

# Opinion

33203 Grand River / Farmington, MI 48024 Robert Sklar editor / 477-5450

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## Selling awaits Bond issue is not a certainty

**B**ILL IT "The Selling of a Bond Issue." That's what faces the Farmington Board of Education as it eyes voter approval of a \$27 million bond issue in a special election tentatively set for Sept. 13.

The bonds would furnish \$7 million for a new elementary school and an early childhood center in the district's fast-growing western reaches. They'd furnish another \$20 million for necessary but not mandated safety improvements to schools across the district.

Gaining voter support hinges on the board making sure that as many voters as possible learn about the bond issue's purpose.

As it maps campaign strategy, the board can expect hurdles.

For starters, it has gone on record stating a combined bond issue has a better chance to pass because more residents would be assured of a direct benefit to neighborhood schools.

Without the lure of districtwide safety improvements, the board argues, outside voters won't be so apt to say yes to a bond issue for a westside school.

That argument overlooks that the new school, in tandem with the new Highmeadow Common Campus, will help ease elementary level overcrowding districtwide anyway.

As we editorialized May 26, separate bond issues would have left the final word exactly where it belonged — with the taxpayers.

ONE BOND issue means the board must now defend combining two important, but seemingly unrelated needs. In its vigor to promote the combined bond issue, the board must take care not to shortchange either need.

Meanwhile, justifying the need for a new school and improved building safety pales in comparison to the challenge of overcoming voter apathy.

Despite a 17 percent population increase in Farmington Hills since 1980 and having 50,000 registered voters, the district has drawn turnouts of 2 percent or less in each of its last five elections.

*Gaining voter support hinges on the board making sure that as many voters as possible learn about the bond issue's purpose.*

But even the lure of capital improvements won't necessarily mean more voters saying yes. There may be more voters, but you can bet some will say no, fearing the .8 mill to 1 mill debt retirement levy for about 16 years to pay off the bonds.

The key to overcoming this fear is promoting the board's good-faith plans to lower the district's total tax levy, independent of the ambitious capital improvements.

The debt retirement levy, coupled with plans to lower the operational levy by 1.1 mills, would leave a 1988-89 tax rate of 32.65 mills, 1 to 3 lower than this year's although still subject to higher property assessments.

TO RALLY support for the safety improvements, the board must steer clear of strong-armed tactics in discussing potential health threats from ceiling and floor tiles that contain asbestos and lighting ballasts that contain PCB. Neither potential cancer-causing agent is a threat in its present form.

A better tack would be to stress how laws governing asbestos removal are narrowing. What's not mandated today may be in five years, at much higher cost. There's also continuing concern about liability and fear.

In a community where 70 percent of the taxpayers don't have children in Farmington Public Schools, the board faces having to convince voters to dig deeper into their savings.

The way it wages its campaign will weigh heavily on how receptive voters are on election day.



## World of head trauma shared with fest-goers

**THE FACTS** are stunning. Every second, a head injury occurs in the United States. Each year, 100,000 people die from head injuries. Head injuries account for 700,000 hospitalizations a year. Up to one-seventh of these victims are left with lifelong intellectual or behavioral problems.

Because of a lack of specialized programs, only one survivor in 20 is receiving appropriate rehabilitation to regain physical, intellectual and emotional independence, reports the Michigan Head Injury Alliance (MHIA).

A head injury is an insult to the brain caused by a blow, a fall or another external force. It can dramatically alter a person's life and lifestyle. Physical disabilities, impaired learning and personality changes are common.

Farmington resident Paul Hugler, 29, says Brighton-based MHIA has given him "a chance to socialize with other head-injured survivors and learn of their problems."

A charter MHIA member, Hugler suffered a closed head injury in 1978 when the car he was a passenger in was hit by a drunk driver a half block from his Detroit home.

Hugler cares for himself with help from parents Beatrice and Bob. He's



**Bob Sklar**

mentally alert and eager to work if a job he can do comes along.

TO BOOST public awareness about head injury and its traumatic consequences, MHIA will host a very special booth July 14-16 at the 24th annual Farmington/Farmington Hills Founders Festival.

Amid the festival hoopla, make it a point to pay a visit to the booth to chat with MHIA member Kathy McEvilly of Novi.

You'll learn that each year, up to 20,000 new cases of head injury are reported in Michigan and that head injuries kill more Americans younger than 34 than all diseases combined. Most victims are males ages 15-25.

A chapter of the National Head Injury Foundation, MHIA assists head-injured people not only during the initial crisis but also throughout their rehabilitation.

MHIA volunteers are dedicated to assuring the best possible medical, rehabilitative, social and recreational services for head-injured people and their families. The major thrust is improving quality of life.

TO HELP prevent a head injury:

- When in a car, always use a seat belt and strap youngsters in approved infant and child restraints. Do not drink and drive.

- Wear a protective helmet and other safety equipment in sports or on the job when appropriate.

- Know the depth of the water before diving into a pool, pond or lake.

- Around the home, use firmly anchored ladders. Keep stairways clear of debris. Don't leave toddlers unattended in highchairs, buggies, strollers or by open windows.

- If caught in a thunderstorm, seek shelter indoors or in a closed car. Stay away from water, tall trees and exposed metal objects.

Salute our community's ethnic diversity at this year's Founders Festival, where the theme is "Kaleidoscope of the World."

But also make time to study up on head injuries at the MHIA booth. Prevention is the only protection against this "silent epidemic."

## No shows

### Put an end to voter apathy

"Where annual elections end, there slavery begins." — John Adams, 1776

**I**T MAY BE fitting that John Adams, a Founding Father, president and signer of the U.S. Constitution, found something cynical to say about elections in that most significant year in America's history.

Meanwhile, in election year 1988, voter turnout is disturbingly low, especially in local elections where a single vote has much more impact

than in any presidential contest. It's so low that some of us feel guilty.

It's time for Americans to stand up and make a choice on millage, school board and city council ballots, as well as state, congressional and presidential races.

Consider this: Three Michigan researchers recently completed a study that indicated many people lie about whether they voted. The study showed voter turnout would increase about 50 percent if everyone who said they voted actually did.

And the better educated person is the most likely fibber. In 1980, the researchers said, 56 percent of the college graduates who said they had voted that year were lying.

Locally, turnout was shamefully low in recent school elections. In Livonia, 3.6 percent of the registered voters cast ballots and in Birmingham 7 percent.

In Bloomfield Hills, turnout was 2 percent and in Westland 3 percent.

During presidential election years, turnout is higher. Still, in 1984, fewer than 60 percent of registered voters cast ballots.

Small turnouts allow well-organized special interest groups to have a bigger effect on election results. An organization turning out 200 voters for a school board contest attracting only 400 voters has that election wrapped up, bought and paid for.

That isn't democracy. It is an increasingly effective means of achieving political ends.

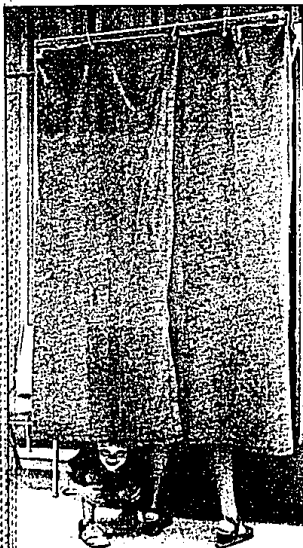
And it should be noted that small turnouts count only the percentage of registered voters. Not tabulated are the thousands of voting age people who are not even registered.

We offer these suggestions:

Voter registration should continue to be accessible, especially to young people, our future electorate. Eighteen-year-old high school seniors should be allowed and encouraged to register as part of government classes and at graduation. Schools should emphasize the significance and troubled history of voting rights.

Even more importantly, parents need to set an example in civic responsibility for their children. Groups like the League of Women Voters should continue to organize and present candidate and issue forums, and to push voter registration drives.

Forget the guilt, make the effort to vote this year. We Americans don't know how good we have it. But we'd better figure it out.



Parents need to set an example in civic responsibility for their children by exercising their right to vote.

### Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. None can be returned. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. Letters should be limited to 300 words in most cases. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

### Voters should be registered

**To the editor:**  
In a democracy, citizens support public schools in the belief that educated and informed citizens are necessary for survival, but are the schools and local governments keeping faith with that belief?

It has been 17 years since 18-year-olds were given the privilege of voting. Are they being properly prepared for the process?

The first step of voting is registration. In most cases, school boundaries, cities and township boundaries do not coincide. Principals and clerks need to search out their 18-year-old residents in their entire district.

The deputy registrar should be available on a permanent basis to register all students as a celebration of their 18th birthday, if possible. This means a deputy registrar must be available all year and not just once or twice before elections.

We all know of the small percentage of eligible voters actively participating in presidential elections.

Once registration is accomplished, the schools can continue the educational process with such activities as mock elections. Perhaps, in time, we

will have government officials elected by a majority of all the people.

Mary Alice Casey,  
League of Women Voters  
West Bloomfield  
Farmington Area

### We must ask ourselves why

**To the editor:**  
When our forefathers gave this country the right to bear arms, little did they know all the tragedies and sorrow this country would endure.

On June 6, 1988, this nation observed the anniversary of one such tragedy. The anniversary of the assassination of senator Robert Kennedy. 10,000 attended a mass at Arlington National Cemetery. We are once again reminded how some men are driven by hate to kill others.

Each day, someone is gunned down. A police officer, a brother, sister, father, mother, a child. Each day we hear of some being killed on the news by guns.

Farmington Hills is blessed. It doesn't have a high murder rate. But, every city has a bad seed. Hate is everywhere.

Every time we hear about a killing, we always ask ourselves "why." The answer is because it never seems to hurt enough to stop it.

Vernon Klepinski,  
Farmington Hills

### Ford boosts river cleanup

**To the editor:**  
The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers are to be commended for their outstanding coverage of "Rogue Rescue 88." Saving this marvelous resource is imperative, for all of the reasons mentioned in your several articles.

One person interviewed in your May 30 issue said: "We've got to get the corporate sponsors involved" — and with that statement, Ford Motor Co. enthusiastically agrees. For three years, Ford has been the primary corporate sponsor of the Rouge cleanup program.

During this time, Ford has donated in excess of \$300,000 to the cleanup effort. Also, each year, several hundred Ford employees have been given one day away from their jobs to participate in a "work day on the Rouge."

Ford has undertaken this participation because we live, work and play in the Detroit area. Our executives have asked, and will continue to encourage, other Detroit businesses, big and small, to join us in this most worthwhile campaign.

David W. Krupp,  
Ford Motor Co.

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