

Early issues

Some fodder for pols' grazing

It's an election year for the Farmington Hills City Council, and soon the voice of the politician will be heard in the land. We'd like to believe that this will be one election where all the candidates and their sidekicks behave like ladies and gentlemen, stop picking on each other and actually discuss some of the important issues with alacrity. Voters need to make intelligent choices on Nov. 2. Did we hear someone, possibly a candidate, snicker in the background? Well, we can dream, can't we?

The filing deadline for Farmington Hills hopefuls is Tuesday, Aug. 24. There's no primary in the Hills, so it'll be the more the morrier come election day. Four incumbents are up for re-election. Two are safe and two are shaky. They know who they are. Several challengers have indicated interest.

Soon the signs will be all around — sprouting from front lawns, popping up along busy highways and sticking out of residents' mailboxes. An important local election is coming up.

It may be a bit early in the game to editorialize about the upcoming election, but several issues have emerged in the Hills recently. We think they should be considered by the local politicians — both the wanna-bees and the wanna-stays.

The issues are:
■ Parks — long and always. People here care deeply about how their parklands will be used and what will happen to the last remaining open spaces in the community. At issue is the operation of Heritage Park, the jewel of the system. Is it a nature preserve or a so-called active park or both? Should the nature trails be

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paved? Should youngsters from other communities be bussed in to fish that little pond? Should anyone be allowed to fish there? Who put goldfish in that pond in the first place? Is the constant criticism aimed at the parks establishment really justified?

■ Development. Farmington Hills is paved over and populated, but there still are stretches of undeveloped land, as well as odd little pockets here and there, which could be filled with malls, condos, businesses . . . or nothing at all. Right now, some people in the 12 Mile/Middlebelt area are upset because it's possible that a discount warehouse may come to that corner. Will the views of the people be taken into account before council and the planning commission make decisions on development?

■ Council conduct. A Hills councilwoman, not up for re-election, supposedly called a resident a "creep" when the resident complained about a proposed development during a meeting. Can residents expect fair treatment from council when he/she stands up to express a valid concern? Are the little people blown away by officialdom, while the deep-pocketed developers are given every consideration?

There are more issues, lots more, but these'll do for starters. Hey, there are only 82 days left until Nov. 2. Time to start thinking election.

Paper's role makes sense

Newspaper: A regular publication, usually daily or weekly, containing news, opinion, advertising.

Webster's New World Dictionary

Wo are a newspaper. We consider it our job to bring you the news of your community.

We cover government, schools, police and fire, business, sports, entertainment, the arts and the individual residents who make your community what it is.

We also give you our opinions on local issues. We know you look to us for this kind of information.

For us, this goes beyond being a business matter of dollars and cents, since our parent group of newspapers, Suburban Communications Corp., also publishes "shoppers." It is an issue of what constitutes a newspaper and what can be counted on to give the public legitimate notice on a regular basis.

Recently the state House of Representatives passed a pair of bills that would lower our standards for informing the public. They would allow your local "shopper" — that's a paper with little or no news content — to run the so-called legal and public notice advertising that up to now has been limited to newspapers which carry at least 25 percent editorial content.

That's contrary to the way other states and the federal government regulate this issue. And it's contrary to a number of state court rulings that have required that a publication be published regularly (usually daily or weekly) and

that it contain information appealing to the general public.

NEWSPAPERS have a responsibility to cover news and inform readers. People subscribe to most newspapers; or they buy them on the newsstands. Adpapers or shoppers just "show up," or sometimes they don't.

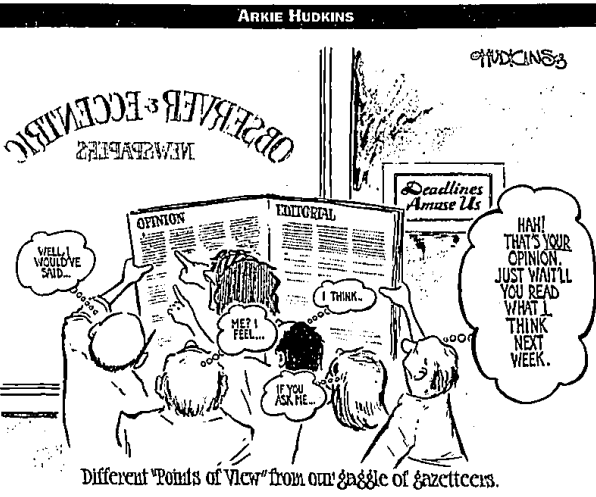
The following area members of the state House voted to keep public notice in newspapers: Penny Crisman, R-Rochester Hills; John Jamian, R-Bloomfield Hills; Justine Barnes, D-Westland; Jerry Vorva, R-Plymouth.

Local representatives who said "shoppers" are an appropriate vehicle to provide the public with legitimate public notice are: Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills; Barbara Dobb, R-West Bloomfield; Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak; Richard Young, D-Deerborn Heights; Lyn Bankes, R-Livonia; Deborah Whyman, R-Canton; and Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills.

Reps. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield, and William Keith, D-Garden City, did not vote.

We are hopeful that the Senate will refuse to pass these bills once they come out of committee. Area Sens. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Oxford; William Faust, D-Westland; Robert Geake, R-Northville; David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield; and Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, reportedly will vote against them.

Area Sens. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, and George Hart, D-Deerborn are still uncommitted. So it's important to let them know that you want the legal public notices of your community, school district or county published in a newspaper you count on for news and make a choice to read.



Different Points of View from our gaggle of gazetteers.

LETTERS

Dolan take note

An open letter to state Rep. Jan Dolan: I am extremely disappointed in your vote in favor of the property tax cut. It appears that once again you have ignored the wishes and interests of your constituents and succumbed to political expediency. As you are aware, I am very involved with North Farmington High School (a "National Exemplary School") and have been the president of the Parents' Club for a number of years. As such I have seen, first hand, the quality of education provided by the Farmington School District and the success of various programs instituted at North by the principal, Debbie Clarke, and by the district as a whole.

The proposed tax cuts, shifts and other pie-in-the-sky ideas for school funding will seriously jeopardize the success of our district and the best interests and welfare of our children. For you, a representative of that district, to ignore the successes of the district and to vote for a politically popular, but fiscally unsound, proposal is outrageous.

Farmington-area voters have recently supported a three year millage renewal. Thus, there is certainly no outcry for property tax or school reform in our district.

To the contrary, the parents and tax-payers of our district are very pleased with the operation of our schools, the quality of education received by our children and the fiscal responsibility of our school administration.

You were elected to represent the interests of our community. There simply can be no logical reason that you would vote against those interests unless you were attempting to curry favor with the governor and those more powerful representatives who might hold the key to your political future.

I supported you in your local elections and in your race for the House of Representatives. Your recent votes have raised serious doubts in my mind and I will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to support you in future elections.

I would appreciate it if you would provide me with the reasons you feel that this vote will benefit the members of your district.

David L. Haron, Farmington Hills

after competitors have been excluded, then isn't that some sort of extortion?

The suspicion of extortion exists because of the nature of the contract to a specific administrator (MESSA) at the puzzling insistence of the Farmington teachers union (Farmington Education Association) and evidently not by any cost considerations at all.

This is indicated by the quote attributed to the Farmington teachers union spokeswoman. Another suspicion is the insistence by MESSA that the Farmington School District later pay the extra 40 percent for MESSA's "error."

This sounds like a method of financing the parent union (Michigan Education Association) through bait-and-switch overcharging trickery. Is the local FEA now "fronting" for MEA interests? Why does the FEA blindly insist on an inferior bidder? So who represents what interests here?

All of this is incredible. The Michigan Education Association, Michigan Education Special Services Association, Farmington Education Association organizations want to "change" the price quote used in the contract to suit their interests, yet do not want the Farmington School District to change some other feature used in the contract to suit its (taxpayer) interests.

Since I am paying the piper, I am now calling for the following tune: Either follow the contract or do not follow it.

1. If the contract is to be followed for the three-year duration, the MESSA's price quote as negotiated stands.

2. If the contract is not to be followed and thus opened up for MESSA's price "corrections," then the Farmington School District is free to reconsider and reopen bids for the administration of this health insurance program. Perhaps MESSA will not be competitive and won't get the business.

John Hubbard, Farmington Hills

Nico going at Grace

I would like to thank all personnel who were at William Grace Elementary for the teen center this summer.

My son Scott participated every day and enjoyed the field trips that they took to amusement parks. The activities from 2-8 p.m. at the center kept them entertained and able to see their friends all summer long.

These people kept a daily watch on these kids and did a great job. I hope that the teen center continues again next year and after.

Sarah Hanlon, 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 mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

Something's wrong

What is wrong with the picture?

After reading through the July 19 front page article about the Farmington School District health care insurance "battle" that is brewing, something inside me kept saying, "Something is wrong here."

The article, if complete, factual and impartial, suggests a situation has developed that has some sinister implications beyond the legal implications as mentioned.

How can the assumed competent Michigan Education Special Services Association make a huge \$3.2 million (40 percent) error in its bid to administer the health plan?

If an organization gets a single-sourced long-term business contract through a competitive bidding process and later raises its price quote

The Farmington Observer

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QUESTION:
What can be done to keep kids with guns?



'Get rid of the guns. Put big taxes on them.'
Lun Le Livonia



'Keep guns away from kids. How? I'm not Solomon. I don't know.'
Robert Sanborn Farmington Hills



'Metal detectors in all the schools, even in the suburbs. Take most of the violence off TV.'
Rollin Ache Phoenixville, Pa.



'We need tougher gun-control laws . . . not everybody needs a gun.'
Margaret Knight Canton Township

We asked this question at Putt-Putt Golf & Games in Farmington.