

# Let's talk

## Communicate on millage

**W**e have to talk. That's what Farmington School officials should be saying to district voters right about now. Yes, they should talk — and listen — to each other.

There's an important school election coming up. Tuesday, Feb. 2, is the date, and the renewal of 12.0834 mills worth \$31.1 million to operate the public schools in this community is at stake.

Now, it's only a renewal — not a millage increase — and renewals usually pass with ease, right? Right . . . but this one is different. There are special circumstances.

For one thing, the mill total represents three separate blocks that have expired, or will expire. Instead of holding several separate elections, school officials are asking voters to renew the entire package at once on Feb. 2. That could confuse some voters.

For another thing, there is stated opposition to this millage renewal. Richard DeVries, local education watchdog and unsuccessful school board candidate, has said that the proposal is really an increase because it allows the schools "to supersede the effects of the Headlee Amendment three years in a row."

This is the kind of question that has to be answered — and soon. School officials from the superintendent on down have a responsibility to support their request for funds, not just ex-

pect an automatic "yes" from the voters.

We're happy to note that an open meeting on the renewal has been scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19, at Farmington School headquarters, Farmington and Shilavasse roads. Superintendent Michael Flanagan, assistant superintendent for finance Bruce Barrott and the board trustees will be on hand to field questions.

People with questions about this millage should attend, or at least watch it live on cable Channel 10.

School officials should not shy away from discussion or debate with anyone, including Richard DeVries, who wants to talk about funding.

We guess that's goal No. 1 for Farmington school people this year: Make a case for renewing the millage. Of course, there are other issues for 1993, other goals we'd like to see accomplished.

For one thing, we'd like to see the entire school establishment from the superintendent to the newest bus driver become more "user friendly." Employees should remember that the public schools are a public entity. Many do remember to their credit.

School officials also deserve credit for trying new trends in education. The year-around school program at Gill School and the scheduling modifications at North Farmington are examples.

What more can we say? Keep it up.

## Closing stabs health care

**I**t becomes increasingly difficult to see the benefit of dismembering Michigan's public services, but that doesn't seem to stop opportunist Gov. John Engler from keeping his knife at the ready.

Mental health care is the latest victim of Engler's cold-blooded crusade to provide Michigan with a balanced budget at any cost — any human cost, that is. Remember, this is the man who, lacking a plan to separate the needy from the greedy, adopted the wholesale approach to welfare cheats and cut off all checks just in time for Thanksgiving 1991.

His latest victim in the mental health category: Wayne County's Lafayette Clinic.

The clinic was closed last year. The argument, from a state administration intricately explaining only one side of the issue, said the clinic had very few inpatients and therefore couldn't justify the cost of staying open.

Hey, what's the problem, Engler's administrators said. We'll just transfer this handful of patients to other area hospitals, close the clinic and save a whopping payroll by locking down an empty building.

If that's all there was to it — and Engler's people swore it was as simple as that — then it would have been hard to argue with.

Dr. Elliott Luby, a former executive administrator of the Lafayette Clinic and now professor of psychiatry at Wayne State University, found plenty to argue with.

True, Luby said, there were few inpatients at Lafayette when it closed. But he wanted to know what would happen to the more than 700

outpatients who depended on Lafayette for their well-being.

Luby also raised a point the governor's crew conveniently forgot — Lafayette wasn't designed primarily for inpatient care. Research was the clinic's reason for being.

Luby cited schizophrenia treatment, the study of sleep disorders, research into Alzheimer's disease and development of neuropharmacology as just a few of the areas that attracted some of the world's most prominent doctors to the Lafayette Clinic.

The clinic's closing put an end to all that. With the closing, all those top-flight researchers left for hospitals willing to invest in the future of mental health care.

Luby says they won't be coming back, and it will be extraordinarily difficult to attract top talent without research opportunities.

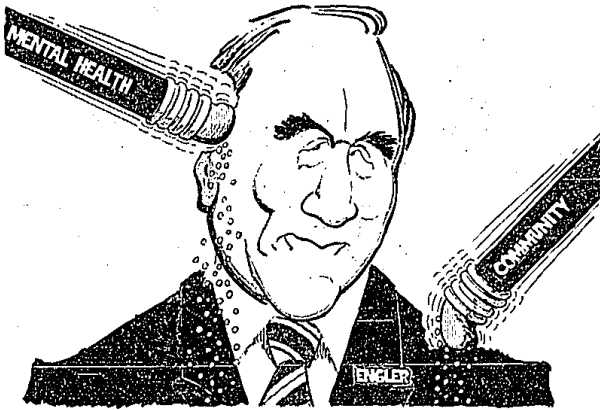
So, the clinic that literally invented lithium is shuttered due to a narrow interpretation of its worth and a colossal inability on the part of an amateur surgeon to grasp the significance of work that doesn't always fit neatly on the bottom line.

If asked, few would line up to live in a society where the budget's, and not the society's, health comes first. Yet, here we are.

Saying yes to Michigan is important so long as one says no to the collapse of its infrastructure. The Lafayette Clinic closing pulled yet another beam out from under the state; too many more similar scenarios will be disastrous.

ARKIE HUDKINS

HUDKINS



## LETTERS

### On Goodfellows

**T**he 1992 Goodfellow delivery is over for this season. It happened Saturday, Dec. 19.

After participating in 19 holiday ventures with the Farmington Area Goodfellows, I continue to be moved and feel a sense of fulfillment and gratitude along with being motivated to start planning the December 1993 gift-giving project.

Some years ago the Farmington Area Goodfellows changed their motto to include senior adults along with children as gift recipients. The number of seniors served has grown from 34 the initial year to 161 this past December.

From the beginning, this Good Samaritan organization recognized the urgent need and gave the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services — Senior Adult Division's staff nursing support and encouragement in compiling a list of qualifying clients and their needs.

On Dec. 19, I witnessed the generosity of the volunteer drivers who pulled up with their vehi-

cles, cheerfully loaded food and gift packages and drove away to make their deliveries, only to return for another delivery route and tell us how pleased the seniors were to receive such a generous gift.

Every year the finest representatives from the area's three high schools participate. They show their caring and giving selves with the gift recipients, especially the older persons who are a few generations away from them in age.

Special recognition goes to the Farmington Observer, whose staff and editor continue to publicize our goals.

Yvonne Singer,  
 Farmington Hills  
 Department of Special Services

**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.

## GOP politicians will be rowdy

**A**t this season the journalistic instinct to predict events of the coming year runs the greatest risk of overwhelming common sense.

OK. So what follows is less prediction and more informed guess.

Michigan politics is teetering on the edge of fundamental change. After many years of Lansing gridlock caused by divided control of the House/Senate/governor (you pick), Republicans are one measly House vote away from full control.

Last year's elections wound up with a 55-55 split in the House of Representatives. That funny sound you hear in the distance is Gov. John Engler and his GOP friends constructing bribes to get some (any) Democrat to switch parties and so gain control of the House.

My guess is they'll do it, after a fair amount of huffing and puffing.

"It's very clear that the gridlock has been broken in Lansing, and this is going to be a very active town in the next few months," says Engler, already sensing victory.

If that happens, you could see a lot of activity on a lot of issues that have been around for a very long time: property tax reduction, school finance, legal (court) reform, auto insurance reform and education.

In the minds of the governor and GOP legislators, resolution of these issues has been stymied for years by the way Democratic control of the House allowed special interests to block progress. The trial lawyers, in the GOP's view, killed tort reform and maintained the auto insurance scandal, while teachers unions stopped property tax reduction and educational performance reform.

That may or may not be so. But my guess is that not long after gaining control, the Republicans will have their hands full trying to manage their own.

Take property tax reduction and, the other side of the coin, school finance reform. The business community and many suburban prop-



PHILIP POWER

erty owners sure would like to see property taxes cut. But Republican lawmakers representing wealthy school districts are not about to roll over while financing for their schools dries up.

Or try to reconcile two traditional Republican interest groups — insurance companies and doctors — over changes in auto insurance.

My guess is that Engler, if left to himself, is both clever and tough enough to manage this kind of reconciliation. But I don't think he'll be left entirely to himself.

There is a tremendous civil war brewing in the Michigan Republican Party, the fallout from last year's national defeat.

Ordinary "country club" Republicans blame the religious right for driving women and suburbanites away with their exclusionary rhetoric, while "hard conservatives" of the Pat Buchanan variety accuse the country clubbers of betraying true GOP principles. The war for control will be long and savage.

My guess is that Engler won't be able to hold a boiling and fissioning Republican legislative caucus together.

Whether and how he does that will determine in large part what he gets from the end of Lansing gridlock.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His voice mail number to leave a message is (313) 953-2047, Ext. 1880.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### QUESTION:

Are you going to win the Publisher's Clearing-house sweepstakes?

We asked this question at Dagwood's Deli in downtown Farmington.



'The chances of winning are really slim. No, I didn't get a letter.'  
 Cecil Sanford  
 Farmington



'Yes, I got a letter, but I don't think it's real. Where's the money coming from? But I mailed it in.'  
 Mark Hankins  
 Farmington Hills



'I got a letter . . . and I'm gonna win.'  
 Jan Hankins  
 Farmington Hills



'I threw my (sweepstakes) letter away. I saved 29 cents.'  
 Diane Puffing  
 Farmington

## The Farmington Observer

TOM BAER, EDITOR, 477-5450

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