# A 'towering' issue

## Don't skip debate on clock

f a community must have a crisis — and every community has one sooner or later — the Great Clock Tower Flap in Farmington

is the kind we'd perfer.
Sure, some Farmington folks are a bit peeved right now because of a plan to erect a tower with a clock on top near the historic Masonic Temple on downtown Farmington's main corner.

We're still gotting letters about it.

But, really, this is a genteel sort of a crisis.

All the major players are good people with the best of intentions, and we're sure the flap will me to a happy ending . . . just like the plot of

a B movie.
The clock tower issue was the lead story of
the Farmington Observer's Jan. 21 issue. Councilwoman Shirley Richardson initiated the
clock proposal with money left over from the
recent 125th anniversary celebration and private contributions.
It looked like the deal was repidle on its way
to heirs done until some feisty residents — in-

to being done until some felsty residents — in-cluding several old-timers who do a lot of walk-ing through the old town — held up their collec-tive hands and told officialdom: "Hold on, there. Not so fast."

What about some public debate on this? they asked. What about the planning commission? What about the historical commission? Their letters-to-the-editor on the clock certainly did

pep up our Op Edit page a week ago.

The residents worried that a tower would detract from the historic (it dates to 1876) Mason-te building, that brick building at the northwest corner of Farmington and Grand River. The building, ones the Township Hall, is the focal point of Farmington, even though there isn't much that's public about the structure.

Well, as we said, all's well that ends well, or so it would acem. The planning commission and historical commission are indeed getting involved, and the residents are being listened to.

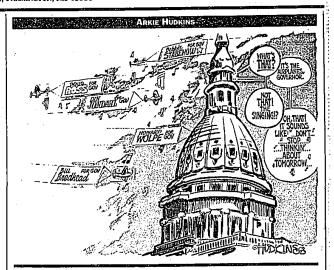
Perhaps, because of the debate, it will be decided that the Masonic Temple is not the place for a clock tower. Maybe the powers that be will take a look around downtown and see that there are already several clocks and decide that another isn't needed.

Anyway, whatever the outcome of the Great Clock Tower Flap, there are no bad guys in this

Way to go, Shirley Richardson, for trying to Way to go, Shirley Richardson, for trying use some left-over money to do something nice for your hometown. And nice job, Lee Peel, Fred Walsh, Judith Cook, Nancy Leonard and Betty Borgman, for being outspoken observers.

You spoke up; they listened. That's the way

things are supposed to work in places like Farmington.



#### **LETTERS**

#### Thanks for the story

reat article on the Farmington Girls Gymnastics "Falcon Tumblers look to

Improve."

Support like this gives great encouragement to the team, and parents like myself appreciate to the disk sports teams. the recognition given to the girls sports teams.

Conrad Welsing, Farmington

#### Good job, schools

Our local school officials could not have been more "user-friendly" than they were last week during the forum about the millage renewal to be held Feb. 2.

Mr. Flanagan, Mr. Barrett and the school board, acting in good faith, did a great job mak-ing themselves accessible to the entire commu-

People had the opportunity to attend or phone in questions and have them answered

As a parent and voter I am impressed with the forthrightness of these hard-working, devot-ed people, whom I have always found willing to

address concerns when approached.

Congratulations to the board and the administration for once again being responsive to the needs of the community and formost to the

needs of the children.

Bobble Feldman, 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 malled to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

### Seek alternative to suicide

here is a merciful alternative to the ghoulish scenes of assisted suicide di-rected by Dr. Jack Kevorkian that have ed Oakland and now Wayne County since ne 1990.

It is an alternative that neither hastens death nor prolongs life, and recognition of its impor-tance by the medical community is coming

none too soon.

The specter of death is haunting the halls of
the state Legislature as the eighth assisted suicide by Kevorkian, for the first time a man, occurred last week.

A law prohibiting assisted suicide goes into effect in April, and a broad-based commission is expected to establish a state policy on it.

The commission must not make the same

mistake as those who propose suicide for the terminally ill or the severely mentally ill. The tableau that paints the right to die as just is as distorted as the misshaped belief that life

should continue at any cost.

Commissioners ought to consider the quality of mercy to be visited on those who are suffer-

They must investigate and encourage th I ney must investigate and encourage the growing hospice movement in southeast Michigan, which offers palliative care to patients who are terminally ill. Palliative care admits it's time to make a dying patient comfortable and offers counseling for the patient and family

At Angela Hospice in Livonia (464-7810), At Angela Hospice in Livonia (464-7810), that may mean a respite for family members, home health aides or social workers to care for the 30 patients a day it handles. Expected to open in the fall is a 34,000 equaire foot, 16-bed facility for inpatients, such as senior citizens and those with AIDS, who have no one to care for them, according to Tracey Schroen, director of public relations.

The Hospice of Southeastern Michigan (559-The Hospice of Southeastern Michigan (oz-2722), which has offices in Southfield, Bloom-field Hills, St. Clair Sheres, Detroit and Taylor, helps more than 3,000 patients a year, said Bar-barn Lewis, director of communications. Hos-pice benefits also include medication, supplies and durable medical equipment. Last year a nospice for children was added to services, which already exist for AIDS patients.

While 85 percent of hospice patients are in their own homes, sometimes it becomes neces sary for a patient to use a nursing home or a hospital until symptoms are under control again. Most costs are covered by Medicare, Medicaid, third- party insurers and active development campaigns.

velopment campaigns.

But in order for the movement to succeed, hospice needs the cooperation of the medical community. "That's really the key," Lewis said. "It's a hard thing for doctors to do. In soome respects, they look at it as giving up." Schroen notes, however, that physicians have become more accepting of the movement in the last five years. Angela Hospice allows doctors to follow their patients.

Families should "know that a loved one needn't suffer nor be led to believe that suicide

Families should "know that a loved one needn't suffer nor be led to believe that suicide is their only option," said Mary Lundquist, a registered nurse and executive director of Arbor Hospice (677-050, 383-8800) with offices in Allen Park and Ann Arbor.

Faced with Kevorkian, we all must do more than wait for mercy to blow in on an errant wind by following the activity of the commission.

## Test needed despite concern

he "Michigan Educational Assessment Program." It sounds smooth and polysyl-labic, just like any good bureaucratic It even shortens into a pronounceable ac-

term. It even sortens mue a pronounceaue ac-ronym, MEAP. MEAP test results were released earlier this month. They have provoked a storm of parental concern and educator comment, driven mostly by a 1991 state law that denies in 1994 a stat endersed high school diploma to kids who don't pass the tests.

pass the tests.

Here is a representative sample of the range of views, from a group of reasonable and respected school leaders:

Dennis McMehon, superintendent of Brighton schools: "Our school district believes in assessing students' abilities.". It is important not to rely on any one form of assessment, which just gives a snapshot of the students' ability."

Fred Liebowitz, supervisor of secondary education in Southfield schools: "I don't think cation in Southfield schools: I don't think something that significant should be based on one score. . . . I understand the purpose of trying to raise standards of education, but there

trying to raise standards of education, but there are other ways to raise standards than holding a kid's feet to the fire."

Jon Reynolds, superintendent of Waverly schools, is concerned the MEAP tests could be used as a "back-door method" of creating a state-ordered curriculum and eventually linking financing with test results. Once published by the media, MEAP tests tend to get parents and the public to rank schools competitively, which may or may not be fair.

Gary Doyle, deputy superintendent in Bloom-field Hills, agrees: "I think in general the con-cept of having a quality standard is good. But this is another example of the state getting in-volved in local districts."

Two themes emerge from the range of com-ment I've seen about MEAP tests: First, it's a back-door way of getting state control of local school districts and, maybe,

control of local school districts and, maybe, linking financing with performance.

My view: So what's wrong with that? One big reason American kindergarten through 12th-grade education is so resistant to change is the notion of local control. As long as our school system is organized by independent school districts (in Michigan we have 523 of them), any overall attempt to raise standards is doomed to failure.

Second, basing evaluation of a kid's learning



🖪 'I don't think something that significant should be based on one

> Fred Liebowitz Supervisor of Secondary Education Southfield Schools

achievement on just one test is unfair and.

probably, inaccurate.

My view: That's right. Basing a kid's future
on just one standardized test makes little sense.
I remember seeing 10-year-old kids in England throwing up and even getting ulcers just before taking the dreaded "Eleven Plus" exam.

Indeed, a University of Michigan professor of education, Scott Paris, argues that standard-ized tests stifle education and should be banned for three years while educators come up with better ways to evaluate student achieve-

ment.
Lots of states — Vermont leading them — are
developing something called "portfolio assessment systems" in which the range of a student's
work over several years would be collected into
a folder for external review. This is obviously a
much better way to determine what a chied
tually learned than a standard test, but it's also

tually learned than a standard test, but it s also boviously much more expensive than a stand-ardized computer-graded test.

The bottom line: The MEAP test alone is no cure-all. But it's better than nothing because it forces attention to what kids actually learn and provides stimulus to school reform.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His voice mail touch-tone number is (313) 953-2047 Ext. 1880.

#### OUESTION:

How do you feel about the Feb. 2 school millage re-newal?

We asked this question at the Farmington Hills City Hall?



'I feel it's necessary and worthwhile, and I certainly hope it

passes. Sue Rose Farmington Hills



COMMUNITY VOICE

'I favor it, but i feel that more should go toward the arts and cre-



'if it's just a re-newal, i'll vote for it... but not if it's an in-crease. My taxes are too high.' Dorothy Savage Famington Hills



'I've not been reading much about it..., I would be inclined to vote it down.' Marga Smith Farmington Hills

### The Farmington Observer

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