

POINTS OF VIEW

Timely advice: Harness anti-clock energy

Tick tock... here comes the clock... like it or not. The clock and its brick tower and its mansard roof creep a few minutes closer to town with the Farmington Planning Commission's official blessing of the site plan Monday night amid more and more citizen grumbling.

That thing, that clock, has been condemned by some as an aberration on what they see as holy ground that contains the revered Masonic Temple. Shirley's Temple is what they're calling the intruding clock tower now.

Shirley, of course, is Shirley Richardson, a Farmington councilwoman and the driving force behind last year's 125th Anniversary celebration. Part of the clock's \$80,000 cost will be paid for by money left over from the 125th winking, so the project is seen as a monument to her.

But the clock has its supporters. For the most part, they're the power brokers in this town. They'll tell you, bah, that clock looks great and it represents

needed change for downtown Farmington, and the old business district must change if it's to survive.

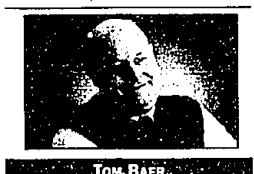
Members of Farmington's power structure — merchants, city officials, Downtown Development Authority board members — seem solidly in favor of the clock. They hold the power and they're used to getting their way.

So it's probably just a matter of time until those fretwork hands go round and round, marking the minutes and hours for all who gaze upon the Masonic (oops, make that Shirley's) Temple. Or maybe not.

Perhaps the Nancy Leonards, the Nan Reids, the Tom Lyczkowskis, the Marie Kaness, the Robert Siegmunds and the many others who've publicly opposed the thing will get their way.

Maybe the governors will listen to the governed. Stranger things have happened.

I'll be watching as the Great Farmington Clock Saga plays itself out in a string of meetings and in the letters-to-



TOM BAER

the-editor columns of this newspaper.

And I'm hoping that people on both sides of this issue will look beyond the clock and see what can be learned — some would say salvaged — from the experience. If the power brokers of this town are smart, they'll do just that.

The DDA and the city should try to harness the energy displayed by the anti-clock people. Yes, the stop-the-clockers can be bitchy, nasty and pushy at times. But they do care about

their town. Give them credit for that. They do care, and official Farmington should pick up on that.

For starters, the DDA structure should be changed to allow one or two ordinary residents to serve on the board. Their input and ideas are badly needed.

And, please understand, these additions probably shouldn't be part of the shirt-and-tie or power-suit crowd. Those who wear blue jeans and walking shoes and sweat shirts are feeling badly disenfranchised these days. Let's give 'em a chance to serve and contribute.

Once we're past the clock crisis (believe it or not, that time will come!) there are a few suggestions that may be tried, if they already haven't been, to spice up downtown.

■ Hold an anti-mall promotion — "Recover from Mall-aise... shop downtown Farmington." It'd be good fun, a real attention getter.

■ Vote on a town mascot who would

show up in costume for events like the Founders Festival and sidewalk sales. It would be more fun, and the community could be involved in the voting.

■ Clean up downtown and establish a maintenance program for sidewalk trash and snow removal.

■ Promote neighborliness among downtown merchants and their shoppers. One way to do this would be for the DDA to sponsor more of those "after hours" get-togethers where business people could brainstorm ideas to improve things.

There many other ideas that could boost Farmington's business district. They're in the minds and hearts of the residents who are so angry about the clock tower right now.

They need to be mined by the people who run the Farmington DDA.

Tom Baer is the editor of The Farmington Observer. He may be reached by calling 477-5450.

State diploma complicates goals of education

If we are to guide our children, then it is our responsibility to offer specific challenges, grade them on a universal scale, and, above all else, be clear when we set goals.

Yet, the more concerned we get about providing strong educational opportunities for our children, the further away that dream seems to slip.

For a long time, we've been arguing about correct and equitable ways to fund public education. Now, it appears we aren't sure how to measure the education that is being funded.

Gary Faber, ex-West Bloomfield High School principal recently promoted to assistant superintendent for instruction, put it well in an interview earlier this week. Basically, Faber said:

■ Too much emphasis is being placed on Michigan Education Assessment Program results.

■ It is entirely possible for a student to

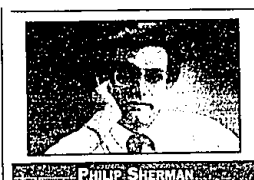
do well on MEAP and still bomb out on receiving a state-certified diploma.

■ Michigan State University, a well-recognized hall of higher learning, has, according to Faber, said that if a student does well on MEAP and SAT/ACT scores, the university will conduct "business as usual," meaning it will discount state endorsements.

Faber also notes that students take components of the MEAP test with only a few weeks of instruction in the subject matter. "We have a lot of bright kids who might not pass MEAP, for no other reason than they didn't experience (tested) course work yet."

He seems to make sense, and just in time, too. This situation is about to be further complicated by a requirement, via state mandate, that by 1997, all students must pass a proficiency examination to graduate.

Those are a lot of hoops to hop



PHILIP SHERMAN

■ The more concerned we get about providing strong educational opportunities for our children, the further away that dream seems to slip.

through. In our zeal to arm students with the best education possible, and assure prospective employers that these students are qualified in bedrock skills, we may have succeeded only in outsmarting ourselves.

It's almost like the old bait-and-switch tactic, where unscrupulous shop owners would offer an item at an obscene discount. A customer would come in looking for the item, but would find the shop conveniently had "just sold the last one," at which time the shop owner would offer the customer another, more expensive item.

Let's compound things a little more. In measuring a student's accomplishments, we still haven't included other indicators such as report cards and scholarship competitions.

If this seems overwhelming to you, imagine how it must seem to a student.

If your imagination fails you, let's make it pertinent. Suppose your next merit review for a raise requires you to meet certain objectives, but the objectives are not clear. You cannot discern what is or isn't important, and just as you complete one goal, your accomplishment is devalued and you are asked to tackle another goal... and another... and another...

A situation where a bright student gets derailed by an ill-conceived system should not be allowed. We owe it to our children to select a system for gauging their progress and standing by our decision. Otherwise, we will continue to confuse them, and confound ourselves.

Philip Sherman is editor of the West Bloomfield/Lakes Eccentric. His telephone number is 644-1100, Ext. 264.

Final season comes to end for this small town deli

Iknew I was in for it.

We had run a story on the vacancies in downtown Birmingham, and Sandy Sherman, one of that city's biggest boosters and hardest workers, was going to be in my face about it over lunch.

Still, the food at the deli he owns on the shady side of Maple Road is always fresh and fast. Among the customers, I might well see a familiar face. Sandy is often good for a story tip. He's basically such a nice guy.

The confrontation would be worth it. Sadly, after March 19 I won't have that choice to make.

That's the last day of business for Sandy's, which in its six years of operation has been, in my estimation, Birmingham's benchmark deli.

I've enjoyed the freshest meats and cheeses on the freshest rye bread, real bagels and a variety of salads served up cafeteria-style by the nicest, most efficient group of young people you'd want to meet.

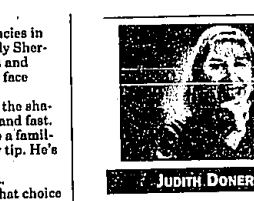
Then there's Sandy himself. He strides the streets of Birmingham in his shirtsleeves, winter and summer, delivering to his phone and fax customers, always taking time to talk to his in-store customers; and leading his young employees by example.

I'm not the only one who's sad.

"I'm so depressed, I'll have to find some other place," said Janet Kiner, who regularly takes lunch back to her office at Lance Investment on East Maple.

"I don't know where I'm going to eat. I live in this place," said Jim Casey, a Realtor with Snyder, Kinney, Bennett & Keating. Casey says he tells people how to find his office by saying, "I'm just down the street from Sandy's Deli."

Sandy's customers aren't the only ones who



JUDITH DONER BERNE

will have to adjust their lives.

His crew of young people, most of them college students, were surprised when Sandy gave them the news.

"Is he kidding?" Trish Horiggs, who has worked there since September, recalled thinking.

"It was kind of a surprise," said acting manager Tracy Brown, an Oakland Community College student who has worked at Sandy's for two years. But, "You could tell he wasn't having fun anymore."

And that's what Sandy says. His lease is up, and he made almost a spur of the moment decision that he wanted to close up before he truly stops enjoying what he's doing.

Six years ago, he left the scrap metal business to open the restaurant he always wanted. And now, he'll go on to - he's not sure what. He doesn't rule out another restaurant. And he doesn't rule out his beloved Birmingham.

"I'm going to miss this. I'm going to miss the people," is all the newspaper-shy Sandy would say for publication.

But his young employees aren't shy about praising their boss.

"This was like a stepping stone for kids," says Brown. "He's always willing to give you a second chance."

In fact, Sandy has confided that some years back he had 10 of 12 employees who were recovering from substance abuse.

To take a line from Cheers, "You want to go where everybody knows your name..." That's part of the ambience of a town like Birmingham, or Plymouth, or Rochester or Farmington - quality shops, restaurants, galleries, where people are friendly.

Now there's one less.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric. She can be reached at 644-1100, Ext. 242.



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