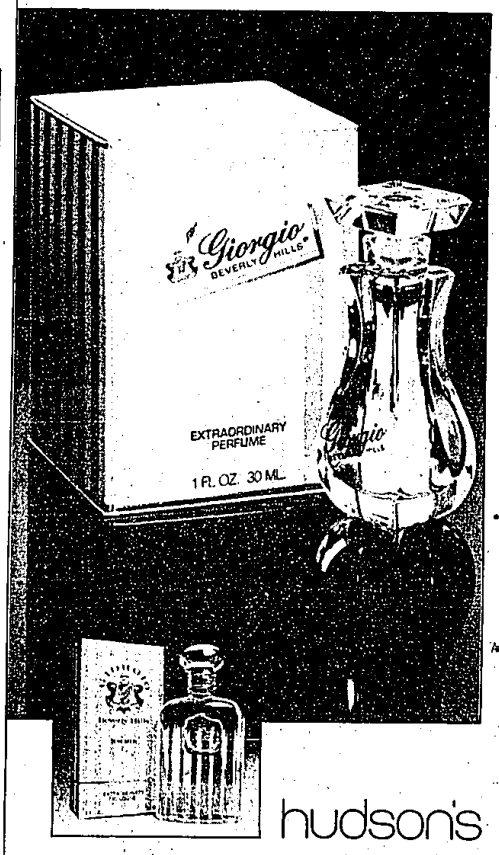

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