

It's a tax, folks

Not what downtown needs

Because of the Lansing slash in property taxes for schools, Farmington Downtown Development Authority predicts it will be \$130,000 lighter in money for next year's 1994-95 budget because of reduced funds from tax increment financing.

Don't fret, though. The DDA has sought out an obscure public act dating back to the early 1960s — amended in 1990 — that allows cities to establish principal shopping districts for the purposes of redevelopment and development.

With this act, there's also the power to levy a special assessment.

The DDA is already pursuing the matter. There was an informational meeting Wednesday for business owners.

How much this assessment will cost downtown business owners or how it will be implemented have yet to be determined. The number being considered is somewhere around 9 mills, according to city manager Frank Lauboff.

First of all, we file "special assessment" right along with other saccharine utterances of government such as revenue enhancer and processing fee. It's a tax, folks.

This special assessment would be paid on top of a 2-mill tax that's already being levied on both businesses and residences within this district to fund the DDA.

This is far from being done. There still needs to be a public hearing — probably sometime in December — and approval of the assessment from the Farmington City Council.

And, of course, this special assessment would be offset if the state Legislature or Farmington Schools decides to levy any taxes.

In the meantime, the people at the DDA better have a nice song and dance prepared. They have to sell this to business owners, a beleaguered lot as it stands.

We think the DDA is an integral part of Farmington's future. Historic downtowns such as ours have to compete with the boom and growth of strip centers and mega malls.

That's why the DDA was created. So far, we like what the DDA has done. The farmers' market in the Village Commons, a brochure to attract new businesses and the three-tiered plaza being constructed to enhance the front of the Masonic Temple are examples of the good work.

We understand those efforts need to be preserved and maintained, but so do downtown businesses. The last thing they need is another tax.

The DDA has reduced its dependence on TIF in its development plan amended this year, which supposedly shifts emphasis from a brick and mortar strategy to a marketing one.

This amended plan is fairly specific in terms of unfinished capital projects: sidewalk repair on Grand River, facade improvements on Orchard Street and removal of utility poles.

However, we don't feel the plan spells out enough of a marketing strategy for downtown. Business owners need to know what kind of return they're going to get in terms of new customers with promotions such as Sharin' of the Green and the Halloween Fest.

Sorry, but we don't think kids decorating a 300 pound pumpkin in front of city hall does the trick.

We'd like to see the DDA borrow a page from downtown Royal Oak. There are ethnic restaurants, nightclubs, coffeehouses, avant-garde clothing outlets, bookstores and record outlets. In other words, there's something for people of all ages. A more creative approach should be developed to attract such businesses.

We think they're capable. After all, the DDA has proved itself creative when finding a way to replace \$130,000 in a pinch.

State needs Vietnamese link

The Vietnam war will end only when the economic casualties stop.

Businessmen like Birmingham's Jack Lynch know that. The local psychologist, entrepreneur and Vietnam veteran epitomizes the growing number who realize that our economic interests are linked to humanitarian concerns.

He returned from Vietnam in September, his second trip since the war in an attempt to build an economic pathway between the two countries.

In November, a group of Michigan business executives and government officials will step back to the future in hope of cementing economic ties with the country that most of us have forgotten.

This group will be yet another from the Wolverine state to join a growing number of business executives who are eyeing Vietnam, our former combat nemesis, as an economic ally.

Michigan's government and business leadership must be applauded for looking beyond the blinding emotional issues left over from a war long past and toward a cooperative relationship that will benefit tens of millions on both sides of the Pacific.

November's trip is the first state-sanctioned group from the United States to visit the southeast Asian country. The contingent, led by Commerce Director Arthur Ellis, will visit a country of more than 70 million, 60 percent of whom have been born since 1975, the year Vietnam was unified.

Unfortunately for Michigan, which is in serious need of new business partners, our federal government's antiquated policy of economic

embargo against the people of Vietnam prohibits most American's from doing business there.

In truth, U.S. business is being left behind while the rest of the world is building relationships with a country that will be one of the fastest-growing economies in the coming years.

While the Japanese, French, British, Germans and Australians are building important relationships, American business interests are forced to stand on the sidelines while our government continues to be mired in the past.

The mission of the Michigan contingent is to develop an economic relationship with the Vietnamese people that will be ready for pursuing — once U.S. government officials come to their senses.

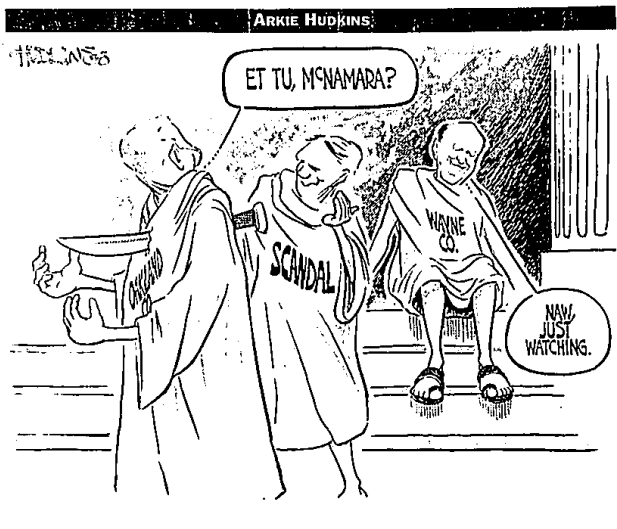
Vietnam possesses the natural resources, labor pool and agricultural potential that make it an attractive partner.

The U.S. embargo has failed in its basic mission — to bring home POWs.

It has only been successful in causing untold suffering among millions of Vietnamese, mostly children who are unable to receive the most basic of health care or even enough food to eat.

Seventy percent of the entire population is infected with malaria, which can lie dormant for years but can strike at any time. In Vietnam, the onset of a malaria attack often means death.

It is time for business interests and humanitarians to unite and insist that the embargo be lifted.



LETTERS

Thanks for coverage

On behalf of Linda Mlynarek, administrator, Botsford Continuing Health Center (BCHC), we wish to thank you for the exceptional attention you gave us in your Sept. 20 edition of the Farmington Observer.

We were pleased that you could send a photographer to cover the BCHC Ringers Choir concert event and elated to see front page placement of Mr. Warren's photo. It is very much appreciated.

We would also like to thank you for your continued attention to all releases we send to you. We are grateful for your support of our efforts.

Bridget M. Cosline, David Wrobel
Botsford Continuing Health Center

Then I read in Detroit papers that no bypass surgery is done in Windsor — you have to go 157 miles for that. There seems to be a waiting list, usually months long, for most so-called "elective surgery," and "elective" seems to mean anything from bunions to bypass surgery. Canada is rationing their health care more and more as costs skyrocket.

It is very telling when Canadian politicians come to the U.S. for health treatment. Their actions seem to indicate they find Canada's health care lacking.

Canadians can escape to the U.S. for treatment when they feel Canada's care is failing them. Where will Americans escape to if we adopt the Canadian system?

Mary Renaud, Livonia

Learned a lot

I am in the sixth grade at Power Middle School. In my reading class with Mrs. O'Connor, we are talking about how letter writing can be used.

We were discussing how letter writing is a way for citizens to communicate with businesses, politicians, city services, etc.

I chose to write to the Farmington Observer because I like to follow the city and school board elections. I learned a lot from the article that was written on Mr. Aldo Vagnozzi, who stopped by our house to talk about the city issues.

Benjamin York, Farmington Hills

Kudos to county reporter

Our 27 members of the Oakland County Senior Citizens Advisory Council voted that I write to tell you how much we appreciate reporter Ralph Echtinaw's coverage of our council's meetings.

This is a reporter who is well-informed about Oakland County affairs. I like his wry humor! Rosemary K. Clark, Bloomfield Hills

Health report puzzling

Mary Rodrigue's glowing report (Sept. 23) of Canada's health system leaves me puzzled in light of the following:

In May I tuned in to Channel 9 news and saw a report on women with breast cancer in Toronto. Women in the Toronto area who developed breast cancer have to go to Thunder Bay or another city whose name I didn't catch. The reason? Toronto doesn't have the equipment to treat any more women and won't have that equipment for two more years!

I recently saw a newspaper report that said 60 percent of people in Buffalo hospitals for elective surgery are Canadians.

SOS: Save our species

Currently, we are faced with the greatest rate of species extinction worldwide since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. This loss is destroying the genetic diversity of our planet. One quarter of the world's species could be lost within the next 50 years. An alarming 100 will be lost per day by the year 2000.

For 20 years, the Endangered Species Act has been one of the most effective pieces of environmental legislation in this country. The act is scheduled to be re-authorized by Congress in the upcoming months. It is critical that the act is not only renewed, but strengthened to halt this dramatic loss of life.

While species extinction is a global issue, we can determine its potential destruction here in Michigan where eight species are endangered including the Gray Wolf and the Piping Plover. A strengthened act will include ecosystem-wide recovery plans, a proactive approach to species protection and full funding.

Our Endangered Species Act is being attacked by the timber, mining, ranching and development industries. They are actively lobbying Congress to pass a watered-down version of the act.





Unless we act now, we stand to lose life-saving medicines, productive agriculture, abundant fisheries and genetic secrets of diverse life forms for ourselves and our children. We must ensure that future generations will not have to rely solely on history books to see and learn about the Eastern Cougars and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers.

Caroline Schwarz
Citizen Outreach Director
Public Interest Research Group in Michigan

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.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION: How should we pay for public education in the state?

			
'By income tax and sales tax. They should raise it.' Bill Liba Farmington	'I believe you should fund the public schools by raising the sales tax and by reducing the powerful teachers union.' Jon Novak Farmington Hills	'I think they should have less taxes for people who smoke cigarettes. Tax people who drink.' Pat Turk Farmington Hills	'If I owned property, I wouldn't care if I was taxed... especially if it goes to education. I'm concerned about children.' Merry Both Livonia library employee

We asked this question at the Farmington branch of the Community Library.

The Farmington Observer

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