

Opinion

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Vote May 22

Major sewer upgrade a must

THE TALK of the town it isn't. But it should be.

The planned \$12-million sewer separation and improvement project is the largest and costliest such undertaking in the city of Farmington's history.

The fruits of eliminating Rouge River storm/sanitary overflows during wet weather will benefit every household and business in one way or another.

So every taxpayer voter should stand up and take notice of the special election Tuesday, May 22, when the funding method for the project will be decided.

We have no reservations about the project.

Sure, some roads will be torn up. But that's the price of relentless erosion of the Rouge's ability to cleanse itself. Scrapping the project is not an option, as we see it.

The two-year project is intended to eliminate untreated sewage discharges into the Rouge and improve the river's water quality.

It's a key element of the city's push to comply with federal and state mandates to clean up the Rouge.

THE CITY, in essence, has no choice but to undertake the project — not only to satisfy the mandates, but also to do its part to help rescue the Rouge.

Farmington is one of 47 Michigan communities in the three-county Rouge River Watershed Basin that must come to grips with the river's pollution. Estimated total cost to clean up the Rouge is a whopping \$900 million.

At issue locally is how to pay for separating older combined sewers, improving other parts of the sewer and pumping systems citywide and providing a 3.2-million-gallon retention basin to hold excess sewer water until it can be sent to Detroit for treatment. Current retention capacity is 150,000 gallons. The new concrete basin would be covered and offer odor control and automatic flushing.

A "yes" vote will mean higher property taxes

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to pay off construction bonds. A "no" vote will mean higher water and sewer rates to meet bond payments.

THE PROJECT will cost each household an average of \$120 to \$210 a year for the next 20 years, depending on:

- Whether voters approve the sale of general obligation bonds.
- Whether the city, as expected, qualifies for a 2-percent state loan, resulting in a saving of \$7.3 million over the 20-year life of the bonds.
- How much water each household uses if the bonds aren't approved and a user fee is added to water and sewer rates, boosting them by about \$1.51 per 1,000 gallons of water used.

We don't endorse one funding method over another. Individual taxpayers are in the best position to determine how much water they use. Low water users might come out ahead voting "no" at the polls and paying the user fee, which, in effect, is a service charge. The less water used, the less paid.

Others might prefer the additional tax of 3 mills the first year, declining thereafter as property assessments rise. The tax would be deductible on the federal tax return for taxpayers who itemize.

Under this funding method, the higher your property value, the more you pay. The state circuit breaker also would apply for taxpayers who qualify.

We applaud city leaders for leaving the funding method up to those it directly affects: the taxpayers. We trust that voters respond in a well-represented turnout Tuesday, May 22.

Recycle now

Let's look beyond incineration

Whether it ever reopens, the now-dormant Detroit incinerator sends a strong message to government and business, as well as each of us as consumers.

Some believe the message is that incineration is no longer viable as a trash-handling option. We're not prepared to go quite that far, at least not yet.

Nonetheless, we are convinced incineration faces a troubled future.

Though its reopening appears imminent — based on the addition of expensive new technology to control emissions — the massive Detroit trash burning unit was recently shut by the state Department of Natural Resources because of escaping mercury.

Only a small amount of the dangerous fumes had escaped, incinerator operators argued, begging the DNR for more time to correct the problem. But even a little was too much, the state air pollution control commission said, sending a strong message to all those operating incinerators in Michigan.

NO MATTER how advanced the technology — and the Detroit incinerator was nearly state of the art — there is simply no guarantee that having an incinerator today will eliminate the need for alternative trash-handling methods tomorrow.

That lesson is just as true for the newly reopened Central Wayne incinerator in Inkster, the still-closed SOGIA incinerator in Madison Heights and the planned Auburn Hills incinerator as it is for Detroit.

Closing the Detroit incinerator, whether permanently or temporarily, is a strong indication our suburban communities must redouble efforts to promote recycling.

Many area communities are on their way toward curbside recycling — asking residents to separate their trash before putting it out for the waste hauler. Other communities have opened recycling centers, allowing residents to voluntarily drop off items to be recycled. Each is a positive step, but local communities cannot go it alone. For recycling to succeed, it must be achieved on a regional basis.

We believe regional recycling has a bright future — but only if governments secure markets. In advance, for the goods to be recycled. We're encouraged by steps the Conference of Western Wayne has already taken toward this goal and we urge SOGIA members and other Oakland County communities to do likewise.

Keeping in mind that paper goods are the largest part of the waste stream, and that government is among the largest generators of paperwork, we're encouraged by Wayne County's ef-

forts to recycle its considerable office paper. We urge local and state governments to follow the county's lead.

If this year's gubernatorial race produces nothing else, it should generate a pledge from each candidate to commit the state to 100 percent recycled office paper within 12 months after taking office.

Likewise, we urge local businesses to begin recycling plans of their own.

AS CONSUMERS, we should just say no — to excess packaging or products packaged in containers that cannot be recycled.

Most business experts say environmental changes brought to bear so far have been consumer-driven. As consumers, we should therefore use our new-found power.

That said, it might not be enough.

That is where incineration comes into play — as a last chance option for goods that simply can't be handled any other way.

No option, even recycling, eliminates the need for additional landfills. Incineration, at least, lets the landfills we already have last a little longer.

But before any incinerators are built — or reopened — we must have additional safety steps to protect the public.

Battery recycling is an idea whose time has clearly come. We urge the state Legislature not to waste another minute in drafting a statewide collection plan for car, watch and household batteries. Battery recycling would have been part of the agreement to keep the Detroit incinerator operating, at least temporarily, and it's a concept too important to let die with the incinerator's closing or to limit to the Detroit area only.

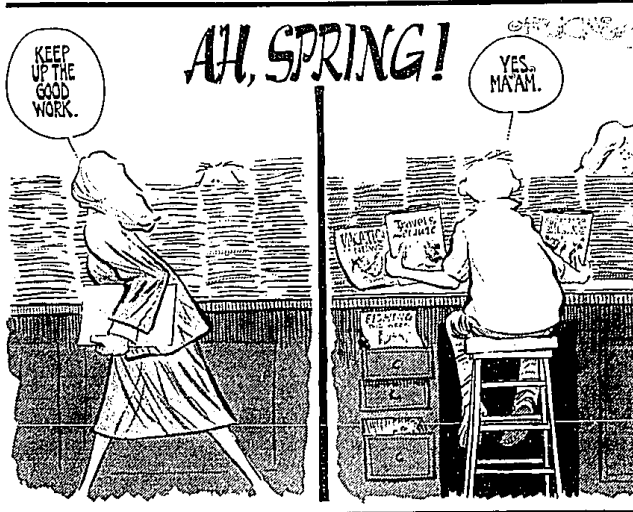
ADDITIONAL STEPS announced for the Detroit incinerator, apparently involving chemical scrubbers, are also welcome. Older incinerators must also be brought under the same tough standards used for Detroit. The same is true for those incinerators still on the drawing board.

By closing the Detroit incinerator, the DNR made it clear it was putting safety ahead of profits when it comes to meeting the nation's tough air pollution standards — with new, even tougher, federal standards soon expected. The state DNR must stand up to political pressure, as it did in the Detroit case, to assure the most restrictive standards are met.

What all this could lead to is smaller, less active, but safer incinerators. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But whether smaller, safer, less active incinerators will prove economically feasible is another question.

The answer, in any case, is this: recycle now.



Spare us the threats of anti-porn soldiers

COMING to the defense of a giant corporation has never been my style. But style, like rules, are made to be broken, so here goes.

Like many of you, I'm a little sick and tired of the hoards of holier-than-thous who are parading around the suburbs trying to tell the rest of us what we should or shouldn't read or view.

The latest anti-pornographic posse was found roaming the range at K mart Corp. headquarters up in Troy this past week.

Festooned with sanctimonious signs extolling the virtues of the family, members of the American Family Association (AFA) were protesting the fact that K mart subsidiary Waldenbooks sells Playboy and Penthouse magazines, considered to be pornographic by AFA.

THE GROUP urges we boycott K mart and its subsidiaries Waldenbooks, Builders Square and Pace Warehouse. K mart is fighting back by joining Playboy and Penthouse in a lawsuit against David Canton, Florida AFA director, who is one of those urging the boycott.

AFA is picketing K mart outlets around the country, protesting the retail chain's legal defense. Groups like AFA are simply dan-

gerous toward and simple-minded in their outlook on other people's freedoms — yours and mine.

Like Citizens for Better Education, which has waged a war against free thought in the Plymouth/Canton school district, the AFA wants a society molded in their image of morality.

And therein rests the real danger. It matters not whether the target be Playboy, Penthouse or J. D. Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye," a perennial favorite of censorship aficionados, the implied threat is the same — "think like us."

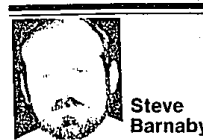
The theme is Orwellian.

ONE CAN only wonder about folks whose minds are so obsessively focused on a negative world full of demons and pornographers.

They obviously have spent little time at Waldenbooks, browsing through the thousands of fine pieces of writing which are on the shelves every week.

The strength of our country and the foundation on which it was built, our communities, is in its diversity of opinion and culture. Certainly few of us wish our children to grow up on a steady diet of Playboy and Penthouse.

But growing up, reaching maturi-



Steve Barnaby

ty is like a novel. Each scene is full of different characters. Each chapter offers us different choices. Life just isn't a play populated by evil characters.

It would be best if AFA members wandered down to Waldenbooks and picked themselves up a copy of Herman Melville's "Hoby Dick." They would see themselves in the destructive obsession of Ahab who left his men with no choice but to perish with him. They would meet Starbuck, a man, who like most of us, struggles with the choices in life. And lastly, they would see Ishmael, saved from all this nonsense, only by the grace of God.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

Crime victims grab spotlight

To the editor:
Eight sponsoring national victim organizations recognized April 22-28 as National Victim Rights Week.

The purpose of the week, observed in 48 states last year, is to acknowledge the devastation that crime has created across our nation and to underscore our determination to assist its casualties.

By any measure, Americans suffer inordinately from criminal violation — at two, three even four times the violent crime rates of other industrial democracies.

Victims of crime face pain, loss, and heartache. Their anguish and suffering often continue for years and, unfortunately, that experience is often compounded by the way they are treated within our criminal justice system.

In 1988, the citizens in Michigan and Florida voted overwhelmingly to establish constitutional amendments for victims. This constitutional change gives victims a voice, not a veto, in the way their cases are handled in the criminal justice process.

It represents a simple and straightforward attempt to balance the scales of justice. These amendments do not interfere with the constitutional rights of the accused.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving at

Be humane with animals

To the editor:
The week of May 6-14 is National Be Kind to Animals Week.

The old saying, "You wouldn't treat a dog that way," is no longer true. Some people would.

Just as some people are inhumane against fellow human beings, some are inhumane to animals. The ways are so many to count yet not too many to make some people sick.

The way hunters trap animals for their furs. How the animals are forced to suffer horrible deaths. Animal rights groups to have a legitimate complaint.

The other truth is none of them, men or women, are forced to go naked.

I have yet to see any of them strip down the clothes they wear that also come from animals. The clothes we wear on our backs and feet come from animals.

When was the last time you let a dog or cat or your bare feet or bare hands with their tongues?

Or just enjoyed their existence because they have just as much right to be on this planet as we do? Think about it.

Love nature, not abuse or waste it.
Vernon Kiehlman,
Farmington Hills

Peggy O'Dea,
Southfield

Picketing view lauded

To the editor:
Good for the Observer & Eccentric's position on April 26 circled the arbitrary ordinances passed by three communities enabling police to make arrests for orderly picketing on public property.

To protest in our society has always been a legally protected right. Unless trespass or vandalism are involved, peaceful picketing should not result in arrest in West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, and Bloomfield Township.

I must disagree, however, with the editor's assertion that the reason for the protest is of no consequence, only the picketer's civil rights. The abolitionists being picketed, you see, are denying the unborn something far more meaningful than the right to picket; they are denying the pre-born with the right to life itself.

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