

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

Bob Sklar editor/477-5450

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Vote Monday

Inch, Webb pace a good field

TAKE HEED, Farmington and Farmington Hills taxpayers. More than 60 percent of every local tax dollar goes to the Farmington school district — regardless of whether you have school-age kids.

If that's not reason enough to vote in the Farmington school board election next Monday, June 11, consider that the 11,000-student district boasts a \$92 million budget, 1,900 employees and 30 buildings. You should want a say in the district's leadership.

Beyond that, issues span the education spectrum: class size, drug-free zones, high-tech teaching tools, district goals, improving test scores, special education, gifted education, schools of choice, facility improvements, dual-income families, program continuity, balanced learning opportunities, foreign language, property tax relief.

In this year's race for two nonpartisan school board seats, we support incumbent Jack Inch and challenger Cathleen Webb.

In evaluating the nine contenders, we considered campaign questionnaires, forums, interviews and literature.

We looked for integrity, involvement, flexibility and vision — and the ability to stay focused, no matter how hot a discussion becomes.

We looked for candidates who understand the role of the school board vis-a-vis the administration, the teaching corps, the support staff and the public.

WITHIN THIS backdrop, we found more than two candidates qualified to serve on the school board. But Inch and Webb have earned our endorsement.

Inch is a 12-year incumbent with four children who have attended Farmington schools. He brings a heady balance of straight talk and independent thinking to the school board.

An educator for 34 years, he has been one of the school board's most outspoken, incisive trustees. He's feisty yet fair-minded. He consistently

looks at the big picture.

Inch doesn't run from controversy nor turn to mush when the heat is turned up. And he's the first to admit the school board "doesn't live on a castle on a hill."

We don't always agree with his views, but we admire the way he strips off the kid gloves and bareknuckles it.

School board treasurer and economics department chairman at Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus, Inch provides invaluable insight into the inner workings of a complicated school district budget.

His top priority, improving reading skills, shows a keen understanding of public education's key building block.

WEBB'S EASYGOING personality belies her probing demeanor.

The mother of two Gill Elementary students not only offers a fresh voice and an eager heart, but also a commitment to uniting the school district, not polarizing it. She'd represent all taxpayers — and do it with style and savvy.

Her background is steeped in parental participation: elementary attendance area study committee co-chair, facilities study task force steering committee member, community education advisory council co-chair, Gill Elementary PTA past president.

Equally important, she's nobody's puppet. She's articulate but doesn't speak just to be heard. She's also streetwise, a good listener and in touch with the people.

And she recognizes a school board member's most basic responsibility: "to vote not for yourself but the district." We trust she'd fulfill her pledge to, as a trustee, "get out and talk to the people."

We have no hesitation in entrusting to Inch and Webb the crucial job of setting policy for the education of this community's most precious resource — our kids.

passed along to us.

Fine. Then pass the buck where it belongs, to people who buy the premium channels. Reduce the price for basic cable — which is now running near \$20 — or better yet, make it free. Then collect on the premium channels, which are now running near \$10. If the wrong people pay for it.

Not everyone needs to have five movie channels, but everyone should be allowed access to information and other services that only cable provides. People with lower and fixed incomes shouldn't be priced out of watching video-taped city council meetings, local police safety shows and meet the candidates night.

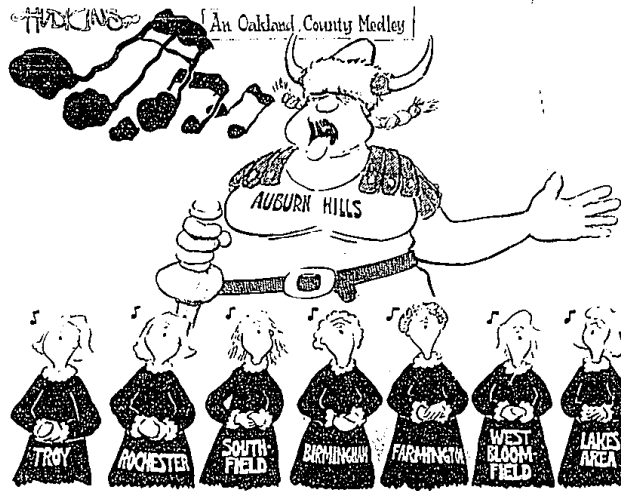
Since its inception, the cost for basic cable service has nearly tripled in some areas, and rates for premium channels like HBO, Showtime and ESPN have doubled. And service doesn't seem to be getting any better.

According to cable companies, the main reason for rate hikes is the increased cost in providing premium channels to subscribers. For example, the expense to produce those made-for-TV movies gets passed along to them and, therefore,

degrees, in business and data processing. He has no axes to grind. He has studied the budgets. He knows the condition of the buildings and equipment from a user's point of view. Blonde is typical of a generation of OCC students — young professionals with families and advancing careers — and merits election.

Jay B. Shah's candidacy has been healthy. Vice president of a civil engineering firm, Shah, 43, of Waterford has splendid economic development credentials and impressive political endorsements but lacks a previous demonstrated commitment to the college. If elected, however, he would bring the board great talent.

The board's biggest challenge this year will be to seek a fifth giant as chief executive officer replacing R. Stephen Nicholson. All candidates are committed to an open interview process. We look forward to continued progress at OCC.



Flood control in Hills a never-ending battle

FOR SOME residents, the downpour that pelted Farmington Hills June 21, 1989, meant nothing more than flooded roads and yards.

But for folks in flood-prone areas, it was a living hell.

For them, the floodwaters left an indelible imprint, turning roads into lakes, houses into islands, basements into cesspools, hot rooms into junk and doorways into glass shards.

And the drama that unfolded as the Rouge and its tributaries rose relentlessly during the mighty storm still haunts the victims.

Take it from Westbrook Manor subdivision resident Max Simon, whose home sustained \$15,000 in damage when the creek behind it overflowed. "Many of our people live in utter terror whenever the skies cloud over or they wake up and it's raining heavily."

"Our homes," he added, "are still in as great a danger today as they were a year ago."

When the driving rain subsided last June, it quickly became clear the city had to divert as much stormwater as possible from flowing into sanitary sewers and over creek banks.

IN THE aftermath of the last big flood in 1981, Farmington Hills drew up a master storm drain plan, built the \$5 million Cadek Drain at 10 Mile and Grand River and made \$3



Bob Sklar

million in citywide drain improvements.

In 1984, voters defeated a capital improvement tax by a 2-1 margin, a strange defeat given a major flood three years before.

That defeat, coupled with lighter rains, seemed to pull city officials away from major neighborhood drain improvements. Still, the city has budgeted from \$470,000 to \$1 million a year on drains the last four years.

In the wake of last year's cloudburst, City Manager Bill Costick didn't lunge for excuses. He responded quickly and sensibly to public outcry. He immediately set the gears in motion for massive infrastructure repairs.

His plan: \$18 million in mainly stormwater storage capacity improvements in three overextended drainage districts.

To finance the work, Costick proposes a 20-year, county-administered bond issue. A special 0.8-mill city tax will be levied to pay off the bulk of the construction bonds.

SELECTED AREAS will benefit but the whole city will be assessed. And I have no qualms with that. Every taxpayer has a vested interest in the stability of our neighborhoods and the welfare of our residents.

The \$18-million city project will supplement \$65 million in planned Evergreen-Farmington Sanitary System improvements, designed in part to stop stormwater from penetrating aging sewer pipes and spurring a sewage backup in heavy rains.

But let's not be too excited once these drain and sewer improvements take shape. We must assure we don't do blinders and overlook the very storm drain network we're improving.

At the same time, we must impress on our neighboring communities to the north and west — West Bloomfield, Novi, Commerce Township — the urgency in easing upstream stormwater storage capacity problems.

Meanwhile, the city must continue to monitor flood-prone areas and stay up on the availability of flood relief programs and flood plain insurance.

Under Costick's leadership, I'm confident the city administration will continually preach flood prevention to employees and residents.

Farmington Hills, quite simply, must run roughshod on flood control.

Bob Sklar is 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, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48024.

City earns pat on back

To the editor:
I would like to commend the city of Farmington for its excellent job of informing and educating residents about the recent sewer upgrade project.

An interested and informed electorate turned out in credible numbers to decide the issue. The mailings and public meetings arranged by the city were well done. I credit the high voter turnout to the city's efforts. Good job.

Laura Myers, Farmington

No-knock: not off base

To the editor:
I am having difficulty understanding how you can perceive House Bill 5319 (a.k.a. no-knock bill) as a vehicle to "deprive citizens of their constitutional rights."

If you are such an advocate of our judicial system, you must then realize the hurdles police officers are confronted with to obtain a search warrant, let alone one with a no-knock clause.

The Fourth Amendment does not guarantee our privacy as you proclaim. Rather, it is our protection against unreasonable search and seizure.

It is not unreasonable to allow police officers armed with a court order to enter without announcing their presence to reduce the opportunity for drugs to be flushed, ingested or otherwise destroyed.

The Detroit News featured a front-page article the same day your editorial appeared that echoed a sense of disturbing irony, "Violence in schools moves to suburbs."

Suburban school violence is nurtured by societal problems — guns, drugs and a lack of supervision.

Robert Trojanowicz, director of criminology at Michigan State University, was quoted, "Violence is on the increase and will cluster around the areas where you have the greatest crime and drugs."

Come on, now. Let's stop saying no to no-knock and listen to our children saying no to drugs.

Our forefathers were not witness to chemically addicted, crazed individuals toting silly automatic weapons. You want your privacy? Simply say no to drugs.

Tom Cox, Farmington Hills

Ryan White story: telling

To the editor:
Ryan White was only 18 when he died from AIDS on April 8. His story is about AIDS. His story is also about how we, as human beings, treat each other. It goes beyond AIDS.

Ryan had to fight to stay in school. At a time when he needed other people the most, some of those people turned their backs on him. But this is how some people are.

Like Ryan we, too, need other people. There are times we need them a lot. We do need each other. We don't want to feel abandoned in particular by our loved ones and friends. But there are some people who could turn away. No matter who we are, we need each other. Whether we are popular or unpopular, famous or unknown, rich or poor.

Ryan reminds us of all that none of us is immortal. How many of those people who turned their backs on Ryan mourned his death?

His candle is out now. But for us, our candle still burns. We can learn a lot from Ryan, by looking at ourselves in the mirror and examining ourselves.

Vernon C. Kleplinski, Farmington Hills

Cable TV

Rate hikes pricing people out

IF WE HAD a dime for every cable TV rate hike, we could probably all afford the Playboy Channel.

Slowly but surely over the last decade, news and information (and, yes, entertainment) have been pushed further out of the reach of the viewing public.

Since its inception, the cost for basic cable service has nearly tripled in some areas, and rates for premium channels like HBO, Showtime and ESPN have doubled. And service doesn't seem to be getting any better.

How far will the rate hikes go? For six years, thanks to deregulation, cable companies have been allowed to charge what they want. Deregulation was supposed to have fostered competition, which would have led to competitive rates and better service.

OBVIOUSLY that has not happened, and something has to give.

According to cable companies, the main reason for rate hikes is the increased cost in providing premium channels to subscribers. For example, the expense to produce those made-for-TV movies gets passed along to them and, therefore,

OCC election

Blonde is serious about serving

OAKLAND Community College faces a no-lose election next Monday. Four rational, well-prepared candidates who care about this two-year institution are seeking three seats on the board of trustees.

Incumbents Sandra Ritter and Douglas Wakefield are opposed for re-election to six-year terms. There was no reason for any significant opposition. The college has paid attention to advancing Oakland's place in a 21st century, high-technology world economy.

Two other candidates seek to fill a four-year vacancy.

Richard Blonde, 35, of Rochester Hills has the advantage of a longer demonstrated interest in OCC. He is making his second run for the board of trustees, an indication that he is serious about serving.

A satisfied OCC customer, Blonde has taken the equivalent of three years of work toward two

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