

# Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336

Tom Baer editor/477-5450

12A(F)

O&amp;E Thursday, January 9, 1992

## Hills agenda

### Several issues for 1992

**A** NEW DIGIT has rolled up on the decade of the '90s. People are making — and already breaking — New Year's resolutions. Here are a few resolutions (some call them goals) we'd like to see Farmington Hills officials make and keep:

- Facilities plans — Yes, we know that council considered such plans a couple of years ago, then quit at our urging. But now, as the city council grapples with people-related issues, we're saying the plans should be tried again. They should be openly arrived at in open meetings (no dinners or breakfasts, please — that was the part of the problem last time!) before decisions are made on important issues like parks use and the library. Of course, the citizen ad hoc committees should be left in place to provide input.

- Library — A new library will be built one of these years in Farmington Hills. We hope officials continue to develop a plan to merge the new library with the Oakland Community College Library on the Orchard Ridge campus. The

library should not (repeat not) be constructed on the Peltz-MDOT property.

- Parks — Parks use, especially the development of beautiful Heritage Park, continues to be a hot topic. We hope the park remains a nature preserve with few urban trappings. There are other places for baseball diamonds and sand volleyball pits.

- Recycling — The community is off to a great start with its curbside recycling, but officials have to settle this nagging issue of how to pay for it — tax or fee. The question should become part of the budget process in both cities this year. Public hearings should be held. Citizens would speak, officials would listen, and hopefully the councils would reach intelligent and informed decisions.

- Image problem — This issue was discussed at length in last week's editorial. Officials (elected and appointed) should realize that there is at times an image problem in the Hills. If left unchecked, the problem can diminish the effectiveness of local government.

## Ring off?

### If police must solicit . . .

**I**F YOU must solicit . . . please, practice safe solicitation. That's our advice to the Farmington Hills Police Officers Association (POA) in the midst of the current row over the union's fund-raising techniques.

Every year many local telephone calls are rung to raise funds for FOAs, but very rarely is it a police officer from Farmington Hills doing the calling and asking. It's probably someone from a telemarketing firm on the other end of the line.

Many residents complain about such begging calls (they can be annoying, especially when they come at dinner time), and Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer has criticized the practice.

Now, we're not against police unions soliciting. And we're not putting down telemarketing with its boiler room telephone operations. You can always say no and hang up the phone. That's what we do at this office, we confess.

We are saying, however, that a police union had better know exactly what those boiler room guys are saying to the public on its behalf. If the union folks can't control the telemarketers, they're better off doing the soliciting themselves — or not at all.

If the pitch gets too insistent, too persistent, too hard-sell, it will reflect poorly on the police department, the profession, and the entire city government.

Maybe Chief Dwyer is truly worried about the professional image of his department when he complains about the union's solicitation policy. Or maybe he's trying to gain an advantage in an upcoming negotiation.

Anyway, we think that state legislation is needed to regulate police and fire organizations' solicitations. Such legislation is planned. It should be supported.

## First Night

### B'ham builds warm tradition

**T**HANK YOU BIRMINGHAM and the Birmingham-Bloomfield Cultural Council for giving us an exciting, refreshing, low-cost, family-oriented way to spend New Year's Eve.

More than 9,000 people from many parts of metro Detroit roved the community, choosing among 125 live performances at more than a dozen sites at the second annual First Night/Birmingham '92 arts festival.

They gathered at midnight in the center of the city to view a laser light show, to count down the old year and to raise their voices (and kazooes) in the traditional Auld Lang Syne.

Birmingham is among 75 cities throughout the United States and Canada which this year put on the alcohol-free First Night celebration.

It's a heady undertaking, requiring tremendous leadership and organization, fund-raising abilities, an army of volunteers and a city willing to put its liability, safety, emergency and clean-up services on the line.

**BIRMINGHAM GETS** its share of knocks from those on the outside looking in on this seemingly wealthy community. It has a reputation for in-breeding and conservatism, for racism and for prejudice.

But it has taken its strengths — its strong arts community, heritage of volunteerism and the beauty of its buildings and grounds — and offered them, for this night, to everyone.

In doing so, Birmingham is helping us throw out the old and stale and build a new, warm tradition for celebrating New Year's Eve.

## Education

### Voters say yes to high-tech

**I**NNOVATION IN EDUCATION will be a key to enhancing the economic viability of this nation. Parents, teachers and administrators should take a close look at the Plymouth/Canton district if they want to experience a taste of the future.

Voters in that western Wayne County district recently approved a bond issue that included \$12 million for a high technology package that would wear students away from printed books and onto the computer terminal that would feed them the latest information more rapidly and efficiently.

Interactive video, laser discs and computer links to university libraries will give students in this district a leap ahead in learning how to do business on a global scale.

Taxpayers will save money in the long run. School districts adopting this system will free themselves from purchasing tons of paper in the form of new textbooks every five years or so.

Students also will have a better ability to keep

up with rapid global changes that today leave traditional publishers far behind.

- Replacing books with technology may seem radical to those who want to stick with "back-to-basics" education. But as a nation that cares for its children's future, we must experiment and innovate.

Administrators in that district are working with consultants in attempts to design a program that will be applicable to future computer changes and educational needs.

With sound planning, this program very likely will succeed. But even if it fails, the district has taken a correct step. To improve education, we must encourage the educators to take risks and, yes, even fail when taking them.

The Plymouth/Canton district is to be commended for this leap into the 21st century. Administrators there hope to make their district a model the nation can follow. We wish them good fortune in this endeavor and hope that other districts follow suit.



## Competitive troubles signal need to change

IT WAS A lousy way to come into the New Year.

The University of Michigan football team got decisively whupped in the Rose Bowl by the vastly superior Washington Huskies. And the after-shocks of General Motors' announced plant closings and work force reductions were still rattling around the state.

U-M and GM are traditionally among Michigan's strongest assets. That both should face similar competitive troubles at the same time should serve as a cautionary tale.

AS TO THE Wolverines, the suspicion had been growing for years in Ann Arbor that the U-M football program, though successful, was a long way from the top national rank of the 1940s through the '70s.

There was a growth of competition. As population moved to the warmer climes of California and Florida, high school football programs there grew and flourished.

The best competitive test: the Big Ten's continued record of failure in the Rose Bowl against the Pacific Ten. It wasn't just Bo Schembechler's fault; most football observers say the Big Ten simply isn't in the same league.

Bo had a wonderful run in his 21 years as head coach. But like the corporate momentum built up over the years at GM, his long tenure at Michigan may have solidified habits that were once good but are now uncompetitive.



**Philip Power**

GM FACES a similar challenge for similar reasons.

The rise of competition — first from Europe, then Japan — changed the face of the market.

GM looks as bad against the Japanese as the Big Ten in the Rose Bowl. In 1979 GM commanded 46 percent of the American auto market; in 1991, only 35 percent.

Like Bo stubbornly running play after play into the line, GM first tried to solve the competitive problem by a traditional method: Throw money at it. The company spent \$77 billion in new plants and equipment to reduce labor costs. But as *Fortune* Magazine recently concluded, "Nobody spent as much as GM and got so little for it."

Finally, like Gary Moeller installing a modern diversified offense at Michigan, GM realized it had to fix its uninspired and poor quality product line. In the last two years, it has introduced a record-setting number of new products to uniform fans from the automobile press and consumers.

But with a recession on and the company still 40 percent less productive than Ford, more fundamen-

tal steps were required. Hence GM's decision to close six assembly plants, 15 other factories and shrink the labor force by 74,800 blue- and white-collar jobs.

THAT BOTH U-M and GM face fundamental problems of succeeding in today's world can be seen from two quotes:

- U-M star offensive tackle Greg Skrepanak: "We definitely need an adjustment to take our game to the next level." Possibly "adjustment" understates what needs to be done.
- Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa: "GM is like the Stars and Stripes to the United States, so it comes as a great shock to Americans that GM has been defeated by Japanese cars." Possibly "defeated" is too strong, but make no mistake, GM's downsizing indicates quite clearly that the corporation has no plans to regain traditional U.S. market share in the foreseeable future.

Times change. More times than not, the competition improves. And all too often, the old ways that brought past success do little but hinder future accomplishment. Fundamental change is necessary, if only for survival.

Gary Moeller knows this at U-M, just as Bob Stempel knows it at GM. Let's all hope for their success in this New Year and the future.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. Its award-winning column will appear periodically.

### from our readers

#### Phone pleas not pleasing

To the editor:

Reference is made to the article in the Farmington Observer of Dec. 25 concerning the solicitation of funds in the name of the Farmington Hills Police Officers.

I fully agree with your disdain with Farmington Hills Police being involved in such a program. I'm sure such calls are perceived by most of the citizenry as being intimidating.

Using the telephone adds to the problem of disrupting the privacy of a person's home.

How can a fine organization lower itself and the members lower themselves by raising money in a manner so many people consider unethical?

I don't care whether or not Solwinski says certain complaints are baseless. It makes no difference whether every phone solicitor uses no pressure, is very kind and low key (flat), or one likes to get a call from the "police."

The police are our friends when we need to call them, but not when they call us. It's scary, it's intimidating, it's awful.

Midwest Telemarketing may be the greatest in the nation, but it's hard to erase the public's perception of all the other Police Forces' phone fund-raising schemes.

INCIDENTALLY, many months ago, my last encounter with a Police Officers Association Fund Raising

phone call began very pleasantly as usual, "Hello, Mr. Farnol, this is Officer . . . How are you today . . . (etc)."

I asked him the spelling of his name, his address, many other pointed questions and to send me literature. He said he would, but first how much did I want to donate.

I advised him that my wife and I don't donate to phone solicitors without first getting written information. Actually, I was asking for a lot of information just to check him out.

He was not only angry, he was livid. He blasted me from here to breakfast for wasting his time. He then hung up.

This could have been one of Midwest Telemarketing's congenial solicitors, though I don't know. Like most people, I didn't complain, but unlike most people I didn't send a donation, even though I was intimidated.

If the Police Officers Association eliminated phone solicitation, developed and worked its own fund raising with 50 percent or more going to charity, you can count on my support because that's the way it should be.

Robert J. Farnol,  
Farmington Hills

#### Our secret Santa says, 'Thank You'

To the editor:

Farmington's Secret Santa wants to thank you for taking time during the busy holiday season to tell the public about our efforts.

Your coverage will undoubtedly help our program to be even bigger next year. As a result, we believe next year's donations will be even larger allowing Farmington's Secret Santa to bring more smiles to needy families.

By the way, since your coverage we have acquired additional funds which were used to obtain a security deposit to a trailer for a lady and her 4-year-old daughter.

We also paid a family's electric bill which was three months past due and was scheduled to be shut off the next day, and we delivered 10 hams to 10 families along with gift certificates to be used at Oak Farms and Vegetable Market.

Thank you once again for spreading the Christmas spirit to all your viewers.

Terry Hela,  
Farmington Secret Santa

#### Opinions are to be shared

Opinions and ideas are best when shared with others.

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

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