

Opinion

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

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Boys Republic

Tour reinforces our concerns

A TOUR of Boys Republic last week showed that the temporary home for delinquent boys in Farmington Hills is definitely more secure than in the past.

But the hourlong visit also reinforced our suspicions about the medium-secure facility for wards of the state.

It underscored that the new assessment program is a new use of the land and should have been reviewed by the board of zoning appeals. Moreover, it revealed that repeat offenders indeed are on campus in both the long-term treatment program and the short-term assessment program — which neighbors didn't know.

What bothers us most is that the community learned about the scope of the changes on the wooded, 80-acre campus only through an inquiring group of neighbors.

Farmington Hills leaders have asked officials of the private, non-profit, social service agency to describe campus changes and answer queries at the city council meeting next Monday.

But that exchange is way overdue. City leaders knew about the changes in March. They must be held accountable for not delving into them sooner.

Their lack of oversight has fueled the rumor mill. Neighbors, hearing about fenced basketball courts, locked bedrooms and 24-hour audio monitoring, fear hard-core felons have invaded their quiet neighborhood at Nine Mile and Inkster.

THERE'S A clear need for facilities like Boys Republic to give wayward kids another chance to turn around their lives. Farmington Hills isn't turning its back on that civic responsibility.

But the community has a right to know who's housed at Boys Republic. It's as simple as that.

Heck, it wasn't until last week the public learned that Boys Republic no longer houses only boys from broken homes and who are guilty of nothing more than petty crimes.

It was learned the campus also is home to some boys who have committed more than one serious crime: burglary, car theft, drug possession.

Phyllis Griffin, Boys Republic executive di-

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rector, and state officials stress that no violent criminals would ever be housed in Farmington Hills.

WE HAVE no reason to doubt them. The treatment program has evolved over the past 15 years but it hasn't endangered the community. But we're still uneasy about boys in the assessment program.

The assessment program, in combination with increased staff and renovated housing units, has yielded tighter security, in turn, curtailing truancy and making the neighborhood safer, campus officials say.

In exchange for improving campus security, the state, strapped for beds for delinquents, will continue to send more boys to Boys Republic. As part of a one-year agreement, the campus will receive a higher daily paycheck, which will help pay off a \$1 million mortgage taken for security improvements.

Instead of being placed there by the state after assessment, boys in the new program still must be assessed before the state places them for long-term treatment.

Boys Republic can refuse a boy for the assessment program or can seek reassignment of trouble-makers.

State officials say their pre-assessment screening of each boy and his family — and their assurance no boy sent to Boys Republic requires maximum security — should negate any fears that the assessment program is a greater risk to the community than the treatment program.

We're appenmded about the assessment program because the need for beds for delinquents is critical. But it's still a new use of the land — subject to zoning board approval.



Red flags are marring plans for peace march

SKEPTICS HAVE challenged his motives, partly because of uncertainty about his credentials.

But growing support for his planned peace march and rally on Sunday, Oct. 15 in Farmington has reinforced his resolve.

"We're on the move. I don't think we can be stopped. I feel like a dam has broken," says Derwin Success, a lay staff member at Berea-St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Highland Park and the sparkplug behind the new community coalition, Love Force United.

A political opportunist he's not. That's why Success, a black member of a biracial family victimized by racial slurs in their Farmington neighborhood, opted out of the city council race after considering it.

He didn't want politics contaminating his real dream: promoting racial harmony and defusing racial unrest.

ON MONDAY, the Farmington City Council gave the group the green light to meet on the lawn and steps of the city hall immediately after the march to hold a peaceful rally in support of ethnic unity.



Bob Sklar

Love Force United now must convince the council to seek a parade permit from the state to close Grand River, a state highway, for the march. The route would be Money to Liberty.

Parade permits require that the state be released of liability. So first Love Force United must line up a \$1-million insurance policy protecting the city from any damage claims arising from the march.

Still, the city's conditional support dovetails with the 75 people at Love Force United's first meeting on Aug. 14, who "spoke from their hearts" against racism, Success said.

"We need to do more than just wave a flag. We need people. We need to be a shining light. We no longer can tolerate racism. We need a show of unity."

SUCCESS, HIS wife, Dianna, and their two young children have been targets of hate messages since moving to their home on Shilawessee four years ago. Dianna and the kids are white.

Two days before Christmas in 1987, vandals spray-painted "Get Out Nigger" and "KKK" on the brick and siding of his well-kept home.

When racial taunts picked up this summer, Success installed a tall stockade fence around his back yard to make his home and his family more secure.

Success has a right to live in peace. But I'm concerned that he calls himself a reverend and says he has a doctorate when he's not ordained and his highest degree is a master's. I also don't understand his distrust of the Farmington police, who have stepped up patrols near his house and will aggressively prosecute anyone caught harassing him.

A peace march and rally should go a long way toward breaking down racial barriers. But for the event to succeed, Derwin Success can't keep raising red flags about himself.

Bob Sklar is editor of the Farmington Observer.

Silverdome

Time to cut money loser loose

THE SILVERDOME must be cut adrift. Time has passed it by. The Detroit Pistons have moved, the Michigan Panthers are history, and the Dome experienced a \$1.5 million deficit last year. Now baby boomers who crammed the facility to watch rock concerts, are seeking a seat in a more intimate setting.

That's why we believe that Pontiac State Rep. Charlie Harrison's legislation to increase the hotel tax in Oakland County to shore up a struggling concern is nothing more than throwing good money after bad.

FOR YEARS the taxpayers of Michigan have been asked to subsidize this business to the tune of \$800,000 annually. Initially, many supported the concept with good reason. Pontiac was a struggling city. The Silverdome, it was argued, would attract new businesses, create jobs and bring a renewed prosperity to the area.

But none of that has happened. Although Oakland County has experienced a breath-taking economic expansion, Pontiac still struggles. And the area around the Silverdome is barren.

To add insult to injury, struggling Pontiac residents have been forced to fork over \$1.2 million a year to support what has become the white elephant of arena's in the Detroit area.

And that \$1.2 million would go a long way in helping out a city badly in need of more cash.

Silverdome officials claim that increased

If the Silverdome is to make it, it should be made to do so on its own, without burdening taxpayers or hotel owners who benefit little.

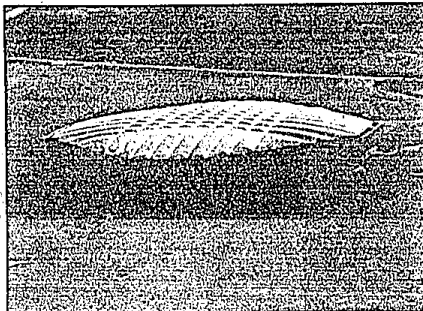
funding will enable them to bring new events to the Silverdome. But taxpayers shouldn't be forced to gamble on what has proven to be a risky investment.

When first constructed, the Silverdome was a state-of-the-art facility. Seating 80,500, with 102 private suites and an inflatable roof to keep out the cruel Michigan winters, it was a sight to behold.

But nine football games from a perennial loser with a few tractor pulls in between a financial success does not make.

Bringing new events to the Silverdome will be nothing more than window dressing. In truth, the Silverdome was built in a location destined to fail. It is like an aging automobile, out-of-style and run down. Fans are flocking to more sophisticated and contemporary facilities such as the Palace, Joe Louis Arena and the newly refurbished Fox Theater.

If the Silverdome is to make it, it should be made to do so on its own, without burdening taxpayers or hotel owners who benefit little.



File photo

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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.

Run-around irks voter

To the editor:
Recently I turned 18 and I became a registered voter. Although I am glad that I am now a full-fledged participant in American democracy, a part of my political self remains unfulfilled.

At the time I registered to vote, I mailed to Farmington Hills city clerk Kathryn Dorman a form stating I was a Democrat and wished to vote in that party's 1992 presidential primary.

When I received my registration card, however, it stated I had "no preference" for the primary; therefore, I was ineligible to participate.

I tried calling the clerk's office, but I was told the person in charge of such matters was out, and I would be called back the following week. I was not called back.

I did receive from the clerk's office another copy of the form, which I promptly filled out and returned, expecting another card, or at least a phone call, verifying my eligibility.

Dishearteningly, I received no reply. I got a third copy from my government teacher and mailed it in, which again resulted in nothing. Meanwhile, a friend of mine who registered for the Republican Party primary received his card without a hitch.

I always wondered why there were so few Democrats in Farmington Hills. But I think I'm beginning

to understand.
Alex J. Grossberg,
Farmington Hills

Media neglect some outrages

To the editor:
During the past several weeks, the media have kept us informed, shocked and outraged at the slaughter and execution of Chinese students who demonstrate for democracy. In thus keeping this atrociously heinous, the media are fulfilling their mission.

On July 17, seven students were shot by the Treasury Police of El Salvador. In a country with a population of 5 million, this number is equivalent to about 2,000 Chinese students.

The students were part of a demonstration at the University of El Salvador in San Salvador, protesting the abduction of between 15 and 20 students and faculty during the preceding two weeks. Some of these members of the university community were beaten while in custody. The prisoners were held one, two or three days and then released.

As this letter is typed, the Treasury Police surround the university. The United States supports this "democracy" of El Salvador with over \$1 million per day. Clearly, the United States has at least as much interest in El Salvador as we do in China.

Why do the media allow gross violations of human rights in El Salva-

dor to go unnoticed and unreported? We have a right to know what our tax dollars are supporting.

Vivian Compton,
Livonia

Ethics pivotal to governing

To the editor:
Your Aug. 10 editorial, which responded to the "Hills Survey," did not address the central and crucial issue of government accountability — ethics.

This moral imperative impacts upon every facet of life everywhere. And from my experience in speaking to people throughout our city, the verdict is dismal indeed.

Some examples of extremely negative civic credibility are the Arnold House (even your paper delicately phrases it as "a question mark"), the IHO debate on Drake Road, the golf course restaurant ploy, the Marks tap-in fiasco, the Harold Larson tree-cutting affront and the recent flooding disaster, to name a few.

Without a clean sweep of the present council this Nov. 7, it will be business as usual. But with your continued support in exposing questionable, if not unethical, practices by city government on every level, we will obtain better citizen representation with a higher quality of life ensuing for us all.

Albert Rosen,
Farmington Hills

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