

'It's all compromise'

Settle the development war

By God, we think they've got it! We see the light of understanding coming into the eyes of certain Farmington Hills City Council members.

People just don't want that commercial and residential development southeast of 12 Mile and Middlebelt roads, and they're willing to go to the mat with their government to stop (or at least control) it.

The Hills Council, which had approved the project in a split (4-3) decision on June 20, backed water on Monday and voted 6-1 to reconsider. Area residents, who'd raised a little hell at City Hall and in the opinion columns of this newspaper, have won a skirmish, if not a battle, in the ongoing development war.

Well, we're happy that the governed have spoken, and we're just overjoyed that the governors (six of the seven, anyway) have listened. The project, a 180-house development with a shopping center on the land, does need a longer, closer look by the city.

And the concerned residents need time to get with the city and the developer to see that their suggestions - and they've made some good ones - on any development at 12 Mile and Middlebelt are followed.

Hopefully, by the time the first spade hits the dirt, some sort of compromise will have been worked out, and this whole saga will have a happy ending - like a B movie on the Late Show.

That's how representative government is supposed to work, after all. There's give and take and a lot of argument and fact-finding, and finally consensus and compromise.

It's like a pop singer once warbled: "... you don't realize that it's all compromise, and the problems are so overrated."

Actually, it's difficult for us to paint anyone as the bad guy in this episode.

Yes, we do see the residents' point of view. They didn't move to the suburbs (to this suburb, anyway) to live behind the parking lot of some all-night supermarket.

Then consider the plight of the city council members and planning commissioners. They realize that they could do a lot worse than the development they approved for 12 and Middlebelt. And do they really want to get the city tied up in litigation with some deep-pockets developer?

Even the developer, Gary Jonna, seems reasonable and has agreed to meet with the residents about this project. A lot of developers would tell their critics to go stuff it.

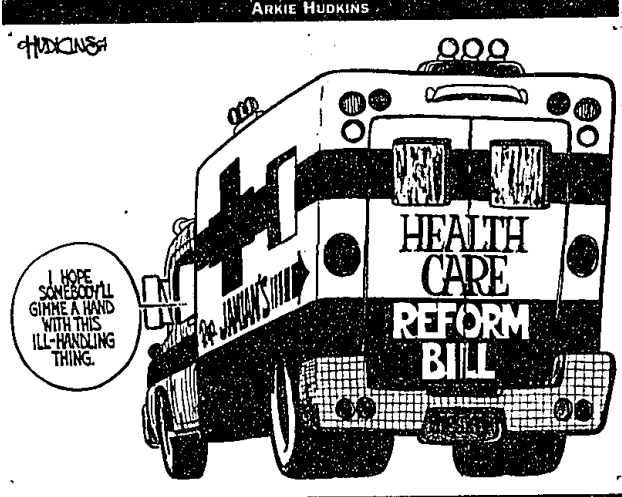
Let's hope their "negotiations" lead to something that everyone can live with.

When it comes to development, the Farmington area has benefited over the years through careful planning and some accidents of geography. It hasn't been pillaged by developers as have some other Oakland County communities.

By good fortune, the area's mega-mall - Twelve Oaks - is located in the next town west. Let their police department deal with the crime. Let their planners figure ways to improve the clogged roads. Let their residents fume over cut-through traffic through their subs.

No, Farmington Hills has stood pretty much out of harm's way as development swept through the northern and western suburbs. Maybe, just maybe, a little old development at 12 and Middlebelt would be so bad - if it meets the standards set by the folks who will have to live with it.

So let those negotiations between developer and residents begin.



LETTERS

Much appreciated

The excellent article on our parish priest Father Panayot Pamukov and wife Popadia Sylvia, on their 50th wedding anniversary and his ordination to the priesthood, was enjoyed by all.

On behalf of father and our St. Clement parishioners, we thank you for this community service. It was greatly appreciated.

Violette Griffen, Rose Temelko, publicity chairwomen

You mudslinger!

After reading Mr. Breshgold's June 23 letter, I wondered if he and I had read the same newsletter from Joe Knollenberg.

The newsletter I received (Volume 1, Issue 3) was informative, well-reasoned, and devoid of anything I would consider "campaigning."

Mr. Breshgold, why don't you simply compare your life's achievements and your reputation against those of Rep. Knollenberg, and show us your superiority, rather than engaging in mudslinging?

Robert N. Ranney, Farmington Hills

'Tone of duplicity'

A careful reading of Aldo Vagnozzi's long letter of July 7 by anyone knowledgeable about City Hall politics can appreciate his ability to subtly slant the "facts" to his point of view and leave the average reader totally convinced that any further discussion is pointless.

In his last paragraph, he sets a tone of duplicity by his unabashed invitation to me that my input on budgetary matters is not only most welcome, but that any suggestions I make would fall on sympathetic ears.

Not so. Experience, that school of hard knocks, proves otherwise. Example: My extensive involvement on the ethics committee years ago came to naught. And, from what I hear, still fully unresolved.

Conclusion? Citizen input is carefully screened for political correctness so as not to conflict with prescribed political policy. And why use a public forum to elicit my cooperation? If Mr. Vagnozzi felt that I represented such a commendable civic resource, why did he fail to submit my name to countless boards, commissions or committees for consideration over the years?

It is common knowledge that I was a community activist such as being a precinct worker for a number of years. In fact, I ran for city council and received the Observer's appreciation for my background and civic concern.

There is yet another serious flaw in Mr. Vagnozzi's sense of realpolitik. He suggests, in a demeaning manner, that I never appeared at any budget hearing. Therefore, I was impudent to make any criticisms afterwards.

He further implies that a citizen has no right to complain to the council if she or he failed to make prior objection to some subsequent action. What a ludicrous abridgment of citizens' rights.

Another glaring deficiency in Mr. Vagnozzi's political record is his proclivity for furthering the Democratic agenda: Tax and Spend.

Not once since I moved here many years ago have I observed him support lower taxes and smaller government. Such counter-productive behavior goes hand in hand with political aspirations that are at variance with the majority of average-income Americans.

His spirited defense of the city manager is not surprising and is squarely in line with his ability to gloss over history such as the scandal that erupted some years ago after the Observer revealed that a former councilman's tap-in fees were carried on the books as an account receivable rather than as a lien on the property as prescribed by law.

Mr. Vagnozzi stated that he visited over 5,000 homes in our city during 1993. Maybe it is time to retrace his steps so that he can get the feel of residents a year later.

In fact, I invite him to visit my home where we can candidly discuss our city's future bereft of political interruptions, political pressures or political manipulations.

Who knows, maybe Farmington Hills may come out a winner.

Albert Rosen, Farmington Hills

Beyond Imagination

I have known Mr. Larry Lichtman since he was a student in my government class at North Farmington High School.

To think that Mr. Lichtman would demean himself to "sell" a vote for a \$150 campaign contribution is beyond my imagination.

William D. Brinker, NFHS teacher, retired

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.

Don't halt these good skates

We've seen the signs ("No skateboarding") and we've heard the grumbling ("Council oughta pass an ordinance..."), but we have to say we're dead-set against such anti-skateboarder sentiment.

The Farmington Hills City Council proved some months ago that it's not a mean old Grinch of a governmental body by turning a unanimous thumbs down on a request from local school officials to regulate skateboarding, in-line skating and rollerblading on school property.

Apparently, some suburban school officials, concerned about safety and liability, want cities to pass ordinances that would keep these wheeled wonders off school property.

Skateboarding, for years the rage with the young and young at heart, has expanded into in-line skating (on something like ice skates with little wheels in the blades) and rollerblading (with rollers in the skis).

Sporting-goods stores do a brisk business in these items and the trimmings that go with them - helmets for heads and pads for knees and elbows.

But, once you're strapped on the wheels, where, oh where, do you go to roll? Well, before tightening up the laces (or Velcro), a little common sense must be employed.

No, you can't skateboard down the middle of Farmington's Grand River Avenue, Livonia's Five Mile Road, Plymouth's Main Street, Warren and Wayne roads in Westland or Garden City's Ford Road - even though you might bend the motorized traffic during some rush hours.

And nix on wheeling through downtowns or shopping malls where you might collide with pedestrians. The police'll nab you if you try something that foolish.

The whole idea is to enjoy this equipment

There's one thing you can say about skateboarding: It sure beats sitting in front of a TV set watching cartoons after school and on Saturdays. Skateboarding takes place in the fresh air and involves exercise.

without hurting yourself or bothering others.

But what's wrong with rolling across an empty parking lot at the local elementary school after hours in the company of other like-minded sportsmen and women? Absolutely nothing, we think.

Hey, how about that... somebody finally found a use for an empty parking lot. There should be some sort of civic award.

We think that skateboarding ordinances would just add to the woes of young people who often complain that "there's nothing to dooooo around here."

And let's be honest about it: Our police have better things to do these days than round around 12-year-olds who are peacefully using what the sporting goods stores so readily sell to their parents.

Well, there's one thing you can say about skateboarding: It sure beats sitting in front of a TV set watching cartoons after school and on Saturdays. Skateboarding takes place in the fresh air and involves exercise.

"You burn up 9.5 calories a minute when you're Roller Blading," said a Farmington Hills girl who's just bonkers over the activity.

No, officialdom shouldn't object when skateboarders wheel through empty parking lots. It's a good show, as long as they don't bother others or hurt themselves.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What were you doing July 19, 1969, when the Apollo astronauts landed on the moon?



"I was at work at Ajam Laboratories in Livonia. We listened on the radio."
Frank Miller
Farmington Hills



"I was in school - junior high in Livonia. I remember watching it on TV."
Craig Bowles
Farmington Hills



"No, I couldn't tell you what I was doing. I don't remember it at all."
Sidney Lash
Farmington Hills



"I was 15 years old. We were glued to the TV. I asked my mom, 'Did you ever think you'd live to see the day?'"
Alice Schneider
Garden City

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