

Spreading the word

Forums on cable aid voters

Anyone who fails to vote in the Nov. 2 city council elections had better start hunting up a new excuse. The old "I don't know these people" line just won't wash anymore.

Not only are the council hopefuls profiled and their stands on the issues reported on the pages of this newspaper, but the office staffers are also in thousands of homes in living color thanks to the proliferation of the meet-the-candidate forums, most of them cablecast for MetroVision subscribers.

These days, dear voters of the Farmington area, if you haven't seen or heard the candidates, it's because you've decided literally to tune them out.

The civic groups and homeowner associations that sponsor these candidate forums work hand in glove with the local cable TV folks, who pepper their programming with live and rebroadcast candidate grillings.

Switch to MetroVision's local-access channels just about any day or night during this campaign time and you're likely to catch a healthy dose of local politics.

Residents who think they need to see the hopefuls one more time should mark Monday evening, Oct. 25, on their calendars. Rebroadcast candidate forums will occupy the 6-10 p.m. time slot on cable Channel 12.

There have been at least four forums to showcase the six Farmington Hills candidates. To our knowledge, they've all been on cable.

In Farmington, where there are four candidates, there is a problem this year, forum-wise, with just the one sponsored by the League of Women Voters. Of course, there should be more.

■ We appreciate all the hard work that goes into these productions, and we believe that anything that introduces residents to local politics and politicians is a good thing.

To show the importance of cable TV in local politics, consider the Hills council election of two years ago. Something went wrong with the video equipment at one of the forums, so another meeting was quickly put together just a few days before the election. What's a forum worth without accompanying cable TV?

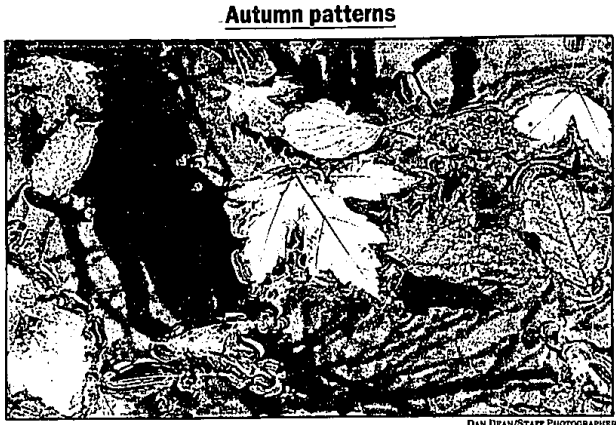
In the Farmington area, this cable TV/candidate forum alliance comes from the very successful run that the Hills council has had on live cable. The "Monday Night Fights" (as the meetings used to be known) are regular viewing fare for a lot of people around here.

We'd like to think that there've been more voters casting their ballots since government found its way on to cable TV.

We appreciate all the hard work that goes into these productions, and we believe that anything that introduces residents to local politics and politicians is a good thing.

Of course, the political scene could become overloaded on electronics. Savvy polls realize that elections aren't won on cable TV. We hope candidates won't discard door-knocking, handshaking, sign-waving and mailbox-stuffing.

If they do, we'll all be losers. However, local politics on cable TV is a good show. Catch it if you can.



Autumn patterns

DAN DEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fallen leaves: No two snowflakes are alike, they say. Neither are the patterns made as the leaves touch down on our towns. Here, they fall into wetlands alongside the new Rails-to-Trails hike and bikeway in West Bloomfield.

LETTERS

Story had insight

Your paper is to be commended for the recent article (Oct. 14) on developments at the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Staff writer Bill Coutant did an excellent job of reporting on a complicated subject. The move of the library from Farmington to Pontiac with the proposed removal of the current staff is of great concern to more than 2,500 blind and physically handicapped persons in Oakland County.

Bringing this problem to the attention of the general public was a great service on your part.

Let us all hope that this problem can be resolved in a manner which will reward years of effort by an outstanding library staff and avoid disruption of this urgently-needed service.
Gerald T. Johnson, Beverly Hills

of our national forests so fast and so cheap, that the price doesn't even cover the cost of selling the trees.

The USFS's own studies show that in 1991 timber sales on more than two-thirds of our national forests lost money.

A rational, carefully managed timber program can harvest timber economically from the national forests while protecting the environment. That's what the USFS should be doing. But I don't think they are. Do you?

If you wish to let our representatives in Washington know how you feel about the activities of the USFS, write to your senators and representatives.

If you would like more information about our National Forests you can write to: The Wilderness Society, 900 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006-2596.

George R. Mell, Farmington Hills

Don't spoil her home

Re: Tom Baer's Sept. 23 editorial. Oh come on, Tom. Get real!

Of course the residents of Farmington Road are upset about the proposed bicycle path across their front lawns. And I, for one, don't feel that an 8-foot concrete drive 50 feet up from the road is as "harmless and unobtrusive as you can get."

You are 100 percent correct in your comments about my home and property being "precious" to me. After putting in nine and 10 hour days at work, I look forward to returning to my suburban fiefdom.

And doggone it, you must have a crystal ball, because I am "mortgaged up to my eyeballs."

How right you are to insist we butt out of city affairs. I was very impressed with previous government ordinances to eliminate flying cats and ban unsightly basketball hoops. I guess I missed your editorial insights on those matters.

Forget the fact that across the street from these "cantankerous ones" sits a 211-acre park, paid for with a special recreational tax that would be perfect for bicycle trails. Why waste city property?

Sorry Tom, I care too much about this lovely established neighborhood to back away from trying to negotiate a compromise. Yes, I do feel an 8-foot-wide concrete path in the middle of my front yard is a "scar."

Maybe the next time you write an editorial on local issues you will interview both sides.

You have every right to be in favor of the bicycle path and to express your views in an opinion column. You have no right to belittle residents for voicing their concerns.

Shame on you!
Patricia Zacharias, 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.

Tax plan gobbles up equity

Presto! Change-o! Just when Michigan homeowners thought they were getting rid of the onerous and inflationary school property tax, the idea is back.

Gov. John Engler is taking a lot of heat, deservedly, for proposing a 4 percent real estate transfer tax. That's right—a 4 percent tax on the price you get when you sell your home.

On a \$100,000 house, the seller would be whopping \$4,000. If you as a tax would have a mortgage of \$80,000 and equity of \$20,000, the real estate transfer tax gobbles up 20 percent of your equity.

It's odd that a Republican governor would propose a tax that falls so heavily on people who are mobile. A Republican Secretary of Defense from this area once criticized "kennel dogs who sit on their fannies and howl for food" and praised bird dogs who go hunting for it. What Gov. John Engler is proposing is a tax on bird dogs who move to where the jobs are or accept transfers to upgrade themselves.

The tax also would fall on those who must sell their houses due to economic hardship, a death or a divorce. Those are not people on whom we should place a "must tax" priority.

Engler, in an interview with this newspaper, noted that Realtors take commissions of 7 percent. That is no defense. The state won't help the cause of home ownership by raising the total skimming to 11 percent.

What shows up in the text of his message, is an alternative to the 4 percent transfer tax.

You can choose to pay an alternative tax of 16 mills for three years—a total of 48 mills. It's a better deal than paying a 4 percent tax at the time of sale that's the equivalent of 80 mills—

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but it's still a bad deal. Why tax real estate sales at all? Both the 4 percent transaction tax and the alternative 16 mills for three years are bad ideas.

We're getting a nearly \$7 billion cut in school property taxes. We know we're going to have to make up most or all of it. So let everybody prepare to pay. A personal income tax increase would nick earnings. A sales tax would nick consumption of everything but food and prescription drugs. A hike in the single business tax will fall on the value added of Michigan corporations.

Even the little lamented school property tax was fairer because it fell on virtually everyone. We would rather see part of the property tax restored outright than to focus only on those who sell their homes and gimmicks like the 16-mills-for-three-years tax.

The Legislature should dump the real estate transfer tax as quickly as possible.

This editorial on a proposed real estate tax is the first in a series, "Target: Education," which will appear periodically in this newspaper.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What message will you take back to school and to your friends about drug awareness?



'Peer pressure can do a lot to you. Having the perfect image isn't everything.'
Vince Mercader
North Farmington



'One-third of the people that use are going to survive.'
Jeff Krantiz
North Farmington



'Basically, not to use cocaine or any other drug.'
Jay Lazar
North Farmington



'What can really happen to you if you did it. (Eric) gave his real life experience.'
Holly Llewellyn
Farmington High

The Farmington Observer

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