

Why sidewalks?

Needed along busy highways

We guess we're happy that Farmington Hills is building a sidewalk on Gill Road south of Nine Mile. We see the need with an elementary school nearby. Sidewalks are a reluctant concession you make to the urbanization of a community. Now, you'd be hard pressed to name a more typically suburban issue than sidewalks.

Once they're in place, people take those slabs of concrete for granted. They're accepted and used. No group of homeowners ever stormed a city council meeting with shouts of "Take out those damn sidewalks!"

While in the planning stages, however, sidewalks are apt to create controversy. It tends to be the young-versus-old and city-versus-country type of friction.

That seems to be the case in one neighborhood in southern Farmington Hills, where the city wants to construct a sidewalk along the east side of Gill Road between Nine Mile and Colfax.

The controversy over the plan was detailed in Bill Coutant's article headlined "Gill residents: City's walking all over us" on page 1 of the Aug. 23 Farmington Observer.

Over the years, people have told us they moved to places like Farmington Hills to get away from things like sidewalks. If you want sidewalks and paved roads, they've said, go live in Detroit. Humph!

Others wonder how the city could justify the axing of just one tree (no matter how scrawny or common) to appease the walkers, joggers and Rollerbladers.

Still others, especially the elderly, don't relish the prospect of aching backs and balky

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snowblowers when it comes time to clear the drifts from a sidewalk the city has put in front of their house.

And what about taxes? When the sidewalks go in, the property values go up, adding to our tax burden, some homeowners have told us.

These arguments have their points, even the Country Squire one. Still, we agree with Hills councilman Jon Grant, who favors sidewalks on main roads.

"It's primarily a safety issue," said Grant, who lives in the Nine Mile/Gill area. "We're not a sleepy little rural community anymore. It's just not safe for kids to be walking along a busy road like Gill."

Now, we're not suggesting the paving over of Farmington Hills. There are places — within newer subdivisions and in parks — where sidewalks don't belong. We are saying that sidewalks are necessary along busy roads, though, and we're glad that Farmington Hills seems committed to building them.

We're also happy to note that the city will be meeting with those affected on Gill Road to explain what is happening and why. We hope the city will do everything possible to make the plan acceptable to the concerned residents.

Unequal justice not the answer

Michigan's ability to administer justice equally will be damaged by a House bill that would regulate underage drinkers more severely than their elders.

The proposal in question is House Bill 4839, which contains substitute language for several of the laws grouped under the state's vehicle code. Better than halfway through the 43-page bill rests language that would, for the first time, specify different and stronger penalties for anyone under 21 caught drinking and driving.

Currently, all drivers are subject to the same law. If you are pulled over and register .10 or higher on a Breathalyzer test, you can and will be arrested for driving drunk. The legal term, which would appear on the police report, is OUIL — Operating Under the Influence of Liquor.

However, House Bill 4839 says if a driver under 21 registers even .02 percent on the same test, he or she will be subject to the same penalties as those over 21.

Driving drunk is a poor idea for anyone, regardless of age. We all know the reasons why that statement is true, thanks in large part to groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

But in its attempt to discourage underage drinking, House Bill 4839, if passed as written, will instead open our court system to charges of handing down lopsided justice. Many minority groups have made the same charges, on the grounds that they believe a fair hearing before an impartial judge is an ideal that exists only on paper and not in practice.

At age 18, residents of Michigan can marry and vote. That's the age where they incur the responsibilities of an adult, right down to the

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law that says Happy Birthday, don't forget to register for military service.

If they're old enough to die in battle, then they should be able to enjoy equal protection under the laws of the country they're defending.

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In that case, the courts said the administration on campus makes the rules, which means a university president, for example, could legally keep a student newspaper from printing articles about tuition increases, or anything else, for that matter.

The impartial, wise administration of one set of laws, let alone two, seems challenging enough in today's judicial system. Education, not a larger whip, is the answer our legislators are looking for to keep drivers under, and over, 21, from hurting themselves or others.



A get-away-from-it-all August vacation

LETTERS

We're all proud

We are proud of our subdivision at Farmington Square and glad you let the rest of our community know how fine an area we live in. We appreciate your kind words and great front page article in the Aug. 19 Farmington Observer. It's nice to see the positive side so prominently displayed.

Robert P. Washer, president, Farmington Square Homeowners Association

It's just routine

It was with considerable regret that I read your Aug. 19 editorial. Shame-shame on you.

A service as necessary and as relied upon as is a newspaper has an unmitigated responsibility to report accurately and fairly.

Your snide implication that "a big shot developer with deep pockets" received some cozy and unjust preferential treatment from the planning commission reveals an appalling ignorance of parliamentary procedure, as well as an eagerness to make inflammatory accusations.

Every meeting of the planning commission begins with the approval of the agenda, at which time items are routinely added or deleted.

Mr. Jonna's request to have his item removed from the agenda was ordinary procedure and was routinely granted.

Indeed, his request was only one of two such requests granted for that agenda. Yes, Mr. Baer, "John P. Taxpayer" would have, indeed did, receive the same consideration from your planning commission — with more courtesy I trust than you extended to us.

Jeri Van Houten, vice chair, planning commission Farmington Hills

Thanks, Mr. York

Iwould like to thank publicly David York, a new member of the Farmington school board.

I'm a divorced father who has recently returned his son to Michigan, having removed him from a difficult situation out of state. He was living with his maternal grandparents. They are wonderful people but had run into serious financial difficulties.

I encountered a serious problem enrolling my son into East Middle School. Because I don't yet have custody papers, he was refused admittance. I can understand the schools concern, but my son was going to suffer. I can't afford private school tuition, so I didn't know what to do.

I asked my boss for advice. He called a friend of his, Ron Oliverio, who said he would make some calls and see what he could find out. Oliverio called me the next morning, to get some additional details. My son was enrolled that day. York indicated that, while I do need to get the legal situation finalized, the important thing was that my son be able to go to school.

David York thank you. You listened and took

the time to help, because it was the right thing to do.

Tom Dancelovic, Farmington Hills

He's no pig

Opinion: "We're different than pigs, aren't we?"

Well, it's not that my good friend and I have never disagreed on issues. He's a farmer. Farmers are in a very risky business and generally don't hesitate to express their thoughts.

It's just that I didn't realize that we disagreed on the subject of abortion. Sure, I've known him to thump baby piglets up-side the head if he didn't think Momma Sow could feed them but hey, that's OK.

They're pigs, not the highest order of primates like we are.

I don't know. He said that 80 percent of the American public agreed with him. Well, maybe it was more a matter of freedom. He doesn't think that anyone should be able to tell a person what to do, you know, how to live.

I didn't want to reply. It was late and how can you address this subject, as your friend is walking out the door. But I was shaken, and this wasn't just bacon we were talking about here.

"What about the child?" I said. Well, I guess he hadn't thought too much about that. If you can't take care of them, snuff 'em. That's a person's right to decide, you know.

"Sorry," I said. "I didn't realize we could decide to snuff someone else, only ourselves. Besides, doesn't the decision part come before the responsible parties have intercourse. Our superior minds know what can happen, right?"

"Oh come on!" my friend said. "People don't think about that. You know, having sex is one of our primary, uh, urges." Somewhat, I got visions of squealing beasts copulating down in the pen by the mudbath.

"There seems to be something terribly wrong here," I said, "that we would terminate a life as a result of some naturalistic yearning, and call it our right. It more so, is another case of our default on responsibility in our increasingly dehumanizing society. We're not responsible for the deficit, for the result of media sex, violence and Beavis and Butt-head, for educational, disciplinary and moral decay, and surely not for someone that we and God created."

Geez, I guess I am in the minority. But I thought we were different than pigs. Aren't we?

John Soper, Farmington Hills

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Was justice served with the verdicts in the Malice Green trials?

We asked this question at The Grand Cafe in downtown Farmington.



Jack Dubay
Garden City



Kimberly Schneider
Farmington



Mike Crew
Farmington



Sonia Amat
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