

Goodbye Wendy

Their gain, Farmington's loss

The measure of any community's success relies on its people. The city of Farmington — and yes, Farmington Hills, too — has had the fortune of having Wendy Strip-Sittsamer doing her share.

Sadly, the executive director of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority will leave Farmington Friday to begin a new challenge as the director of the Southfield DDA in August.

We're happy for her, but sad for the community.

To say her diplomatic skills, energy and dedication in the Farmington community will be missed is an understatement. In five short years, Strip-Sittsamer has pumped life into the downtown revitalization effort. Under her guidance, the city's \$1.5 million streetscape improvement program enters its final construction phase this summer.

A natural leader, Strip-Sittsamer has had the knack of accomplishing the business at hand while balancing individual interests in the downtown business community. Ideas and people are her strengths. And she has always managed to rise above small-town politics to push downtown Farmington onward with spirit.

She has been adept at dealing with everyone from large landlords to small businesses, which

make up the downtown community. She is liked and respected by all.

Poise and professionalism have been her trademark. It was never unusual to see her downtown sporting her yellow hairhat as she checked construction projects under her care. She has been just as at ease campaigning for downtown needs before city councils and organizations.

Downtown Farmington had her heart and soul, but Strip-Sittsamer has been just as generous with other community concerns. Just when you thought she was too busy to take on another task, there she was.

The 30-year-old Farmington Hills resident has lent her talents to organizations such as the Eight Mile Corridor Task Force, and Community Center of Farmington-Farmington Hills, where she served as chairwoman of the public relations committee.

That's not to mention the Farmington Area Arts Commission, Farmington Hills Years 2000 task force steering and advisory committees and the Farmington Families in Action Drug Awareness Month planning committee. She served the Farmington-Farmington Hills Optimist Club and in 1990-91, she was honored with the Optimist of the Year award.

No doubt about it, she'll be missed. Southfield's gain is indeed Farmington's loss.

Stadium sale good for suburbs too

The serious competition between Mike Iltich and Edsel Ford II for the Detroit Tigers means suburban Detroiters can breathe a collective sigh of relief. The latest reports have hockey/pizza magnate Iltich edging out Ford as the leading contender to take the Tigers off cash-short Tom Monaghan's hands.

The pending sale — which still needs approval of other American League team owners — means no stadium will likely be plunked down in western Wayne or northern Oakland County.

Both men, but particularly Iltich, are business visionaries who take a long-term, regional approach to major decisions. That's one reason Iltich kept the Red Wings on the Detroit River front instead of skating off to Pontiac. The city's revived theater district and moving Little Caesar's corporate headquarters from Farmington Hills to the Fox Theatre building also demonstrate Iltich's gutsy style.

That kind of civic commitment indicates a solid effort will be made to keep the Tigers where they belong — in Detroit.

The sale will hopefully kick-start stalled negotiations with Wayne County Executive Edward McNamara over the site and financing for a new stadium, preferably downtown.

It would be even better, of course, if the Tigers' new playing field was built without public financing. Iltich of Bloomfield Hills and Ford of Grosse Pointe, like Monaghan, are wealthy enough to sink their own money into the project, or at the very least obtain credit or attract private investors.

Wayne County voters could have a chance to

While the trend in the '70s was to build about as far out of town as the freeways ran, the newest stadiums in the American League — Minnesota, Chicago and Baltimore — were all built in the center city.

shape the new owner's thinking on that issue as early as this fall with a referendum on a hotel/entertainment tax.

We are not naive. A downtown location, while vibrant and easily accessible, won't be the cure-all for Detroit's massive socioeconomic problems.

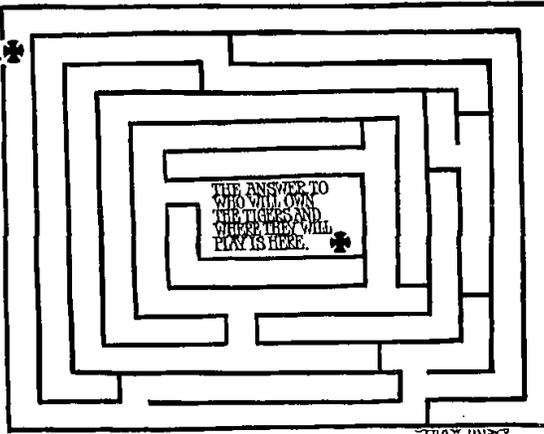
But that solution would be far better for baseball fans and suburban residents alike than building a \$200-million diamond fortress in Plymouth Township, Auburn Hills or some other remote location identified in surveys as "the center of the team's customer base for the 21st century."

A suburban stadium would undoubtedly provide Tigers patrons with a safe environment and ensure the team's profitability.

But it would also contribute heavily to urban sprawl and put the Tigers about 20 years behind the times. While the trend in the '70s was to build about as far out of town as the freeways ran, the newest stadiums in the American League — Minnesota, Chicago and Baltimore — were all built in the center city.

ARKIE HUDKINS

YOU ARE HERE



TIM RICHARD

LETTERS

Vote for pro-choice

I strongly agree with your July 9 editorial that those who feel that the government should not interfere with a woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion, must vote for pro-choice candidates.

This area of Oakland County is overwhelmingly Republican. The primary in August is the election. Whoever wins will be our member of Congress from the 11th District.

Alice Gilbert is the only pro-choice Republican running in the Congressional primary.

All registered voters can vote in the Republican primary, regardless of party preference. Party preference was only necessary in the presidential primaries.

Marian McCracken, Farmington

The city has indicated that the \$15 is the actual cost associated with the registration process which you, as a board, have concluded is necessary.

This being the case, we urge you not to compromise this issue by absorbing the cost or simplifying the process.

At a time when we are not even sure if the meter reader is really the meter reader, and strangers at our door cause a degree of uneasiness, we as homeowners appreciate your looking out for us by making and enforcing such ordinances.

We further urge you to evaluate the cost of this process and raise the fees when and if necessary.

Steve and Linda Kaplan, Farmington Hills

Fee is necessary

Please consider our comments regarding the city ordinance requiring solicitors to register and pay a \$15 fee before being allowed to walk the streets of our neighborhoods.

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Lawsuit awards spell tax increase

The state Court of Claims let the other shoe start falling to the floor last month. Just as I told you last year it would.

Ingham Circuit Judge James Giddings, sitting as the Court of Claims, ruled state government is obliged to pay the costs of operating trial courts. These are the circuit, probate and district courts in 82½ counties.

All sorts of figures are bouncing around about the cost. I would put it at \$400 million per year to the state general fund.

What happened is that in 1980 the state began paying for local courts, starting and stopping with Wayne County and Detroit. The state left out suburban Wayne and the other 82 counties.

Now, most people reading Detroit papers and watching Detroit TV have no idea how bitterly outcasters resent that funneling of their taxes down I-96 to 2 Woodward Avenue. So 76 counties and 66 local units hired Grand Rapids attorney Doug Van Eszen to sue.

It took three years. The appeals process will take another three years. But Van Eszen's clients are sure to prevail, since many Supreme Court justices are committed to full state funding of trial courts.

Let's put the money into perspective. The state budget currently is in the \$7.6 billion ballpark, putting this cost at 6 percent of the total.

Consider what has happened in the last two punk economic years:

- Gov. John Engler settled the Oakland County mental health suit for several hundred million.

- The state has whacked the welfare, commerce, regulatory and other budget segments hundreds of millions more, holding education levels but throwing more burdens on universities and out-of-formula school districts.

- Engler's "cut and cap" property tax plan is on the ballot and getting enthusiastic support from most Republican legislative candidates. If approved, it will cost more than \$1 billion when phased in over five years.

My prediction has been that if any two of a



TIM RICHARD

long list of things happened, Michiganians will face a substantial tax increase. The Oakland suit was first on the list. The court suit is likely to be the second. The money just isn't there, and the economic growth isn't possible.

There was an interesting wrinkle to the Patterson-Anderson tax cut proposal — remember? The one that didn't get on the ballot. Hidden in the fine print was a section saying the state couldn't raise taxes to pay for lawsuit awards. Brooks Patterson and Patrick Anderson clearly recognized what could happen.

Again: In the next one to eight years, we face a substantial increase in state taxes, whether anyone likes it or not.

The forces are in motion. We can't legislate against them any more than we can legislate against an earthquake or a heat wave.

Meanwhile, we can breathe a sigh of relief that the "KIDS" proposal fell flat on getting signatures for the ballot.

Never mind what the letters K-I-D-S stand for because it's a sham. This Ypsilanti-based group wants to reward the Michigan Constitution to make equitable school funding a constitutional right. In short, they are inviting, asking for, begging for a lawsuit to narrow the gap between rich and poor school districts.

And in these suburbs, our kids' school programs would have been reduced.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Is the Farmington Founder's Festival Parade a tradition in your family?

We asked this question at the parade.



"If we're in town. Last year we were out of town. This is our second parade."
Nancy Urbanczyk
Farmington Hills



"Define a tradition. We come here every year to eat. My mom comes in from Romeo."
Nancy Hawald
Farmington



"Eleven years. It brings the community together. We have a daughter that's in the parade."
Dennis Burger
Farmington



"Oh yes. We've lived in Farmington for 37 years. I'm here with my granddaughter (Rachel Davies of Howell)."
Rosemary Fitzpatrick
Farmington

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