

points of view

Paper must educate community

To the editor:

Your Dec. 20 editorial calling for debate on the school millage election was off base and is not representative of the type of responsible leadership required at the Observer.

First, for a debate to be meaningful, the audience has to be informed. Otherwise, it only serves to confirm existing opinions that lead to polarization which is the last thing that any community needs.

I wrote to you earlier citing the good job the Observer does at reporting the activities of the board and administration and the need to expand your role to that of reporting the issues facing the district.

Your paper shares in the responsibility to educate the community. This is especially true in a school millage election when the administrators' hands are tied by having to avoid the appearance of campaigning for the millage — a charge some

guest column

are all too eager to make.

The written word is the best medium for the explanation of the budget issues surrounding the millage proposal. It is a large and complex budget. There are gross differences in Farmington's budget compared to other districts' budgets due to Farmington's administration of county-wide programs and the voter dictated necessity to fund facility improvements from the operating budget rather than a bond issue. It is these differences that make the use of comparative averages and statistics so potentially misleading and confusing — especially in a televised verbal format. To recommend

debate before your paper has stepped up to its responsibility to the community is irresponsible and counterproductive.

SECONDLY, to single out Carol Luckseitter and chide her for not debating Richard DeVries was unfair and unprofessional. She has been and is a hard-working devoted volunteer to both the community and to the school district.

Like most of us who have worked with the administration and the school board, we have found competent, dedicated professionals that have earned our respect and trust.

We are also keenly aware of the

direct benefits in the classroom of the administrators' work regardless of whether the state chooses to classify those actions as "instruction."

Their interest is preparing our children for the future they will face. The demands of that future are what guides their actions, not shortsighted comparisons to what other districts are doing.

CAROL LUCKSEITTER was correct in not debating. Not only is she under no obligation to do so, but as cited above it would be counterproductive to debate the budget when few are familiar with it. A televised debate is hardly the forum to inform a first time audience.

With the non-uniformity in the structure of school district budgets, comparative statistics are easily quoted that are mathematically correct but are operationally misleading.

TELEVISION regularly demonstrates its power to promulgate editorial and misconception as fact and give undue credibility to opinions stated as facts. It is just this power that promotes its abuse as a forum for opinion making.

It is not for a lack of debate that, to use your words, "the Voters stay in the dark with the days falling away before the Feb. 5 election."

With an issue such as our children's education at stake, this paper would better serve the community by devoting its time and resources to inform the community of the facts, which written media is better suited for than television, rather than foment divisiveness. Lay out the budget and the financial issues facing the district in your paper rather than cite an opinion of the "Hamilton economist" (whatever that is).

A reporter for your paper was at the school board meeting when a "Hamilton employee" cited their numbers and were advised of their errors by both Superintendent Michael Flanagan and trustee James Abernethy.

Step up to your responsibility to this community with the facts instead of trying to give credence to the opinions of an unnamed "economist."

The school board and administration have earned a better standard of reporting an "editorial" and, more importantly, our children's future demands it.

Dave York,
Farmington Hills

from our readers

Boundary issue was a 'ruse'

To the editor:

The Farmington School Board's decision to delay the decision on whether or not to change the middle school boundaries until after the special millage election is tantamount to admission that the entire issue was a ruse to raise the millage.

The selection and order of the "alternatives" for new boundaries were obviously planned to elicit strong negative responses from the parents effected. The intention in doing so was clearly for the purpose of using the emotional issue to add artificial urgency to the "need" to pass the millage.

If they (and their predecessors) had been doing their jobs instead of finding creative ways of spending money over the past few years these desperate measures would not be necessary.

This contrived emergency is merely a transparently desperate attempt to save face at the expense of the middle school students and their

taxpayer parents. This example of incompetence is only surpassed by the board's cavalier disregard for the welfare of the students and parents in the district.

Greg Zimmer,
Farmington Hills

Thanks for upholding standards

To the editor:

I was very pleased to read the article in the Nov. 29 Farmington Observer concerning the store owner who was fined \$5,000 for an obscenity violation.

My wife and I are raising our three children here. We believe that this case was an important indication that the community is protecting our young folks. It is vital that society uphold not only the law of the land, but also our moral standards.

I am also pleased to learn of the Children's Crime Prevention Committee. I understand the committee was instrumental in the police sting oper-

ation on the business. May the committee continue on the path it has chosen and keep up the good work on behalf of our community.

David I. Mitchell,
Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

Submitting a letter to the editor for publication is easy. Letters should be typewritten or printed legibly and kept to 300 words. Letters must be signed and include the address of the sender.

Names will be withheld only for the best of reasons, and the decision to do so will be made by the editor.

Letters should be mailed to the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Sanctuary solution must reflect teaching

THE DETROIT TIGERS and WJR obviously take the prize for unpopular moves of 1990 based on the public uproar over the firing of baseball institution Ernie Harwell.

But not far behind in these parts is the Cranbrook Educational Community's decision to sell the nature sanctuary it owns in Orchard Lake.

Estimated asking price: \$5 million.

Nearly 200 people turned out at a recent public forum called by the hastily-formed Friends of the Nature Sanctuary to protest Cranbrook's intentions.

Cranbrook was accused of "utter hypocrisy" for overriding the wishes of the late Harold Ward who donated most of the property to Cranbrook. In fact, although Ward wanted the site to be used for nature study, he allowed its sale after 1988. Recently his wife Mary Ward said the 50-acre should be preserved "for children yet unborn."

Cranbrook wants the money to help fund a planned \$15 million expansion of its science museum. To them, it's a matter of priorities. Many more people will utilize an expanded museum.

JUST AS THE TIGERS couldn't have been surprised at the reaction to the Harwell ousting (Bo don't know Ernie), Cranbrook also knew that its move would bring on the rage of environmentalists (Cranbrook don't know Earth Day). After all, Cranbrook is nearly synonymous with environmental education.

Preserving open space and curtail development, saving woods and waters is a major thrust in our Oakland County communities — including our schools. It reached new heights three years ago in West Bloomfield where a whole township regime was routed for overdevelopment.

Cranbrook also has to be aware of a similar situation which occurred several years ago just down the road from the nature sanctuary at Marshall Park in West Bloomfield.

The Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority wanted to sell off that small park which had been donated for preservation by Howard Bloomer. But the West Bloomfield Land Conservancy tracked down the deed and Bloomer's grandson in New York City, bringing to light a provision which demanded the land be gifted — not sold. Huron-Clinton gave



Judith Doner Berne

the park to West Bloomfield Township.

THE LAND CONSERVANCY is also involved in pressuring Cranbrook to forsake the sanctuary's sale — or at least to make them take responsibility for seeing that it remains open space. But what is so heartening is they have been joined by young people. These students from Cranbrook/Kingswood, West Bloomfield and Walled Lake Central high schools cry out that Cranbrook has betrayed its commitment to environmental education.

One particularly articulate young person is 17-year-old Mira Seo, a member of the Cranbrook/Kingswood Environmental Awareness Club.

"How can an educational community which encourages its students to seek beauty in so many areas: architecture, learning, art, and significantly in the natural surroundings of the campus itself, justifiably sell off this unique natural community?" she questioned. "For it is just as much a community as we are."

Seo, a senior, said: "Our community must apply its values and vision to preserving and renewing life; we must accept an active role as stewards of the land, and do whatever it takes, even if it means not expanding the Institute of Science. Bigger is not always better."

A letter signed only with a peace sign was one of a packet sent from Bloomfield Hills Middle School students to Cranbrook Educational Community president Lillian Brander. It said: "I don't think you should sell this land, so you can put up another museum. I don't think you need another museum. Please save the environment."

Our schools should be proud of these young people, who have obviously learned their lessons well. Cranbrook owes them a solution consistent with what they have been taught.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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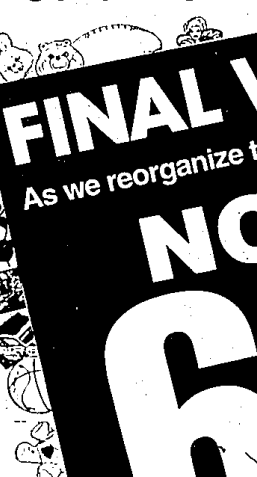
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