

POINTS OF VIEW

He presents 'real facts' on upcoming library questions

BY BLAIR ALGIE
GUEST COLUMNIST
 With all eyes on Lansing and the need for school financing, let us not lose sight of our upcoming special election for a new library and additional operating millage. As I did earlier this year with the school millage renewal, I am asking for your assistance in providing the voters with the real facts on our need for a new \$15.5 million library and increased millage to support it.

In reviewing the materials received in the mails I believe the literature has

GUEST COLUMN

raised several key issues which need to be addressed. For example, "The literature states that 'on the evenings and the weekends people sit on the floor due to lack of seats.'" To satisfy myself I went to the Hills branch at 7:30 p.m. on July 21 and at 2 p.m. on July 24. I found that not only was there no one sitting on the floor but only eight and nine people were sitting at the 13 tables — approximately 52 seats — in the main reading area of the library. Granted it was only a limited

survey, but it appears the literature seeking our support is misrepresenting the truth.

The material we received also states that handicapped parking and access are not adequate. True, there are only four handicapped spaces (only one of which was occupied at each of my recent visits), but the four could easily be doubled to eight by extending the parking area east of the entrance similar to what is provided west of the entrance. In addition, with some redesign and vertical parking it appears at least 10 spaces could be provided for a lot less than \$15.5 million. Again, not the true

facts. It was also stated that the library board will sell the Hills branch like it was a done deal, yet it doesn't indicate who will buy it and for how much. Given the surplus of available office space who will buy it? And if it's not sold will it be an extra cost for the taxpayers? Information is lacking on the availability of other area libraries. Don't our community college, high schools and other schools have libraries for our students and children?

As you can tell I'm not a frequent library visitor. However, the times I have availed myself of their services, I

can't recall the problems which are being used to "sell" the need for a new one.

In closing, I would add that I seem to recall that a special election was held on a new library in early 1992, which was defeated.

Why is another election taking place so soon and why couldn't it be voted on during the General Election in November?

Blair Algie, a Farmington Hills resident since 1971, is retired from a management position at Ford Motor Company.

LETTERS

He says 'yes'

Throughout my life in Farmington Hills, I have supported the Farmington Community Library. As a student, adult, parent and business owner.

I have been fortunate to serve as president of the Library Board of Trustees, chair of the Friends of the Library Corporate Membership Drive, and liaison from the Farmington Hills City Council to the Library Board.

Farmington Hills has many city services to promote with pride. However, our public library is a treasure — discovered by ever-increasing numbers of people annually. To respond to increased public use, our residents would benefit from more library materials, more space to shelve books, more seating for library patrons, and more parking.

The Farmington and Farmington Hills City Councils have reviewed the Library Board's plans for expanded facilities. I have sat in countless meetings since 1988 where the issues were: the library's long-range plan; expansion of the current Hills Branch; the option of a third branch; a possible merger with Oakland Community College; and construction of a new library at a new location.

The Library Board has done its homework. The option of a new library to replace the current Hills Branch is the best use of our tax monies — yours and mine.

Both councils support the 1.1 mills operating proposal which will give dedicated funding for library services. Both councils have agreed to reduce their tax levy by the .77 mill which is currently appropriated to the library for daily operations.

In 1989, the library bond proposal lost by 215 votes, out of over 19,000 votes cast. An analysis by precinct showed voter concern over the proposed location at 12 Mile and Halsted roads.

The 1993 proposed site on Orchard

Lake, south of I-696, is an excellent location which is central to the entire community. Improvements will be made at the shared traffic light with OCC. Sidewalks will have to be installed to assist pedestrian traffic.

On Aug. 10, the residents in our community will have the opportunity to determine the future of our public library services. I will support the bond proposal for construction of a new main library and the millage proposal to provide stable funding to operate the library system.

I urge all Farmington and Farmington Hills voters to join me in voting YES for our library.

Jonathan Grant,
 Farmington Hills City Council

About the library

Why didn't the city planners years ago realize the potential growth of Farmington Hills and buy the property behind the library, so if expansion was needed in the future, the land would be there?

Orchard Lake Road already has a terrible traffic problem. A new library there will only add more traffic. Parents will want their children to cross Orchard Lake to get to the library.

I also object to further bulldozing of trees: I'd rather look at the forest than another building. There are empty office buildings all over Farmington Hills. Put a library in one of them.

Arlene Sudkamp, Farmington Hills

His objections

I have two problems with the plan for the new library — location and cost.

The stated new location for the library, near the expressway entrance on Orchard Lake Road, is a very poor place for the children who need to use the library. Small children are driven by mom or dad and need a location not

so congested or dangerous to enter and exit.

This location is not the best for the general public. It's very congested during library hours, and I'm sure the sub behind will not want the added traffic on their streets. They already have trouble getting to Orchard Lake Road.

My second objection is cost. All architects like public funds. They get most of their money that way.

However, if a two-deck parking facility were built over the present parking lot and outside steel frames were used to cap the present structure, walking ramps could be used to the second floor and escalator for the third.

The present roof wouldn't need replacing. The cost would be less, and it could be built for future expansion.

I've been a Realtor and in the building business most of my life. As a senior citizen, I can't see where burdening my children with added debt is fair. This sounds like President Clinton: Tax the sucker and build it.

Someone planned it wrong. This building is in its 20s.

George Strelczuk, Farmington

'Yes' votes

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce and many businesses in our two cities are fortunate to have available the resources found at the Farmington Community Library.

The library has developed an outstanding business collection, with trained staff to assist the business owner's information needs.

Libraries have changed radically from the late 1960s when the current Farmington Hills Branch was planned. Our public library now has computer access to information and has developed special collections for the new entrepreneur.

We have the only public library in southeast Michigan to participate with the University of Michigan M-LINK

project to demonstrate that public libraries can have a positive impact on the economic health of a business community.

Why should a public library develop special programs for its local business? In our case, the business taxes of Farmington/Farmington Hills provides 40 percent of the total tax support for our community services.

Our businesses greatly benefit from having available a library that is progressive.

When our local businesses prosper, the entire community benefits. The board of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce endorses the two library ballot proposals to construct a larger library and to provide operating millage.

Expanded library services are needed to meet both business and residential needs.

Jody Soronen, executive director,
 Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce

Friends: 'Yes'

To the residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills:

The Farmington Friends of the Library takes great pride in its long history of working with the library staff and Board of Trustees to ensure the high quality of library services available in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

The Friends successfully lobbied the Michigan State Legislature in 1956 to support the first District Library Law which enables one library system to service two communities. The Friends worked diligently to secure funding for our first library building in 1956, the Hills Branch in 1972, the present Farmington Branch in 1975, and an expanded Hills Branch Children's Department in 1980.

Now the Farmington Friends of the Library are endorsing a special election campaign on Aug. 10 for a \$15.5 million

bond issue to build a new and larger facility to serve our rapidly expanding community and for a 1.1 mill operating millage for the library system.

The Farmington Friends of the Library has successfully mobilized community support for their libraries for the past four decades. This invaluable assistance has enabled the library to keep pace with evolving technology and serve the growing intellectual needs of the community.

We urge all of the Farmington and Farmington Hills residents to join the Friends in voting today for a better library tomorrow.

Rosalynne Greenberg, president,
 Farmington Friends of the Library

MEA losing battles

I have always been a backer of lost causes and a crusader for the underdog. Lately, the Michigan Education Association has been taking such a beating at the hands of editorial writers and columnists that I almost feel compelled to say a few nice things about them.

The MEA has not been winning very many key fights lately. They backed then-Gov. James Blanchard, but got John Engler in the governor's race. They backed Proposal A, and got whipped on that one, too. Further, their union brothers at the UAW and the AFL-CIO helped send Proposal A to its humiliating defeat.

If that were not enough, now state Sen. Debbie Stebenow, the probable Democratic nominee for governor in 1994, has "nuked" the entire school financing system.

The education monopoly is not above the rest of us. The economy is weak, people are hurting, we are all in this economic boat together for better or worse. The question yet to be answered is: "Can we all get along?"

Walter Warren
 Westland Taxpayers Union

Outrageous abortion limits show government as unfair

BY ELSA M. SHARTSIS
GUEST COLUMNIST

Michigan just became one of several states that require an adult, competent woman seeking an abortion to make at least two trips to a health care facility, read state-mandated propaganda, to view drawings of the fetus at its supposed gestational age, and endure a delay of at least 24 hours, ostensibly "to reflect on her decision."

I am thoroughly outraged by this law, and find it difficult to write coherently about it. Having long believed that the abortion controversy is the most profound privacy issue of modern times, and that it is not women's issue, I am aghast at this latest government interference in personal decision-making. That our state Legislature can so cavalierly mandate a woman's exercise of her fundamental right to an abortion is chilling indeed.

I sometimes wonder about the abortion patient. Does she decide, unilaterally, to have an abortion? In my experience, she does not. Staff at abortion facilities tell us that the typical abortion patient is accompanied by a friend (male or female), her husband, her mother or other confidant. Virtually all abortion facilities provide counseling, as prudence, ethics and professional standards demand.

And no facility would knowingly accept a mentally incompetent woman as a patient. Obviously, then, the typical abortion patient has already thought about her condition and reached an informed decision based on her personal, private situation.

To quote Carol King, executive director of the Michigan Abortion Rights Action League, "It is a myth that women do not understand what abortions are, or that they wander into clinics without having given their decision a great deal

of thought." Well said. Adults enjoy a legal presumption of mental competence. This presumption shields them from state interference in virtually all important life decisions. Society trusts competent decision-makers to make reasoned choices and to accept the consequences of their choices. One hopes, and common sense suggests, that such decisions are made prudently and on the basis of all available facts. Yet state-mandated indoctrination, prescribed reading material and an enforced waiting period are unknown except as to abortion.

Ordinary people make important decisions every day, sometimes life-or-death decisions. They marry, move, buy property, drive, enter vocations, become parents, raise children, get divorced, invest savings, care for infirm relatives.

They make definitive decisions for themselves and often for others — their parents, their children — such as declining therapy for a terminal condition, or terminating life support. The law permits, even encourages this.

Similarly, one may marry with a minimum of state involvement. . . . Even if a marriage license reveals that an applicant has already been married and divorced many times before, no county clerk remarks (as did Samuel Johnson) that the contemplated marriage is but a triumph of hope over experience. No county clerk sends the applicants home to reflect on their decision or to consult friends or family.

American law and society, then, trust competent decision-makers. Michigan's new informed consent law is a glaring exception to this tradition of trust. It is insulting and demeaning, and ought to alarm everyone.

Elsa M. Shartsis is a Birmingham attorney who is active in the Michigan American Civil Liberties Union and the Civil Liberties Committee of the State Bar of Michigan.

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