

Fishy forum?

School hopefuls should go

Let's get one thing straight before we begin this missive on the current Farmington Board of Education race:

What we are about to say is not to be construed as an endorsement of (or a slam on) any of the three candidates — incumbent Helen Prutow and challengers Richard DeVries and Joe Svoke.

Endorsements come later, after many questions have been asked and answered.

But we do have a problem with two of the candidates, and it involves their efforts to duck some of those questions.

It seems that a group known as Citizens for Quality Schools, formed to oppose last year's millage proposal, is sponsoring a candidate forum at the Farmington Hills City Hall Friday evening. It will be cablecast live on Channel 12, according to the publicity.

All three hopefuls have been invited to participate. Incumbent Prutow and challenger Svoke have said no, they won't be there.

Prutow said the group and the forum is simply a campaign tool for DeVries.

"Your organization . . . appears to have been formed to promote the candidacy of one candidate for the Farmington Board of Education," Prutow said in a lengthy letter to Robert Ranney, president of the group.

Svoke declined the invitation in a one-sen-

tence letter: "Please be advised that I will not be able to participate in your Candidates night . . . He couldn't be reached for further comment.

If they stay away, though, the forum will become an electronic soap box for DeVries — who just happens to be the group's current treasurer and its past president.

However fishy the forum may look, we're disappointed in Prutow's and Svoke's decisions not to go. We hope they change their minds before Friday.

Prutow, about as entrenched as a school trustee can be, should know better than to avoid TV cameras and questions from voters, even biased ones. Same goes for Svoke, who needs all the exposure he can get.

Prutow needs to play Daniel and take her campaign into the lion's den, no matter how fishy it might smell in there. For her, that den is the Farmington Hills Council chamber on Friday night.

Something else bothers us: Citizens for Quality Schools issued a "Biographical questionnaire" to the candidates, and some of the questions seem designed to put down Prutow.

Some board watchers in the community have said, "Oh wow, now the mud-slinging starts." Really, it's more petty than dirty, and we wish it would stop. Prutow and Svoke can help by participating in the forum.

Require female restroom equity

Whether a new Tiger Stadium is built or not, the Michigan Senate should adopt the bill to require more women's restrooms in public buildings.

The House, prompted by Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, overwhelmingly passed House Bill 4319 in mid-April. Complex in detail, it's simple in principle. The various plumbing codes should be amended by a single law that will require more stalls in women's restrooms. The goal is to avoid the long lines we've seen in theaters, stores, convention halls and stadiums.

It's a greater issue than the sight of women, eyes shielded, invading the men's room and causing giggles. It's greater than women's discomfort.

It's a health problem. Women get urinary tract infections from infrequent voiding, according to a 1979 study by a University of Michigan urologist.

A Virginia Tech study found that women require nearly 150 to 180 seconds versus 84 seconds for men to use a restroom. The Virginia Legislature in 1989 responded by requiring a 2:1 ratio of women's to men's stalls.

When female toilets are in short supply, their use tends to make them dirty, uncomfortable, plugged or broken. The problems are compounded.

Dolan pushed the bill this session because of heavy discussion over construction of a new baseball stadium in Detroit. Last weekend the University of Michigan announced it will ren-

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vate Hill Auditorium — a hall renowned for its acoustics but notorious for its shortage of female facilities. U-M should take note.

Long known to women, the problem was publicized in many Observer & Eccentric newspapers seven years ago this week in a series by freelance Penny Wright Steele. We made her documents available to state lawmakers.

Dolan's bill addresses the problem of the sheer shortage of women's facilities. But as many mall shoppers have noticed, the problem is greater. Department stores have public restrooms but seem to hide them. Many stalls are cramped. Women shopping with toddlers have a terrible time.

It's hard to write legislation dealing with those additional problems. Store managers and architects should face them as a matter of conscience and profit rather than because of the force of state law.



LETTERS

Thanks for coverage

Thanks very much for providing coverage of the recent Volunteer Recognition Day, sponsored by the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services, Senior Adult Division.

Please extend our thanks also to Aileen Wingblad for the fine story and to Sharon LeMieux for the photography.

All the volunteers make each day a little brighter for hundreds of senior citizens, and the accolades are well deserved.

John Washburn, volunteer coordinator

Dog owners must clean up

For the past five years I have lived on Farmington Road in Farmington Hills.

It will be three years this summer since sidewalks were put down on our street between 12 and 13 Mile roads. I should like to add that this was done against the wishes of the residents.

Now that the damage has been done, in order to satisfy the wishes of the people in the subdivisions around us, the least they can do when they take their dogs for a walk on the sidewalk is to carry "pooper scoopers" and a container for dog waste.

I cannot blame the dogs for the mess that they leave, but I do blame their owners. We do not own a dog and do not feel that we should have to pick up after other dogs.

Now we not only get garbage thrown by cars passing by, we also get the dog waste along with litter thrown on our yards by pedestrians.

Surely, something could be done.

Dorothy Goldin, Farmington Hills

She's voting for DeVries

In response to "How reader sees election" (April 20), yes, tough times are not scaring people away. Many individuals are contributing their time in hopes of making the Farmington School District better.

However, the upcoming Farmington School Board election will fill two open seats, not one as suggested by the letter writer. There is one clear choice for the overburdened taxpayer, for the voter who is seeking change, and improvement in our schools, and for the property owner who wants to protect his investment. The candidate is Richard DeVries.

Please exercise your right to vote and join me by voting for Richard DeVries on Monday, June 8.

Gina Petrak, Farmington Hills

Minorities thrive in business

For those old enough to remember the Detroit riot of 1967, seeing the violence in Los Angeles on TV was like a recurring nightmare.

I remember it vividly. Some of these newspapers were printed in the old Polish Daily News plant on Canfield Street. I took a crew of volunteers downtown to put out the papers while the riot raged. The sight of corner stores blazing and armed National Guardsmen patrolling the streets is forever burned in my memory.

What Los Angeles burned into many minds was that a lot of the burned and looted shops were owned by Koreans. Like Detroit 25 years earlier, many black store owners displayed "Black Owned" signs to avoid destruction.

This raises an ugly question we must ask if we are to avoid a continuing cycle of urban violence: Why are blacks less successful in starting businesses than Koreans, Chaldeans or Vietnamese, immigrants who arrived penniless and voiceless in America but now dominate commerce in many inner cities?

If the answer is blacks are unwilling to work hard to build a business, then the only appropriate response is to continue dependence on welfare and hope for the best.

I don't believe this is true. And neither does Larry Doss, a tough-minded Couper & Lybrand partner who happens to be black and who ran the successful Inner City Business Improvement Forum in Detroit in the '60s and '70s.

Doss points to two business problems affecting blacks more than recent immigrants:

- Capital: Most black families have not accumulated enough wealth for business capital. Venture capital isn't easy to come by. That's true for many immigrants, too.

- But many immigrant communities are very effective in financial networking, providing long-term and low-interest loans to their members. Think of Mike George and his enormous support to the Chaldean business community.

- Labor: Most immigrant businesses employ family members who work fantastic hours at very low



PHIL POWER

pay to support a collective family enterprise. The structure of black families is much less stable than immigrant ones: 66 percent today are headed by single parents, up from 36 percent in 1970.

These factors suggest what can be — and has been — done in Michigan to help create a stable, thriving, urban middle class and prevent another explosion. A minority business and industrial development company (MBIDP) was started last year and is lending to black entrepreneurs.

Banks in metro Detroit have put up \$500,000 to help inner city folks build businesses.

For children, the Buddies in Business program at Greater Christ Baptist Church this summer will develop products, market them and learn the skills to make a business work.

Doss said the seeds planted two decades ago by ICBF have grown. Today the Detroit area is "probably one of the top four cities in the country for black businesses — much better than Los Angeles."

Government programs have failed because they're blunt and imprecise, not targeted at the problems of real people.

People are realizing that resolving the problems of inner cities will come through thriving local businesses and a growing middle class.

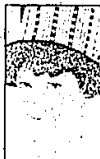
Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Why does your school study other cultures?

We asked this question during Cultural Day at Forest Elementary School in Farmington.



I don't know. It's just fun.
Josh Weinberg
fourth grade



You learn about other countries and other people . . . if they were slaves or not.
Tricia Land
fourth grade



So we can learn the songs and we can dance.
Michael Sinanis
second grade



I am from Iraq and I want to do a dance.
Sami Farido
third grade

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