

Turning 20

A celebration is called for

So Farmington Hills — that consummate subdivision suburb — hits the big two oh this summer. A birthday party of sorts is being planned.

That's right: Hard as it may be for some of us to believe, Farmington Hills is turning 20. Cityhood came on July 1, 1973, and thanks to Mayor Nancy Bates, City Manager Bill Costick and many others, that event won't go unheralded.

Many volunteers are already planning events. We'll be looking forward to:

- A July 1 reception at City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads, highlighted by the unveiling of a decorative fountain and landscaping at the southwest corner of that intersection. Expected to attend are members of the charter commission that set up cityhood, trustees from the last township board and council members from the inaugural city council.
- A display of photographs showing scenes from the Farmington Hills of old. It will be just off the main lobby of City Hall.
- A town picnic in Heritage Park. It'll probably be on a Sunday, but the date hasn't been set.

Now, we've heard some talk around town that this 20th anniversary celebration is foolish.

There have been statements like: What's the

big deal about 20 years? Why not just save it all for 25? Oh, they're just trying to copy Farmington (city of) which celebrated its 125th anniversary with that big whoop-de-doo last summer.

Well, we don't understand this thinking. We're happy that Farmington Hills is putting on a do for its 20th. Farmington had great success with its town party last summer. Why shouldn't a large segment of the same community (although a different political entity) get in on the act, too?

Farmington and Farmington Hills were (and probably still are) very different communities.

In the old days, little Farmington was the nucleus of the cell, the yoke of the egg. It had the houses and stores and paved streets and the social structure. Surrounding Farmington Township was rural with farms, corn fields, orchards, meadow lands and muddy roads. Even its seat of government, the Town Hall, was located . . . in Farmington.

Still, a rich vein of history runs through the community we know as Farmington — city and Hills — and that vein certainly doesn't stop at a city line that some politicians has drawn.

Nope, a celebration for the Hills' 20th is in order. Let the plans go forward.

Reform real tax inequities

If we want our children to get a decent education, we must be willing to pay the bill.

The so-called "property tax reform" debate has been going on for 20 years, and little has ever been done to alter the system. Replacing one tax with another, shifting the responsibility so someone else has to pay, misses the mark as an action that could even remotely be considered reform.

In the most recent round of political wrangling, the state Senate fumbled an attempt to place a 1-percent sales tax increase on the ballot, the passage of which would reduce property taxes by 30 percent. Instead GOP Gov. John Engler won the day by seeing his 20-percent reduction passed in the Senate.

Senators followed form by attaching a meaningless amendment that promises to replace the lost revenue in some yet-to-be-determined manner.

The property tax system, properly administered, is just as equitable, if not more so, than additional taxes in the form of income or sales taxes.

Certainly, the property tax system could stand a large dose of reformation. But forcing someone who earns \$25,000 a year to pay the same amount of sales tax on a purchased item as a person who earns \$150,000-plus is unjust. And while imposing a sales tax is an addiction that we are unable to break, increasing it solves nothing and puts an even-larger burden on those who are financially encumbered already.

The property tax never will be abolished as a main source of money for education. By imposing an additional sales or income tax, we would

have two rather than one form of school taxation over which to complain.

To reform the property tax system, we must provide for the real inequities within the system, not the perceived inequity that we have to pay at all.

We must ensure that no one will lose a home because of the inability to pay property taxes. This is especially true for retirees who experience a dramatic decrease in their income. This could also be applied to those who experience a devastating injury that prohibits them from going back to work.

We must also look to the needs of first-time homebuyers who should be able to experience some kind of property tax relief until they are able to get an economic footing.

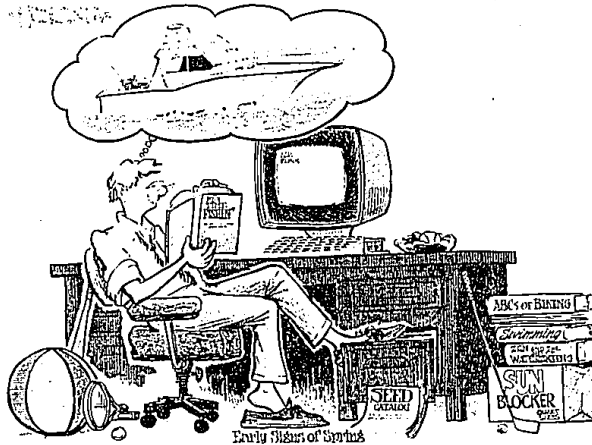
Michigan's leadership and many residents have been unwilling to deal with these realities.

On one side we see "let them eat cake" Gov. Engler who carries the slash-and-burn tax philosophy to an absurd extreme. On the other, we have a spineless Legislature that develops unworkable, unacceptable tax financing plans, which are generated almost solely to cover their political behinds and which go down to defeat at every turn.

In the middle we have a sniveling, self-absorbed propertied class that spends more time trying to figure out how to get out of its financial obligations rather than how to provide their children with an education that will serve them well in the future.

The casualties in this war are, of course, the children, whose welfare takes up less and less of the debate as time passes.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

No clock, please

Please, no brick clock tower at Grand River and Farmington. A four-sided clock on an iron pedestal would be just fine. If it must be a brick monument, put it on the City Hall land.

The Masonic Lodge is a fine old building. A six-foot by four-foot structure rising to the sky would be a genuine eyesore. That tower could only detract from the historic building.

Do the opinions of Farmington citizens count in this grandiose plan? In soliciting the ideas of many local friends, I have yet to find a single person who would support a brick clock tower.

The DDA should keep in mind that a lot of downtown business comes from citizens, local business people and city employees. When you ignore the feelings of the above people, you also threaten their loyalty to shop in Farmington.

James R. Dale, Farmington

best. The hardest job was transforming the image.

The talented students and staff were always there, but the pride, respect and self-esteem had to be built up piece by piece.

Now we have a lot of rebuilding to do. I hope you're willing to help us do it. Good news doesn't sell papers but it does help build community spirit and pride.

A community paper should be able to point out what's wrong with its institutions. It shouldn't always spout the party line.

But it should also recognize when it has made a mistake and take steps to correct it. There are a lot of exciting things going on at Farmington High School. The enthusiasm of the staff and students is contagious. Let the community know the other side.

Laura Myers, Farmington

Good shows!

We recently had the opportunity and privilege of attending "The Sound of Music" performed by the Farmington High School students and "Hello Dolly" performed by North Farmington High School students.

Both performances were equally outstanding. The performers, staging, lighting, music and direction were more than what could be expected from teenagers.

Congratulations to all of these fine young people and to the faculty and parents who give them guidance and support.

William A. and Emma S. Makinen, Farmington Hills

Plenty of pork

We, the members of the Committee to Eliminate Government Waste, want to bring to the attention of local taxpayers some examples of local and state spending that are being sold as "infrastructure enhancement," but which looks to us to be better described as pork-barrel spending.

The first example of such "infrastructure enhancement" is a \$338,022 federal grant to the city of Farmington Hills (matched by \$84,505 from the city) to build 1.5 miles of bike path along Farmington Road from Heritage Park north to I-696.

As a resident of Farmington Hills and an avid bike rider, I can say without fear of contradiction that this is guaranteed to be a bike route to nowhere. Once one gets to I-696 and Farmington Road, there is absolutely nothing to visit or connect to except a busy freeway.

Since it's illegal to ride bikes on the Interstate, they will be using our money to give us a "Bike Path to Nowhere."

You made a fuss

Like many others, I have been very upset with your coverage of the "violence" at Farmington High School.

You don't write the stories, but as the editor you decide what gets front page coverage, what gets inflammatory headlines and what gets embarrassing pictures. I was willing to let you have your say, however much I may disagree with it.

It's your paper and if you really felt that Farmington High School was going to hell in a handbasket you have every right to say so.

But then in your editorial of Feb. 11, you state that fights are to be expected in high schools and our high schools are no worse than any others. You say that the school administration is handling it. You wonder what all of the fuss is about. You made it a fuss.

What was the purpose of your slanted coverage if you never believed in the issue to begin with? Either you've been used by individuals to push their own agenda or you're trying to stir things up to relieve the mid-winter blues.

I was glad to see you at the high school violence meeting at the library last Monday night. It gave you a chance to look into the faces of the parents and students you have hurt with your reporting.

In the five or six years that I have been involved at Farmington High School it has grown from the third-rate high school to one of the

Another example of local pork is a \$58,560 federal grant to the city of Novi to build 2,433 feet of sidewalks along Grand River. When we needed sidewalks in our neighborhood, we paid for them ourselves and didn't ask non-residents to pay for improvements that benefit only residents.

On the state level, a capital example of the this wasteful pork is the recent \$181,600 grant from the state to the city of Saginaw to partially repair the Porter Street Railway Station.

This building serves no useful purpose (according to Amtrak, there is no train service to Saginaw) and was wisely slated to be torn down in 1988. According to news reports, Gov. John Engler says "this grant is part of our strategy to rebuild the infrastructure throughout Michigan."

I think we should call this boondoggle, "The Train Station With No Trains."

If we don't have the courage to say no to our own local pork, how can we ever make any progress on reducing other people's pork? A few examples of turning down federal money for such wasteful projects would give us the moral high ground in telling others we can't support their "infrastructure enhancement," or should I say "pork."

James N. Brozovich, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION: Are you sick of winter?

We asked this question at the Farmington Community Center.



'I was sick of it a week after Christmas.'
Dianne Paul Westland



'No. It hasn't been that bad this year.'
Pat Durkin Plymouth



'No. I just moved back here from Florida because I missed it.'
Julie Durkin Troy



'You bet. I want 70 degrees and the sunshine of Florida.'
Donna Vogelsheim Farmington

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