

Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Baer editor/477-5450

18A(F)

O&E Thursday, September 26, 1991

Pols take note! Let's keep to the high road

SOON THE SIGNS will be all around — sprouting from leaf-covered front yards, tacked to posts along busy highways and stuffed into residents' mailboxes. An important local election is coming up in the Farmington area.

Voters in Farmington and Farmington Hills will have some tough choices to make when they go to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 5, to elect city council members and decide the question of funds for an expansion and renovation of the district courthouse.

And make no mistake, it is an important election. Decisions made about a month from now will go a long way toward determining what the Farmington and Farmington Hills of the future will be like.

Unfortunately, it's more than just lawn signs and political mailings and announcements of meet-the-candidates nights in school cafeterias that tell us an election is in the offing.

The bad attitudes of some of the candidates and their supporters is also a dead giveaway.

AH, YES, SOMEONE should write a song "election time and the rhetoric is sleazy" something like that, with apologies to Mr. Ira Gershwin.

We'd like to believe that this will be the election where all the hopefuls and their sidekicks behave like ladies and gentlemen and stop picking on each other and actually discuss some of the important issues with alacrity so that the voters may make intelligent choices on Nov. 5.

Do we hear someone, possibly a candidate, snickering in the background? Well, we can dream, can't we?

Now, we think we know the people running for the council spots — and we're sure we're going to get to know them a whole lot better as the campaign progresses. They all seem to be decent people. We're sure the community will be well-served should any of them be elected.

But, hey, let's be honest about it: A lot of adults

Let's be honest about it: A lot of adults become children during election campaigns. We've seen it in past elections; we expect to see it in this one.

become children during election campaigns. We've seen it in past elections; we expect to see it again in this one.

FOR ONE THING, certain candidates (you know who you are) are far too sensitive about what is (or isn't) included in the local newspaper about them. These types don't seem to realize that it's the voters they have to win over, not the reporters and editors of some paper.

Candidates who bitch about newspaper content and coverage, while forgetting the voters, are usually the ones who get the "unsuccessful candidate" designation in subsequent stories.

All candidates should remember that newspapers cover political campaigns. The papers don't run them. You'd think most people would understand something so basic to the science of politics. Yeah, you'd think.

To sum up, candidates who expect to be taken seriously by voters and the press should show a commitment to the voters and the community, not to their own egos.

So, candidates and supporters, please grow up, or stay grown during the campaigns. Stick to the issues and forget about:

- Starting whispering campaigns about each other.
- Yanking each other's signs out of the lawns.
- Pitting one supporter against another in divide-and-conquer schemes.
- All the other childish things we've seen so many local politicians do over the years.

Art groups Unity points way to funding

MICHIGAN NEEDS a United Way for the arts.

Just as the United Way will soon raise money for area charities, Michigan's arts community needs a strong, central fund-raising agency of its own.

We continue to believe support for the arts is a legitimate state function, but our state will no longer support art to the extent it has in the past. Instead of crying over lost revenue, Michigan's arts community is aggressively moving forward to meet the challenge.

A new Detroit chapter of Business Volunteers for the Arts, a private, nationwide fund-raising organization, has been formed. The Detroit Institute of the Arts, meanwhile, has begun marketing its wares in DIA retail stores.

Both moves are welcome, but even greater financial support is needed.

WELL-HEELED arts groups will no doubt continue to survive as they fight for new grant money. Others, no less vital, may soon disappear. Rather than competing against each other for contributions, we urge area arts groups to band together in mutual support.

The framework may already be in place. Arts Foundation of Michigan, a private, Detroit-based agency, is considering expanding its role.

The 25-year-old foundation kept quiet during the debate over arts funding, but now seeks to broaden its support for Michigan artists and art groups.

IT CURRENTLY provides cash payments to artists and helps arts groups secure grants. But instead of an occasional grant, we'd like to

see the foundation provide continuing support for area art organizations.

The mechanism: an annual fund-raising drive among Michigan businesses and residents.

We have no doubt area businesses and residents would respond generously, especially if they were assured at least a percentage of money would remain in their home communities.

Rochester-area arts supporters couldn't turn down a program that would help Paint Creek Center for the Arts. Livonia music lovers couldn't say no to the Livonia Symphony.

Heavier dependence upon private fund raising isn't risk-free.

OVERHEAD is traditionally high for groups that depend upon private fund raising. Many end up spending more on fund raising than on programming. Even the national council of Better Business Bureaus calls a 50/50 split equitable.

In the past, that pattern has made us skeptical of efforts to reduce state arts spending and replace it with private fund raising.

Arts Foundation officials, however, have thus far given 89 percent of what they have raised directly to art programs, according to figures on file with the state Attorney General's office.

That is encouraging and a strong indication of why the foundation should be the agency spearheading a central arts fund-raising program.

It must also be remembered that state support for the arts — like state government in general — isn't free of overhead, either.

Art, whether it be a painting, sculpture, symphony or dance recital, is a vital part of life. To keep arts programs alive, it is time for agencies to band together and take their case directly to the public.

2 Virginians forge a country believing in personal rights

TWO VIRGINIANS, George Mason and James Madison, played major roles in the drama that created the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

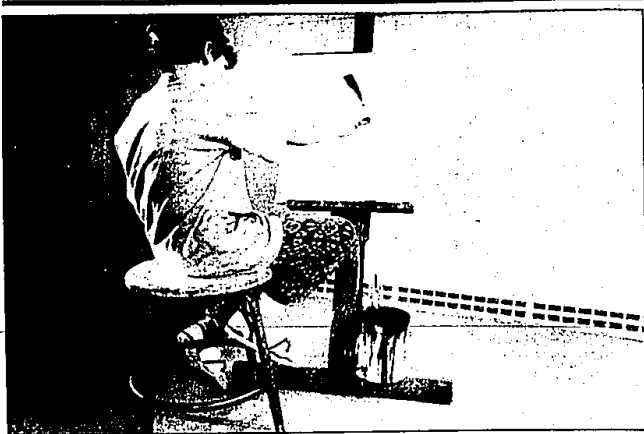
Both favored a national government that would unify the country and both firmly believed in personal rights. They differed, however, on how to attain these goals.

Madison, an architect of the Constitution, believed that since the new federal government would be one of limited powers, authority not

delegated to it would be retained by the people or the states.

Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights which inspired the federal Bill of Rights, also viewed the federal government as one of limited powers. He was concerned, however, that federal powers could erode those of the states.

Both legacies have shaped America's experiment in constitutional government. It is Mason's vision of fundamental rights, as carefully set into the Constitution by Madison's crafting, that we celebrate this year in the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Seeking alternatives

With the reduction of state funding for the arts, art groups will have to become more creative in seeking alternative means of staying alive.

For our opinion, see the editorial on the lower left side of this page.

Dems fail to recognize issues with governor

ITEM: Earlier this week, 95,000 folks in Michigan who get an average of \$170 monthly in General Assistance were told they wouldn't be receiving their welfare checks as of Oct. 1.

Item: Last weekend at the Michigan Republican conference on Mackinac Island, Gov. John Engler told those same 95,000 folks to get off their duffs and find work. "There are opportunities in many communities to find jobs," he said, "not \$10 an hour jobs but minimum wage jobs that... if worked half time would more than replace General Assistance."

The governor is partly right. A brief glance at the Help Wanted portion of this newspaper's classified ads will reveal a lot of job openings. Some are minimum wage, but some pay up to \$15 per hour.

The governor is also partly wrong. For a poor person living in Detroit or Flint without a car and with one of the worst public transit systems in America, that nice job in the suburbs might as well be in California.

IT'S BUDGET crunch time in Lansing again, and the target of choice is the \$2.3 billion Department of Social Services.

The governor and Legislature must approve a state spending plan by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year. While the Legislature looks ready to cut a \$7.9 billion budget, the Engler Administration estimates

there will be only \$7.5 billion of revenue.

Some \$400 million will have to be eliminated. The \$230 million House Democratic plan to substitute job training for welfare payments is an easy target for the governor's veto threats.

So when 30 angry and noisy welfare rights advocates started raising a ruckus last week at a conference committee meeting, fearful Republican senators had to be escorted out of the meeting room by security guards.

Afterward, the governor's aides charged that the committee co-chair, Democratic Rep. David Hollister, had incited the trouble. Hollister denied it, saying, "They were angry, but they should be angry."

APART FROM the sense of bordered alarm that I always feel when observing a state budget quarrel, I confess some bafflement at what's really going on.

All the fire and smoke of longtime arguments are deadly serious. But the gut-level strategies are aimed at the 1994 election.

Engler and the Republicans are trying to occupy the high ground — prudent in spending and nasty to welfare recipients who supposedly could get a job if they just had the gumption.

Democrats, on the other hand, appear to be fixated on defending — or appearing to defend — the welfare system and its clients. This is puzzling.

from our readers

He's against recycling fee

To the editor:

I'm glad that someone has finally come out to challenge the recycling fee (tax). I too am against the fee, and further, will not pay it.

The point is that I did not have an opportunity to vote on it. If I did, I would have voted against it. If the city of Farmington Hills wants to separate my cans, bottles, plastic and newspapers, then let them do it at their cost.

Vince Chiaravelli,
Farmington Hills

Thanks for the coverage

To the editor:

On behalf of the Farmington Area Community Women, I would like to thank the Farmington Observer for continued support of our various fund raising activities by running photos and articles.

I would especially like to thank you for running our article about our recent "Returning Women's Scholarship."

We were pleasantly surprised to find an article rather than our usual paragraph in the Around Farmington

section. You and your staff have once again helped us be more successful with one of our projects.

Robin Kane,
secretary, FAWC

Meetings belong on cable TV

To the editor:

As reported in the Sept. 9 Farmington Observer, while other school board members continue to drag their feet on live cablecasting of board meetings, board president John Cotton openly opposes cablecasting and states that the only people that will watch it must be "bored" and "with nothing better to do."

I disagree with Cotton. It's outrageous statements such as his that will make the meetings anything but boring. And thank goodness for people, in Cotton's words, "with nothing better to do" that keep a watchful eye on local government and force or elected officials to "do better."

Every citizen should have the opportunity to be "school board watchers" from the comfort of their own home with live cablecasts of board meetings. It will dramatically improve the performance of our board members, most of whom, out of the

public eye, blissfully and ineptly coast in their performance as elected officials.

No more excuses. No more delays. It's time for the board to keep their word and live cablecast their meetings.

Jill Schafer DeVries,
Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

That's why the Farmington Observer encourages its readers to share their views with others in the From Our Readers column.

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

Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor
Judith Doner Berne assistant managing editor
Dick Isham general manager
Mark Lewis director of advertising
Fred Wright director of circulation

Subscription Committee members: Carol
Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Aginon president