

from our readers

She'll do her own thinking

To the editor:

I don't know about anybody else, but I am tired of being insulted by letters to the editor insinuating that Dick Headlee made me vote against the recent millage increase proposal.

I think it would be fair to say that the majority of people living in the Farmington School District are mature, self-thinking, intelligent people, capable of making a decision-based on facts.

To suggest that the millage increase was defeated because we read a public information notice issued by Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. seems to indicate that we, who voted against a millage increase, are unthinking people.

JoAnn Phelps's letter of March 7 is doing what she accuses Headlee of doing: thinking for us.

As Phelps points out, this is America and we are free to express our opinions. Obviously, the voters of the Farmington School District did just that.

Maureen Szutarski,
Farmington Hills

Stop ripping older folks

To the editor:

Why is it that the younger generation likes to take potshots at seniors, the only stable group of people in our turbulent society?

When Social Security came into being, we didn't scream foul, we didn't rant and rave, that we wouldn't get any benefits when we grew old.

Today the younger generation moans continually about supporting seniors. The fact remains we contributed to our future and we have a right to security in our old age.

However, there are many out there who would resort to putting away seniors the way the Indians did. Put them out in the field and let them slowly starve to death.

Granted there are seniors who can afford to pay taxes and not feel the pinch, having been fortunate in business to acquire large savings. What about the rest of us?

I'm 76 years old. I've been paying

school taxes since age 18. I never made a lot of money because I never had a chance to go to college because I was poor.

I feel that relief from school taxes should be based on income and health of the individual. Many seniors are beset with illnesses and pay many medical bills.

I think that a gradual reduction of school taxes according to age and income would be appropriate and humane.

The reference to opening a can of worms is all poppycock and has no valid foundation. You're grasping at straws to support your prejudiced view of seniors, forgetting that if you live long enough you will be there also.

Charles Evans,
Farmington Hills

Need people like Headlee

To the editor:

Those who are mad at tax-foe Richard Headlee should remember that he's a taxpayer like us.

I cannot understand where all the money collected for taxes is going. I am 70 years old. My house cost \$15,000 23 years ago. I am paying \$6,000 a year in taxes, and my assessment is up again this year.

Schools don't need more millage. With the increase in taxes, the schools are getting more automatically. School taxes are almost two-thirds of the tax collected and are paid by property owners only.

Businesses that own property must pass the increases on to their customers. This costs all of us a second time. Many states have no school taxes on property. All people in the state should share the cost.

Another thing Young people cry about supporting the old people on Social Security, but the old also support the young by buying products or services that have the cost of their health insurance and pensions and taxes added to the selling price.

Most of us are little people. It takes someone with money and power to change things. People like Headlee can change things.

For those who feel gyped because their taxes were not increased, I am sure the school board will accept their donations.

James T. Joseph,
Farmington Hills

Thanks for a good story

To the editor:

Thanks for a positive article on the Charter House nursing homes in the March 7 Farmington Observer.

Many employees of the area's nursing facilities needed a pat on the back and public recognition for the caring jobs they do for the aging population.

As a three-year employee of one of the Charter House facilities that Alexander Spurio purchased last December, I can tell you that he cares. He and his wife, Nora, are available to the staff and residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

They have set high standards for their facilities and employees. The effort shows not only in the improvements to the buildings, but also in the day-to-day care for the residents.

The staff of dedicated workers at these facilities are caring and personally devoted to each resident they serve. They take pride in a job well done.

The aging population of our nation will require more and more facilities devoted to their needs. We need more places like Charter House.

Articles like yours can certainly help motivate the employees and owners who perform these needed services. Thanks for the recognition in the informative article.

Nursing homes need the help and understanding of the community.

Nancy Garcia,
Farmington Hills

Story good for a laugh

To the editor:

I can understand why the Farmington Observer does not spend good money on comic strips. The real belly-laughs are in the news holes.

In "City board to hear appeals of assessments next week," (March 7), one finds this knee-slapper: "Residents should be able to prove (emphasis added) their property would not sell for twice the proposed SEV (State Equalized Valuation)."

Now that's what I call a one-liner. Right up there with "Let them eat cake."

Keep up the good work, Observer. We villagers love these comings and goings of American's Funniest People.

Thomas R. Stumpo,
Farmington

points of view

Headlee: Don't still the 'contrary voices'

By Richard Headlee
social writer

I've been surprised at the public statements by supporters of the defeated school property tax increase proposal.

Many of these criticized us for "interference" in our community, complained about the information ads that we ran to inform voters, and even accused the Farmington Observer of slanting its new coverage and refusing to sell ad space. Let me set the record straight on these items.

First, I'm proud of the fact that Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Company expended about \$10,000 towards a series of informational ads which described the five-year trend in school district expenditures, property taxes, general fund surplus, enrollment and inflation.

Every number in these ads was absolutely correct, and indeed was taken from the latest available financial statements. In fact, many of the numbers were confirmed in the school district's own brochure.

We also printed in the ads, big as day, the name of our company and the signature of an individual such as myself. Contrast this with the full-page ad purchased by the Friends of Farmington Schools the day before the election.

THEIR AD BEGAN with the breathtaking falsehood that "the district is not seeking new money." Furthermore, nowhere in the entire ad is an address or the name of a responsible individual. In fact, you have to hunt for several minutes to even find the minute name of Friends of Farmington Schools.

Our ads were accurate and well identified. The same can't be said for the "Friends" of Farmington Schools.

Second, the accusation that the Farmington Observer slanted its coverage or refused to sell ad space is preposterous.

The Observer covered extensively the school board's statements as well as the activities of Friends of Farmington Schools, the MEA, and the other pro-tax increase forces.

The paper printed many letters, both pro and con, and finally even endorsed the millage. The fact that they also gave significant coverage to those who were critical of the tax increase proposal only shows that they were doing their job, namely, covering both sides of an issue.

Stifling contrary voices, which is what these critics are implicitly calling for, is hardly the proper role for a newspaper. They went out of their way to give the proponents the benefit of the doubt.

Third, I've been very happy during my years as president of Alexander Hamilton Life to see our company involved with so many worthwhile community projects and with so many important issues.

IN OUR COMMUNITY alone, Alexander Hamilton Life has recently made contributions to the Farmington Hills Police Officers Association, the Farmington Players, the Farmington Rockets Junior football, the Farmington YMEA, the Miss Farmington Pageant, the South Farmington Girls Pee-wee Tournament, Harrison High School Senior Activities, the North Farmington Parents Association, the Farmington Area Advisory Council, the Farmington Community Band, the Farmington Families in Action, the Farmington Jaycees, the Farmington Neighbors, Harrison High School Commencement, North Farmington High School Symphony Band, and many other worthy activities. Corporate involvement in the community isn't "interference," it's good citizenship.

A business has three choices: it can simply pay its tax dollars and hide its head in the sand, it can simply go along with whatever trend appears at the moment, or it can stand up and aggressively fight for what is right.

We at Alexander Hamilton have chosen the hard third choice, and encourage others to do as well. Michigan would be an even better state if every school district had a company so inclined to be involved.

... the accusation that the Farmington Observer slanted its coverage or refused to sell ad space is preposterous.

— Richard Headlee,
Alexander Hamilton Life

Some call for corporate involvement in the community one day and then criticize that involvement the next. Taxpayers citizens and corporations should get involved with their community, and that involvement cannot be a one-way street.

Paying taxes and making contributions goes along with having a say in how those dollars are spent. Nobody claimed it was "improper" for us to support the above worthy activities, or indeed to support the school bond issue in 1989.

To call it improper for us to oppose a school property tax increase in 1991 is not only hypocritical, it's undemocratic. After all, we pay \$10,000 per month in property taxes.

The defeated proponents have been beating their chest over getting 4,000 votes for the proposal. In light of the fact that the school board has 1,460 employees that probably is not such a significant achievement.

Paying taxes while being shut out of government decisions used to be called "taxation without representation." We fought a war about that; once, and if we all stay vigilant, we won't have to again.

Richard Headlee, a Farmington Hills resident, is chairman and CEO of Alexander Hamilton Life. He opposed the recent school millage increase.

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