

Opinion

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Answers needed! Doubts threaten parks vote

DAN POTTER, Dennis Fitzgerald and other parks and recreation powers-that-be in this community, have some explaining to do.

And they have about a month left to come up with some straight answers before Farmington Hills voters go to the polls May 7 to decide the fate of an important parks millage.

At first the millage request seemed cut and dried, an easy winner. In most places, parks fall in that category with motherhood and brotherhood and a cool drink on a hot day. Everybody's for it.

Most places, maybe, but not in the city of Farmington Hills in the last decade of the century.

People here in this slice of urban suburbia take their parks seriously, and these days we sense a growing concern about the upcoming vote on the millage that would generate \$9.6 million over eight years for use on the city's parks.

Ah, but just how would that money be used on sites like the undeveloped Peltz-MDOT property at Farmington Road and I-696, and the developing (some would say over-developed) Heritage Park about a mile south?

WOULD THE funds be used to preserve babbling brooks for power bird watchers or to build ballfields for budding young athletes?

Those are the questions that residents like Kurt Yockey, Joe Derek and Roy Lindhardt have been asking city officials like Potter, director of Special Services including parks, and members of the parks commission like Fitzgerald.

So far, say the residents, the answers have been unacceptably scanty and, well, downright confusing.

"We're getting different information from different sources," said Yockey, whose home in the Quaker Valley subdivision is near the city-owned Peltz property, in a recent interview.

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Yockey said Quaker Valley residents were told by Fitzgerald and Potter that if the city couldn't buy land for ballfields, the diamonds and pitches just might end up on Peltz-MDOT land.

Isn't that just the thing to inspire confidence among the voters with an important election coming up?

MEANWHILE, Lindhardt, a suit-and-tie guy with a yen for the wilderness during his off hours, has been going over the expenditures for Heritage Park from 1986-90.

He tells us some of the items seem inflated and others he just doesn't understand. He's gone to the proper city officials for answers — and gotten none, he claims.

Derek, a naturalist and no stranger to the outdoors, simply doesn't like the way Heritage has been developed under Potter. He just can't stand the thought of the big yellow machines crawling over the parkland as a \$2 million improvement project grinds on.

Will Heritage's forest remain undisturbed, he wonders, or will the city be building access roads deep into the woods so that concession stands may be stocked?

Yockey, Lindhardt and Derek are three men with questions that need answering. They'd better start getting them from the Farmington Hills parks gurus, or that millage just might lose.

These three have been very vocal about their concerns. There are many others, we think, who are just as concerned — and just as likely to vote no on May 7.

THE DOGS



Governor's meat ax lashes out at children

IT'S LIKE something out of a Charles Dickens novel. Ever since John Engler took the reins of power in Lansing, his vengeance against the governmental system which has weaned, nurtured and fed him all these years has shocked many into the realization of what it is that government really does do for a society.

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Steve Barnaby

John Engler has turned his ax on children, the most defenseless group of all.

These aren't the children of the wealthy or the middle class. These are the children who have run out of alternatives, who have no place to turn. Social service agencies are their last best hope.

These are the children who defy the myth that volunteerism is a viable alternative to government services.

PANDERING to the reactionary fairy tale that social service money is squandered in fraud and scandal, Engler has advocated cuts which would displace 3,500 children. You're hearing correctly. Engler's meat-ax approach would put 3,500 children on the street.

Ironicly, the kind of social-service money involved is an example of the best form of cooperation between the private sector and govern-

ment. You could call it Oliver Twist, reborn.

In response, the Michigan Federation of Child Care Agencies and the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association are fighting back in the courts with some limited success.

Earlier this month, Ingham County Circuit Court Judge William Collette halted the 22 percent Engler cuts in children's services.

To counter, Engler's budget bashing cronies convinced the Court of Appeals the cuts should be authorized.

But the Michigan Supreme Court returned the case to the Ingham Circuit Court which is slated to hear the case on April 23.

In the meantime, the children are at risk. Child care agencies are being shorted in their checks. Engler, of all folks, knows that this world runs on money, not good wishes. And without

the bucks, these private agencies will eventually have to turn away children.

Just to give you examples of the impact, 15 of the 66 federation agencies surveyed showed they would lose nearly \$10 million if the cuts aren't restored. They would have to close 306 beds and terminate foster care placement for 420 children. Eighty-five children would go unadopted.

Camp Oakland in Oxford would lose more than \$457,000 this year, alone. Catholic Social Services/St. Vincent would be victimized \$168,000. Other big losers would be Lutheran Social Services, \$786,000. And the two biggest losers would be Orchard Children's Services at \$1.6 million and Starr Commonwealth at \$1.8 million.

Not a nice picture. But maybe the governor plans on volunteering to take in a couple of kids, himself.

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

Urban sprawl Racism is underlying problem

URBAN SPRAWL, spawned by racism, is a threat we are foolish to ignore.

The lifeblood of our communities is being sapped by fear and hatred which infect the personal, business and government decision-making process.

For those of you who live in what is derisively called by some the "inner-ring" of suburbs, think of the investment you've made in your house, your church and your schools. And then ask if you are willing to sacrifice your dream, waste the sweat of your labor, marching behind the banner of racism.

The sensible answer is "of course not." But generations before us have done just that and we are seeing it happen again. The casualties from the past have witnessed an unprecedented destruction of an economy more devastating than wars.

And we are doing it again, despoiling communities in fear of integration.

Racial discrimination, educational inequalities and crime problems all merge in the older areas to make redevelopment less attractive, de-

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spite lower land and building costs," a recent report by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments notes.

Many well-developed, viable inner ring communities are losing residents, according to government census figures. And the dirty little whispering campaign about which community is going to be the "next" Detroit does nothing to help the situation.

Metro Detroiters must commit themselves to renewing, rather than discarding developed communities like so many pieces of rubbish.

Fighting racism is a good place to start.

Go underground? Our utilities must do better

IT SEEMS to happen every spring — and we're not talking about baseball.

No, what happened was that Michigan experienced a little of the rough weather which sometimes goes with the changing of the seasons here at the northern end of Tornado Alley.

Last week the wind blew, the wires came down and hundreds of thousands of people shivered in the dark for days.

Almost a half a million people in southeast Michigan lost power March 24 when winds estimated at 75 mph whipped across the area. As of Monday, according to press reports, Detroit Edison had restored service to all but a handful of customers.

That's good to know. People can put their lives back together by doing things like throwing away thousands of dollars worth of spoiled food from their refrigerators and freezers.

NOT TO BELITTLE Detroit Edison's efforts during the power outage (we know their employ-

ees worked around the clock), but hear us now. There has to be a better way for our utilities to cope with the vagaries of Michigan weather.

A better way would be to put the lines (electric, telephone, cable-TV) underground so that the wind and windblown objects wouldn't knock them down.

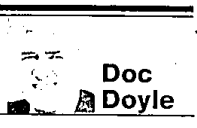
What's needed is an ambitious project by Edison and other wire-stringing companies to bury them, not just in new developments but in older ones, too. Do it bit by bit while the sun shines and maybe we won't have such a big mess next March.

Yes, we've heard the utility's arguments, mainly that burying lines is "just too expensive." But doing so would improve the standard of service. Isn't that what profits are for?

If going underground with the utilities isn't the answer, Detroit Edison, then what is? What can you do to keep so many of your paying customers from shivering in the dark when the winds blow next spring?

What is a curriculum?

Q: One of our school district's long range plans is to develop a K-12 curriculum. Just what is a K-12 curriculum? What is its purpose? Do teachers develop it. Is it the courses students take? I've heard the word curriculum for years but never have really understood it. What is curriculum?



Doc Doyle

A: Curriculum comes from the Greek term that means "to run a course." Students, from the first day of kindergarten are "running" a K-12 curriculum course. The starting line is kindergarten and the finishing line is graduation.

A school district's curriculum is a written document that states what the district is supposed to be teaching at each grade level. It includes educational goals and objectives and in most cases outcomes that can be measured by tests to see if the student is learning.

The final document is called a curriculum guide and can be geared to the fourth grade or a ninth through 12th grade social studies or science programs.

There are four-types of curriculum: recommended, written, taught and learned.

Recommended curriculum is the ideal. It is the curriculum recommended by university scholars and instructional specialists. It is indeed what should be taught if it were a perfect world. However, many teachers often see it more as theory

and oftentimes unrealistic when dealing with the students sitting in front of them every day.

Written curriculum is put into a curriculum guide. Each guide states what should be taught at each grade level. For example math in the fifth grade, world history in the 10th grade.

These written guides translate into the school district's educational goals (sometimes called policies) which the district believes teachers should teach in the classroom.

Taught curriculum is what I call "reality curriculum." It is what teachers actually teach in the classroom every day once they shut their door. It may differ from what the theorists desire for the district hopes is occurring in the room.

Learned curriculum is the most important. It is what students have learned. More often than not experienced teachers will use methods and learning experiences they know have proven successful whether they exist in a curriculum guide or not.

Indeed, many teachers literally

refuse to be boxed in by a curriculum guide, especially if it is outdated or they had little input in its development.

I believe stated curriculum goals and objectives in appropriate curriculum guides are essential in any quality K-12 program.

However, curriculum developed primarily by outsiders or by a few curriculum specialists is perceived by teachers as something those people in central office thought up and dumped on us.

Teachers, at the very outset, must be involved in the development of the curriculum including the curriculum guides. The more teachers are involved in curriculum development, the more they have a stake to see it is successful.

Curriculum is the road map that coordinates what should be learned at each grade level, K-12.

Jerry Gauthier, a curriculum professor, says what is written and what is taught must be brought into an agreement to maximize learning.

This is the task of the curriculum leadership in your district. I held that responsibility for years. It can be stimulating, fun, a sound, education process — as long as teachers are allowed to help chart the course.

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