

Opinion

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

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Reason to exist Justification for Clarenceville

SHOULD the Clarenceville School District be dissolved and joined with neighboring school districts? No.

A group of parents has presented petitions to the Clarenceville Board of Education and argued for the consolidation of Clarenceville with Farmington Public Schools, Livonia Schools and the Redford Union School District.

Originally, the movement began in Farmington Hills with a group of parents who were dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving. They decided they would do better if enrolled in Farmington Public Schools.

But the parents discovered they needed a broader base of support and enlisted some Livonia parents also dissatisfied with the education their children were receiving. Their aim then broadened to dissolve Clarenceville and have the three districts absorb the portions that lay in their municipal boundaries.

DESPITE THOSE desires, an investigation of the procedure required for consolidation suggests that Clarenceville will remain as now constituted for some time.

If consolidation is to occur, approval must be given by all school boards who take in a portion of Clarenceville, Redford Union, an in-formula district, might benefit from the added enrollment, but that's not the case for Farmington and Livonia.

In addition, the only significant tax base (Livonia Mall) that Clarenceville has is in Livonia. So there remains little financial incentive for Farmington to absorb part of Clarenceville.

In addition, a slight millage increase might be necessary for both Livonia and Farmington school districts if the consolidation occurred — not a politically wise occurrence at a time when assessments are rising at double-digit rates in both communities.

At best, only Redford Union might absorb a small portion of the district and that's not certain. From a practical standpoint, then, Clarenceville consolidation will not occur.

An investigation of the procedure required for consolidation suggests that Clarenceville will remain as now constituted for some time.

FURTHERMORE, THERE are some reasons why Clarenceville should not be divided amongst its neighbors.

Although a small district in comparison with others in metropolitan Detroit, Clarenceville still is as large or larger than half the school districts in Michigan.

Clarenceville compares well academically with many districts in the region — including districts many times bigger. Clarenceville residents can be proud of its ACT/SAT and MEAP scores, low percentage of dropouts and percentage of students going on to college.

And residents of the district always have shown a willingness to support the schools financially by passing millage requests and Headlee Tax Limitation Amendment waivers when asked. While some districts have suffered budget deficits and faced bankruptcy, Clarenceville has balanced its operating budgets every year and has continued to be solvent.

IN RECENT years, the district has operated with tight budgets — for example, this year's pay freeze for teachers and administrators.

Supplies have been cut back and other cuts made — which understandably have resulted in parent dissatisfaction with school programs.

In April, though, Clarenceville residents approved an additional 3.5 mills plus a Headlee waiver to place the district on solid financial footing once again. In fact, the district is financially sound enough that it's going "out-of-formula" this coming school year.

The Observer has listened to both sides on this issue and believe residents of all districts involved will be best served by Clarenceville's continued existence.

Summer of '69 It shaped a nation's psyche

WHAT is all this fuss about the summer of 1969?

Why should a mere three months, so long ago, hold any meaning for us today?

For those too young to remember, or who weren't even born yet, that is a fair question, as well as a difficult one to answer.

Even those of us who fully remember that blazing, news-filled summer come away with different interpretations of the same events. As well as questions of our own.

Suffice to say something about America changed that summer, though even now it's hard to say what.

There were other noteworthy summers — 1967, for instance, was the so-called "Summer of Love," and of urban rioting, summer 1968 brought the infamous Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Even at that, summer 1969 was different. Its events cast a true light on the polarization of the times and pointed the way to the divisiveness that would mark this country in each successive summer, each successive year.

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Americans. The Miracle Mets thrilled them. And Chappaquiddick gave America a political scandal that wouldn't go away.

Still, it is the moon landing and Woodstock receiving most of the attention today. Each in its own way, represented an America at its zenith. Or was it a nadir?

Putting a man on the moon became the ultimate symbol of American wealth and might, just as surely as discovery of the New World nearly four centuries earlier secured imperial Spain a place in history. Two decades later, the moon landing still stands as a technological marvel.

Even at the time, however, the necessity of the moon mission was questioned. If we could claim wealth and power, did we not have a responsibility to use them wisely?

WHY SPEND billions on the space program, some argued, while there are people living in poverty? Two decades later, our commitment to space exploration has ebbed. Our wealth and power, while undeniable, are no longer unquestioned. Poverty continues.

Then, there was Woodstock, the upstate New York music festival that — depending upon your age and musical preference — was either an idyllic moment for a youth culture intent on brotherhood and the abolition of war, hunger and all other social ills, or a bunch of heavily drugged ne'er-do-wells (most of them gate-crashers to boot) rolling around in the mud. If the Woodstock nation's communal spirit represented a triumph of brotherhood, and doubts still linger about that, then it was only a temporary victory.

At Woodstock, it was said, people shared food. Who shares anything today?

Preaching brotherhood, saying that another man, race, or culture, is as deserving as oneself or one's own, won't get you elected to too many offices today. It may even get a cross burned on your suburban lawn.

Once, there was a time when we believed we could rise above our problems, whether through a journey to the moon or the inner recesses of human consciousness. Now, we know differently.

In the long run, it comes down to this: Moon rocks are not much different from urban rubble. A peace symbol is not much different from the hood ornament on a Mercedes-Benz.



Fireworks aren't toys; banners upbeat move

LOOKING BEHIND the headlines:

• Call me unpatriotic.

But the thunder of fireworks that roared through my Farmington Hills neighborhood over the Fourth of July weekend pveed me.

The amateur pyrotechnists who unleashed the firepower not only were downright rude in a neighborhood full of families with young children, but also breaking the law in most cases.

Safety must reign. I don't mind supervised children shooting off the few legal fireworks that can be sold at the retail level and used by the public — Michigan — sparklers, firecrackers, etc.

But state law forbids unauthorized use of fireworks that send a projectile into the air, spin, twirl or emit an audible signal — and that's exactly the kind of potent stuff I heard.

Sure, that's the most dazzling. That's why many nearby communities host fireworks displays in a controlled setting for a set time limit at dusk — not from a back yard at midnight when danger lurks and people are trying to sleep.

Most disturbing is that in the past two years, 28 adults in the Farmington area have been ticketed for posing with illegal fireworks, often with an audience of impressionable teens.

No wonder kids, who learn by ex-

ample, toss caution to the winds and hurtle any kind of fireworks imaginable into the night sky in this community. Only because of Lady Luck has no one been maimed. Four years ago, a bottle rocket caused \$30,000 in damage to a house on Branchester.

• Right on, councilman Yoder. The city of Farmington should encourage business district unity, not spite it.

In a split vote, the Farmington City Council June 19 granted a temporary one-year permit letting 12 banners go up in uptown Farmington to symbolize the area near Grand River and Orchard Lake Road.

The cloth banners will be similar to those the Downtown Development Authority has put up in the central business district near Grand River and Farmington Road.

City attorney John Donohue raised legal concerns about a private group, the Uptown Farmington Business Association, installing banners in a public right-of-way and about

the city's inability to censor what the banners say.

A logical night might be to address DDA's first concern. But I wouldn't worry too long about inappropriate messages. Merchants with an advertising bond police themselves. Their aim is to bring in customers, not drive them away.

City Manager Bob Deadman posed another potential fallout. Use of banners in business districts throughout the city could reduce the impact of the DDA's banners.

Sorry, Mr. City Manager, but that view's too parochial for my liking. Strong business districts in outlying parts of the city will most likely bolster the entire city's image as a place to shop — and downtown can't help but benefit.

Besides, as former mayor and town veterinarian John Richardson aptly put it: "I didn't realize the downtown was a sacred cow in this community."

Make no mistake: I'm a downtown booster. I've supported the DDA at almost every turn. But the strategy used to revitalize downtown shouldn't be hoarded.

If the good folks doing business in uptown Farmington think banners will help build an identity, bolster their marketing and boost area pride, I don't see why anyone would object.

Bob Sklar is the editor of the Farmington Observer.

Farmington readers' forum

Letters must be signed, original copies and include the address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld from publication only for sufficient reason. We reserve the right to edit them. Send letters to Readers' Forum, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River Ave., Farmington 48024.

Editor told to do homework

To the editor:

Apparently, Steve Barnaby, you once again have failed to do your homework (June 21).

If you had seen the material purchased by the police, as well as by the 15-year-old boy, you would quickly realize it was not just "naughty magazines," but hard-core pornography by most anyone's standards. Even the titles of the magazines were so obscene they could not be printed in your paper.

Neither Chief Dwyer nor any member of the crime prevention advisory committee is suggesting or recommending censorship. However, we do feel this kind of material should either be wrapped or placed behind a counter.

If the 15-year-old asked (not "talked into") by the police to buy the magazines could do it, obviously many other minors could also.

The party was a huge success. Entertainment included a millionaires party, a hypnotist, a recording studio, motorized scooters, a moonwalk, a caricaturist, a disc jockey, swimming, a recording studio, plenty of prizes and plenty of food.

Months of planning and work by a host of parents, directed by Barb Seabolt and Jan Powers, and donations by many parents and businesses ensured the party's success.

Hopefully, the committee has raised the awareness of the community. I urge citizens, especially parents of minors, to open their eyes and check out what material is sold in stores where they shop. If they don't like what they see, I sincerely hope they will make their feelings known to the store owner.

Betty Niclacy, member, Crime Prevention Advisory Committee, Farmington Hills

All-night fest big success

To the editor:

The Class of '89, the 100th graduating class of Farmington High, ended graduation festivities with an extracurricular party, the "Parade of Stars" senior all-night party, held after commencement exercises.

The party was a huge success. Entertainment included a millionaires party, a hypnotist, a recording studio, motorized scooters, a moonwalk, a caricaturist, a disc jockey, swimming, a recording studio, plenty of prizes and plenty of food.

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1989 senior class, graduates' parents, Farmington High

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