

POINTS OF VIEW

Let's get Woodland Hills back on city's tax rolls

**BY KEN PERRIN**  
**GUEST COLUMNIST**

**F**armington Hills' Woodland Hills Park has become an unnecessary burden on the Farmington Hills since it has acquired the old sod farm on Eight Mile Road and the nine acres at Orchard Lake and I-696.

City Council should sell the Woodland Hills Park property for RA-1 development and get it back on the tax rolls.

The Woodland Hills Park, as envisioned by the Ad Hoc Committee, would benefit only a few neighbors who live to the south and west of the property and a few people who enjoy walking through such natural areas as currently provided by the site.

The city has already spent more than \$1 million dollars on this property,

and is considering spending an additional \$600,000. The expenditure of this much tax money to fulfill the desires (not the needs) of so few people is not wise public policy.

On the other hand, the youth and family sports park which will be developed on the old sod farm site stand to benefit thousands of residents of the community. This will be an excellent use of our tax dollars.

The purchase of the Orchard Lake I-696 property may or may not be a good use of our tax dollars, depending upon the eventual use of the property.

Selling the Woodland Hills Park area to a developer would not have an adverse effect on the neighbors. This area already has the most restrictive zoning used by the city.

The magnificent new subdivision just to the west of the site shows what

beauty will be retained by this zoning, where wonderful large homes are nestled within the forest. Neighboring residents would be assured that their property values would remain high because of this zoning.

It will be argued that the property was purchased through a DNR grant for use as parks and recreation, and that the grant money would have to be returned to the DNR if it is not used for such purposes.

So be it. We must assume that a fair price for the property, and that a fair price would be received on the sale of the property from which the city could reimburse the DNR.

Some will object that the sale of the property would deprive the community of a nature area. We only have to look less than a mile south to Heritage Park for such an area, or directly east across

Farmington Road to the nature trails at OCC.

Each of these areas is already supported by our tax dollars. How much is enough? Certainly no one could claim that the existing areas are even moderately used.

Some will argue that Woodland Hills acts as a density control measure for the community. The current RA-1 zoning is so restrictive that such an argument carries very little weight.

The city is having ever greater difficulty in paying for the services it is already providing its residents. Expenditures must be prioritized based on the needs of the community. Development and maintenance of a parcel of land as a passive park has to be very, very low on any list of priorities. It certainly cannot be justified on a "need" basis.

The Ad Hoc Committee will present

its recommendations to City Council on Monday, Oct. 5, at City Hall. At that time, city council will also be asked to consider the following alternative proposal:

No additional tax funds will be spent on this site at this time. City council will review possible uses of the area which would benefit the entire community (a library site, for example). If no such use is identified, the property will be sold for RA-1 development.

As a result of this alternative proposal, the property would be no longer a financial drain on the city. Indeed, it would become a revenue-producer as the private owner(s) would then pay taxes.

Ken Perrin, a longtime Farmington Hills resident, is a former member of the Farmington Board of Education.

LETTERS

Resents critics

I deeply resent the fact that you would provide Joe Derek and some foreign tourists with a platform used for criticizing and challenging the efforts and time that many Farmington Hills loyalists have devoted to the Woodland Hills Park project.

Working with assistant City Manager David Call and environmental planning consultant Todd Holloway, the Woodland Hills Park Ad Hoc Committee reviewed, revised and committed ourselves to plans for developing a park passive in nature, yet active in pride.

The unconscionable reference to the mitigated acreage on the Woodland Hills Park site as being a hole in the ground is a slap in the face to everyone who shared their time, ideas, vision and expertise.

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority of London, Ontario, and its sponsors should find new locations to tour outside of our city. Better yet,

outside of our country, eh?

Jack Rajkovich, Woodland Hills Park Ad Hoc Committee member

No Barnaby fan

**S**teve Barnaby, in his editorial "This 'Choice' Has Destructive Consequence," masquerades religious bigotry to argue against schools of choice and for women playing football with men.

He believes that schools of choice would imprison students in environments featuring prayer in school, worship of a Christian deity, and education as the effect of women controlling their bodies on the controlled fetus. Note the nation has embraced these principles throughout most of its existence.

He also ascribes male domination, capital punishment, and heartless government as additional tenets of the Christian perspective, but offers no documentation.

He trivializes his position by showcasing an event of discrimination in which a Christian school declined to allow a young woman to play football on the young men's team.

Were she injured in a game, how long would it take before the school and everyone else in sight was sued?

Barnaby fails to focus on any potential benefits of a fully developed school of choice system which would empower the consumer of educational services to choose a school and a district.

This provides freedom to choose what one perceives as the best academic environment while, at the same time, it promotes a competitive and consumer-oriented educational system.

Far from imprisoning students, choice frees students and pressures schools to become the best they can be. What could be less free than the existing system of public education?

Barnaby's editorial does logic and the community a disservice.

Jeffrey P. Jorissen, Farmington Hills

A good choice

**A**s one councilman who was involved in the process of appointing Bob Deadman as city manager 20 years ago, I certainly endorse the council's recent decision to name Frank Lauhoff to the position of city manager.

He has successfully advanced along the same career path as his predecessor. While on the city council, I worked with Lauhoff during his eight years as public safety director. I know first hand of his leadership abilities, his concern for the city and the respect he has earned from the community.

Certainly the right choice was made 20 years ago and I am confident that this decision to promote from within will be beneficial to the residents of the city of Farmington.

Ralph Yoder, Farmington

On bus safety

**A**fter reading in the Sept. 21 issue that bad drivers were at fault in the bus stop safety problem, it strikes me that this response is another red herring used to disguise the real issue.

The Farmington School Board is abdicating its responsibility for the placement of bus stops on major thoroughfares. It is the board and its agents who have elected to put students at risk.

Accidents do happen and they happen to cautious, good drivers. It is this type of convoluted reasoning that has been the typical response that parents and taxpayers have received as the board's response to this issue.

It is also interesting to note that the reason for the unsafe stops was to save money. Yet on the same page as this article were the salary increases for school administrators.

For whom is the money in this district being spent? Is it for the students or for the employees?

Marianne Weiss, Farmington Hills

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