

### Varoom-varoom!

## Political machine revs up

**W**e wonder . . . and worry. Another Farmington school election has come and gone. The campaign has settled. Frankly, we're rather concerned about what we've seen in the last few months coming from our school district.

We wonder, for instance:  
 ■ When school board members spend more than an hour haggling over the finer points of a restructuring of the high school cheerleading program, but a contract extension for superintendent Michael Flanagan — certainly one of the highest paid public officials in the Farmington area — takes all of 30 seconds to discuss during a public board meeting.

■ What message trustees are sending when they "encourage" two people to run for the school board — excluding incumbent Helen Ditzhazy because she did not consult them as to whether she was going to run again. Ditzhazy lost. The board's two favorites won.

■ When a school official telephones a week before the election to tell us two of the children of one of the candidates have withdrawn from school. Questioned later about the motive for the call, another official said it was merely to correct the record. OK, but then why is it when there was a \$1,000 discrepancy in Flanagan's exact salary — which is public record — we couldn't get a straight answer for "the record"?  
 ■ Why board meetings are sounding more like the "Price is Right." When a parent or a resident brings a concern or a question, it's "Don Cowan, come on down." Cowan, director of Building and Student Services, is usually the

### ■ What message are trustees sending when they encourage two people to run?

one to incur the wrath and answer the tough questions. We have to ask: Is it fair to the community to have one person to deal with a lion's share of the controversy? Is it fair to Don Cowan?

These are some things to ponder during the summer while school's out.  
 Bobbie Feldman and David York are the new Farmington School trustees. We wish them well in the coming months and years.

There are daunting times ahead for public schools. School finance and property tax reform are being hashed out. Rest assured, the public schools will take their hits.

That's one reason why it's especially crucial for school officials to make friends in the community, well beyond the core of concerned parents who have kids in the schools. Officials shouldn't alienate the other 80 percent with apparent aloofness and exclusion.

No matter the controversy (Wooddale parking lot, violence in the schools or relocating Beechview students), a recurring theme this year has been the perceived unresponsiveness of the school district.

To what extent that is true is debatable. We can't help but wonder, though, if part of the deafening varoom-varoom enveloping those on Shawnessee Hill is the kick start of a political machine.

## Bills help pharmacies compete

**Y**ou have a chance, right now, to do something about controlling health care costs. The answer lies in Senate Bills 690-693. Those bills will keep your independent neighborhood drugstore from going the way of the stars of "Jurassic Park." The bills are necessary for several reasons.

The bills mandate that health care insurance companies seek bids from anyone interested in bidding on contracts. At the moment, independent pharmacists are all but excluded from bidding because preferred provider organizations, to which most of us belong, have overrun the process.

It works like this. Let's say Acme PPO wants to provide a prescription drug plan for its members. Acme PPO, rather than letting bids, finds it easier to go straight to the larger drug distribution companies, asking, in effect, "Would you provide this coverage for us in return?"

That keeps the independent out of the loop and never gives the local pharmacist a chance to bid for Acme's business.

If Senate Bills 690-693 fail, then one day you'll walk around the corner to fill a prescription and find the pharmacy gone. You'll have your Acme PPO prescription drug card, but it only will be honored at Acme Drugs, which won't necessarily be in your neighborhood.

When you get there, you'll find dozens of other plan members, just like you, standing around waiting for their prescriptions because they cannot go anywhere else.

In short, Senate Bills 690-693 are protecting free trade, trying to hinder monopolies from forming, and ensuring your freedom to deal with the pharmacist of your choice.

We all run into embarrassing medical problems from time to time. Many people ask questions of their pharmacists that they are too shy

to ask of their doctors. You could do that in front of a counter full of people, or down the street, where you might get a little privacy.

Furthermore, the more bids on a contract, the more competition there is, and that's a high price because more competitive. Fewer bids mean large pharmaceutical companies will be able to dictate pricing even more than they do now, and consumers will have a choice: Take it or leave it.

At the moment, you can take it, or take it down the street.

Preferred provider organizations will tell you Senate Bills 690-693 will mean the loss of pharmaceutical cost controls. After all, you belong to a PPO because that PPO told you, or your company: "Contract with us, and we'll get low cost for your members."

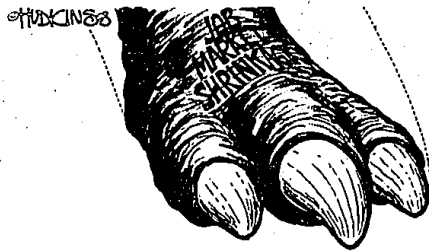
But think about it this way. PPOs are coming back to their members and asking members to absorb more and more of the costs. Remember when you first joined your PPO? Everything was paid for, right? That was the whole idea.

Now the word "co-pay" has become a regular part of our vocabulary, particularly with prescriptions. That's because some PPOs lost their ability to negotiate better pricing with, say, Acme Pharmaceuticals, so, in order to fulfill their contractual obligation of keeping prices low, they ask you to "share" in the cost.

Pretty soon, if this continues, you'll be paying so much of the freight for a prescription that you'll wonder why you've got a PPO. After all, you can pay a lot for a prescription without being a PPO member, right?

Competition is the only thing that will keep the costs of medication down. Independent pharmacists have a right to compete. Save them, and you'll be saving yourselves a lot of money in prescription drug bills.

ARKIE HUDKINS



### LETTERS

#### Thanks again

We would like to express our thanks and admiration for the job done by the staff of Botsford Hospital Emergency and Critical Care Unit departments.

So often we only get comments if people are dissatisfied. We feel it only right that when exemplary service is received it should be acknowledged.

During my wife's recent heart attack, not only the care received, but the caring displayed, was excellent and a great comfort to us and our family.

Thanks to all for a job well done and done well.  
 Wade and Rose Humphrey, Farmington Hills

able to get back to family life and be a full-time father to our boys.

Bill and I want to thank all of our wonderful customers and let them know how much fun we have had these past six years. They really made it great to be in business. We are going to miss each and every one of you. Just keep this in mind, "Be happy for us, we are now a family again."

How about this everyone — A U.S.A. Video reunion in the park at the end of summer? We'll be in touch.

Cindy and Bill Davidson, Farmington Hills

#### About that house

**T**he purpose of this writing is to address specifically several issues resulting from the relocation of the "Kirby White House" to the northeast corner of Farmington and 10 Mile Roads.

As a three-year new resident to the area, I'm appalled that the city of Farmington Hills would permit such a horrendous eyesore to exist. This exceeds the bounds of bad judgment and surely should be considered "egg on the face" of every city official that approved such an convoluted proposal.

I'm not surprised that the Historical Society would approve relocation to this site. They obviously are a committee of crusading, shortsighted individuals who would destroy a neighborhood to "save" an old dilapidated building.

Couldn't one assume that our city officials would exercise better judgment and serve in the best interest of all members of the community? Obviously not.

Who will pay for this ridiculous mistake? Not any of those who approved it, but those whose property value is substantially decreased as a result. Who most of all? Unfortunately, me.

It is obvious that "special considerations" will be given throughout this renovation process, as the structure has been sitting on the public easement for more than three weeks already. Why is this situation exempt from meeting established city building standards and time requirements?

In addition to being a pitiful eyesore this structure, perched on the corner, is creating an extremely hazardous condition to traffic on both Farmington and 10 Mile Roads. I personally have witnessed more than one accident resulting from this distraction.

Must someone be seriously hurt, or worse, before something is done? How long will the city permit this hazardous road condition (and an exposed basement) to exist?

As a tax-paying citizen of this community, my rights as a property owner have been violated, as I was denied due process under the law. As such, I am requesting an immediate public hearing.

As the saying goes "you can't fight city hall." True as this may be, I fully intend to voice my opinion, and take whatever steps necessary to protect my property and exercise the rights guaranteed me under the laws governing this community.

Janice Sutcliffe, Farmington Hills

#### Accepts challenge

**W**hen I first announced my candidacy for Farmington Board of Education this past March, I stated that my decision to run was a great personal challenge. Since the election, I have finally had some time for personal reflection.

You, the community, placed your faith and trust in me by electing me and I am filled with a sense of awesome responsibility. I realize my personal challenge truly begins July 8, when I officially become a Farmington school trustee.

During the campaign many pertinent issues were discussed. Some had definite answers, other questions lead to further speculations and uncertainties. One thing I can say for sure is that the board administration and staff cannot be successful alone. Only 5 percent of registered voters in this community voted on June 14, and I know that many more of you than that have opinions about our schools.

In order to ensure the fulfillment of many of the hopes and dreams we have for our children, everyone must get involved in the process. I look forward to meeting and working with parents, staff and the community in the days to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who worked so hard on my campaign. The value of so many new and established friendships extended to me means more than I can say.

Bobbie Feldman, Farmington Hills

#### Why they closed

**A**fter owning U.S.A. Video on Orchard Lake Road for six years, my husband, Bill Davidson, made a very difficult decision to close the doors for good on May 29. My name is Cindy Davidson and I am writing this letter to inform many of our wonderful customers the reason why Bill made his decision. As many know he has a full time job plus he was at the video store every night of the week for six years with no time off.

Bill realized the fact that our boys, ages 9, 12 and 13, were growing up fast and he was missing out on a lot of their activities. Also, he was missing all of the family time in the evening. So the decision to close the store was to be

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

What do you plan to do during your summer vacation?



'Go to the pool and play tennis.'  
 Jennifer Moreton, 14, Farmington High student



'I'm going to camp (Spring Hill).'  
 Amanda Pauk, 10, Southfield Christian student



'We're going to Mount Rushmore, and we're going to Old Faithful. I'm going to theater camp where we get to act.'  
 Lynnea Arnold, 9, Highmeadow student



'I'm having a pool party on my birthday. And I want to read lots of chapter books.'  
 Katrina Arnold, 8, Highmeadow student

## The Farmington Observer

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