

## Local shopping

### Stores work to win customers

For many of us, the holiday season is a time spent with family and friends, a time for celebrations, a time for gift giving — a time to shop. Like it or not, many of us have not yet finished our quest for "the right gift," and find ourselves still looking, while we feel Santa's reindeer breathing down our necks. But business people in Farmington Hills and Farmington, with the help of their cities, have made shopping more convenient.

Although the cities face tough competition from newer malls and shops in neighboring communities, Farmington and Farmington Hills are still attractive sites for retailers and consumers alike. New businesses have recently opened here and the cities have made efforts to give shoppers better access to them. A new driveway between Hunter's Square and Orchard Place malls is an example.

The cities do not have an indoor mall, and many strip malls are not as easy to see or get into as they should be. But merchants have for the most part gotten the message. They are making changes to woo back shoppers who may have left for other stores in other cities.

Since our communities have many good stores to choose from, shoppers should give them a second look. Shopping locally helps the economy where you purchase your gifts, and that keeps money in the community.

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Despite the emergence of many new malls, with a mega-mall planned in Auburn Hills, Farmington and Farmington Hills still offer convenience and variety — and they're a lot closer to home.

Our cities may not become destination shopping areas for outside communities, but they can at least be the first choice of our residents. And it isn't too much of a stretch of the imagination to think that Farmington's downtown could prosper. After all, unlike many suburbs, Farmington actually has a downtown area to develop.

The holiday season would be a good time to remember local merchants. And their New Year's resolution should be to give shoppers plenty of reasons to shop in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

## Pension veto is right move

Praise from this corner for Gov. John Engler doesn't come often. But because we believe in giving credit when it's due, the governor deserves a "right on" for his quick veto of that outrageous "early retirement" gift state legislators gave themselves before heading home for the holidays.

Engler vetoed the legislation Friday.

In case you missed it, the state House and Senate Dec. 3 approved a bill that would have substantially beefed up pension benefits for retiring lawmakers and the governor. The bill — whose likely chief beneficiary would have been outgoing House speaker Lewis Dodak, D-Birch Run — sailed through both houses with nary a word of discussion on the session's final day.

Under the bill, a narrowly defeated Dodak could have begun collecting his annual \$54,000 pension in April at age 47. That's in addition to any salary the former speaker will earn in future employment.

In addition, Engler and nearly half the 119 legislators returning to Lansing stood to benefit from the early retirement bill, which would have cost taxpayers an estimated \$4.5 million annually.

Fortunately, Engler had the good political sense to kill the bill.

Engler said the governor's office received 3,200 phone calls and hundreds of letters on the bill last week from outraged residents.

Those folks wanted to know how lawmakers thought they could justify the cushy early retirement "when most people today don't have such provisions," the governor said.

His veto message indicates that the governor

appears at least to be grounded in reality when it comes to public perception of politicians in our still recession-strapped state.

Too bad we can't say the same for the Legislature's political savvy.

It's troubling to say that the state House and Senate can muster easy, bi-partisan support on such self-serving legislation while more meaningful bills on important issues die of neglect.

Although many who voted for the bill later reversed themselves and urged the veto, it's painfully clear these guys and gals just don't get it.

Area senators who mistakenly voted yes were Mat Dunaskies, R-Lake Orion, Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, Robert Geake, R-Northville, and George Hart, D-DeARBorn.

Senators voting no were Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, and David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield. Ailing was William Faust, D-Westland.

House members voting to sweeten the pot were William Keith, D-Westland, James Kosteva, D-Canton, Maxine Berman, D-Southfield, Barbara Dobb, R-Union Lake, John Jamian, R-Birmingham, Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, Tom Middleton, R-Ortonville, and Gordon Sparks, R-Troy.

Opposed was Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills. Missing the vote (and in effect voting no) were Lyn Banks, R-Livonia, Justine Barnes, D-Westland, John Bennett, D-Redford, and Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park.

Faced by outraged voters who have already given a nod to term limitation, the pension bill was a bad move at the wrong time.

ARKIE HUDKINS



## LETTERS

### New Nazis same as old

There are events taking place today in Germany that I can only describe as a rebirth of a horrible, nightmarish, personification of evil, whose name is Nazism.

The ghostly terrors of the 1920s, '30s and '40s are alive in the form of the new Nazis, who are being directed by a few of the old Hitler gang, that survived after World War II.

These old guard Nazis are commanding the new Nazis to commit the barbaric acts of terror against their victims, just as the old guard did against theirs, five, six and seven decades ago.

Mark my words, the Fourth Reich is emerging from the ashes of the Third Reich, to continue the terror of the past into the present.

The old victims, the Jews, Gypsies, political enemies, mental defectives and any other group they wanted to destroy, those old victims have now been replaced by the new targets, namely the refugees. God help them for they will suffer the same fate as those of the old days.

If the conduct and actions of the New Nazis continue unabated and unchecked, and if they

are not stopped now, then history will be repeated, and man will not have learned from his past mistakes.

I suggest that the President request a formal assembly of the United Nations and inform these Nazis that the World of Nations and humanity will not tolerate the conduct of these criminals. If they do not cease their dastardly activities against their victims, the World of Nations will bring to bear the full strength of its combined military might against these Nazis and once and for all completely destroy them, so they will never, ever, in the course of future history, be able to rise again, and vent their evilness upon humanity.

George R. Mell, Farmington Hills

**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.

## State leaders neglect economy

News item: General Motors will close two, maybe three, more auto plants in Michigan. The state will lose more than 30,000 high-paying auto jobs over the next four years just from GM's downsizing.

News item: On the last day of session, the Michigan Legislature voted overwhelmingly to sweeten its already rich pension program. Outgoing House Speaker Lewis Dodak and House Republican floor leader Donald Van Singel, both beneficiaries of the new rules, both voted for the measure. Gov. John Engler, who also stood to benefit, wisely vetoed the measure Friday.

Reasonable conclusion: Our legislative leaders are far more interested in feathering their own nests than in dealing with Michigan's economic problems.

Supporting evidence: Just a few things the Legislature failed to do this year include school finance reform, property tax relief, health care cost containment, auto insurance cost limits, unemployment compensation reform, campaign finance reform and ethics in government measures.

Hidden fact: This year's appropriation for the Michigan State Legislature is \$91 million. That doesn't include the pension program.

Obvious question: What are we getting for our money?

The big issue: Michigan's economy. It's in trouble. Best estimates are that we have lost something like 180,000 manufacturing jobs over the past 20 years. These are good jobs, paying good wages and bringing good benefits. They drove our state's prosperity. Now they are drying up. Obviously the Legislature isn't going to do anything.

What's Engler's strategy? Over all, it has been to back away at costs of state government and hold the line on taxes during a recession.

Obvious comment: OK, but what has been the strategic vision for bringing back Michigan's economy? For the first two years of the administration, there appear to have been three elements, none implemented.



PHILIP POWER

1. Cut property taxes. "Cut & Cap" was resoundingly defeated.

2. Push exports. The guy who was supposed to run the program got fired last month.

3. Improve the business climate. Some measures are stalled in the Democratic House, but issues such as product liability reform and unemployment insurance changes are bottled up in GOP-controlled committees in the Senate.

Is this adequate? Nope. Especially not in the face of GM's downsizing and a recession ending too slowly.

What will Engler do? My guess is he'll put on a policy blitz in the State of the State and budget messages, both in January. In place of the mossbacked ideological passivism of the last two years, the governor will become an activist for the economy.

Look for stuff on job training, maybe something to reduce business taxes (yet again) and something to encourage universities in the technology transfer area.

My view: This is just fussing with the edges of the problem. We need a strategic vision of what Michigan's economy is going to become and an action plan of how to get there that deals with fundamentals.

Maybe that's the real reason our elected leaders are so preoccupied with their pension benefits once out of office.

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

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

What do you want for Christmas? We asked this question at the A&W in Farmington.



A key chain.  
David Sonenberg, 4 Farmington Hills



Peace.  
Helen Sonenberg, Farmington Hills



Just my health and happiness.  
Sidney Lush, Farmington Hills



I'd like a cure for AIDS.  
Bill Dart, Farmington Hills

## The Farmington Observer

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