

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Ballot plan offers way to preserve quality of life

On Nov. 8 voters in Farmington Hills will have the opportunity to vote on an important issue. If approved, it can have a far-reaching impact on the future direction and character of our city.

The proposition that the voters will be asked to vote on is: "Shall the City Charter of the City of Farmington Hills be amended to permit the levy of an additional tax not to exceed 5 percent or .5 mills of State Equalized Value, for a period of five years, the taxes to be used only for the acquisition of development rights and/or real property and the maintenance thereof within the City."

Please note that what is being asked for is the authority to levy one-half mill for five years. This millage would enable the city, over five years, to generate \$6 million. This is a large sum of money, but as we're all aware, land in our city has grown considerably in value. If we are truly to impact some key parcels in the community, in an effort

to preserve the character of the city as we want it to be, then something like this is going to have to be done.

Soms have asked if this is a new concept. The answer of course is "no." In fact, twice in the near recent past, the city has exercised rights to buy property to resolve land litigation issues to prevent developments from occurring.

In 1990, the city acquired a parcel of property near Northwestern and 13 Mile to settle a lawsuit and to prevent office development of the parcel of property adjacent to Woodcreek subdivision.

Again, in 1992, at the behest of the Springland subdivision, the city bought property to settle a lawsuit where the court had already ruled in favor of construction of an office building on Orchard Lake Road just south of I-586.

One neighboring community, the city of Wilson, submitted a similar ballot proposal to the electorate in 1988 to provide the authority to the city to levy

## GUEST COLUMNIST



BILL COSTICK

a mill for 10 years to provide funding for the protection of natural resources through land acquisition.

As recent as this past August, a similar issue was on the ballot in Peninsula Township, Grand Traverse County, which many of you may know as Old Mission Point. There the voters approved a .125 mill levy for 15 years that will raise more than \$6 million. The purpose of this special millage was to

buy development rights.

In 1989, the Planning Commission, along with the city's planning consultants, undertook an analysis of the city's land use at that time. The results of that study indicated that approximately 12 percent of the city's land area remained vacant.

What's significant about that 12 percent is that one could surmise, and we've often said this, that many of the parcels of property that have remained vacant, are some of the most difficult to develop.

This could either be true because of the ownership pattern or for whatever reason that has caused the property to remain vacant. What may be significant here is that the proposed half-mill might be useful in controlling growth, limiting the extent or expansion of future office or commercial growth and could become a most useful resource to prevent unwanted growth.

Many citizens have asked how the half-mill increase would affect their tax

bill. Example: a \$100,000 home assessed at \$50,000 would pay an additional \$25 in city taxes if this issue were to pass.

Weighing the vested rights of property owners whose properties may be commercial, industrial or other land uses against the desires of the general public can be a most difficult task.

The courts have not helped much in this area and the trend over the past decade has been to move to a situation where municipalities are held liable for monetary damages when delays because of litigation can be put into monetary terms and damages.

The proposition that will appear on the November ballot, as a factual matter, will offer the opportunity to the voters to provide the city with money that it could use to develop a plan to acquire key parcels in the city that could achieve what the community feels is important at this time, to preserve the character and quality of life that so many have talked about for the past several years.

## LETTERS

## A Wolf fan

County Commissioner Donn Wolf is one of the best known and most active public officials in the Farmington area. He is always there constantly working, not just for us but with us, for better government and a better community.

That is why I read in wonderment Mr. Lopez's remark that he does not know Commissioner Donn Wolf. Perhaps, as a very young student, Mr. Lopez has just not been involved enough in the community. Let me help.

If you want to know about Commissioner Donn Wolf start with a visit to the Farmington Hills City Hall. You will see his picture on the wall taken in 1981 when he served as one of the best mayors Farmington Hills has ever had. Then look at the picture of our first Natural Beauty Road (Howard Road). Donn Wolf led the citizens movement that created Natural Beauty Roads in our city.

This was a positive step developed with neighbors and other officials to preserve the beauty and natural environment that we enjoy today; and it be-

came a model ordinance for other cities.

Then, know that your city taxes are among the lowest in the state because Donn Wolf led the citizens fight to lower taxes three times. Today, as a county commissioner, he is still fighting for lower tax rates.

Visit the Senior Citizen Center where Donn Wolf, along with hundreds of seniors, worked to keep the center's programs and budgets under local control. Or just stop in for lunch sometime and you will probably find Donn Wolf there visiting and working with seniors.

When you see a Neighborhood Watch sign on any one of our streets, know that Donn Wolf, along with Police Chief John Nichols, began that entire operation to help keep our homes and streets safe.

If you want to meet Commissioner Donn Wolf, Mr. Lopez, join and participate in Farmington Families in Action, Farmington Youth Assistance, Farmington/Farmington Hills Intergovernmental Council, the Farmington 125 Anniversary Committee, Lawrence Technological University Advisory Commit-

tee, the Michigan and National Associations of Counties. You will find Commissioner Donn Wolf there and I am sure he will be glad to show you around. Better yet, Mr. Lopez, attend a County Commission meeting (they are held at the Court House in Pontiac) and you will see Commissioner Wolf working for us as Chair of the Airport Committee, Vice Chair of the General Government Committee and member of the Key Finance Committee plus many other subcommittees at which he spends so much time working on our behalf.

It is no wonder that Donn Wolf is the only candidate in the 19th Commissioner District to receive a "Preferred and Well Qualified" rating from the Civic Searchlight. Mr. Lopez did not earn any rating.

Whether it's a tax bill, a traffic light, a police matter or a veteran, senior or a young person with a problem Commissioner Donn Wolf is always there. Donn Wolf is the Citizens Commissioner and that is why so many of us will be voting for him this fall.

Paul R. Sowerby, Farmington Hills

## Reader responds

In his letter in the Oct. 27 edition of the Farmington Observer, Barry L. Brickner, treasurer, Breshold for Congress Committee, treasurer, Vicki Barnett for State Senate Committee, offered me, "Some helpful info."

He did so in response to my letter, published in the Oct. 20 Observer.

Yes, Mr. Brickner, I am Congressman Joe Knollenberg's campaign treasurer, and when acting in that representative capacity, I state the fact clearly.

However, when I speak or write my own personal opinions, as I did in my Oct. 20 letter, I speak for no one other than myself. I do not clear my opinions with anyone, and I do not feel the need to puff myself up with a title, as you apparently do.

It is obviously inappropriate to imply that you speak for another when you are not authorized to do so and are simply stating personal views.

Attorney Brickner chose the opposite and inaccurate assumption in a clumsy attempt to twist my words contrary to their plain meaning, and then to insinuate that his interpretation constituted Congressman Knollenberg's position.

It was helpful, however, for Mr. Brickner to note that Robert Byrd is the Democratic former Senate majority leader, and George Mitchell is their current Senate majority leader.

I also note that Mr. Brickner did not dispute the fact that the former more than doubled the cost of the Earthquake Relief Bill by adding \$6 billion in unrelated pork to that humanitarian measure, and the latter did nothing to curb the unrelated spending.

By the use of his titles, Mr. Brickner appears to be speaking on behalf of his candidates and their campaign committees.

Are we to assume therefore that his candidates see nothing wrong with porking up a humanitarian bill?

Robert L. Hallmark, Southfield

## Lack of gatekeepers opens world of talk radio to no-basis views

I guess it was two or three years ago that I first went on talk radio, first on Denny McLain's show and then several times on David Newman's.

I had written something or other inflammatory in this column, and the producer called me to arrange a broadcast time. I sat in my office, on the phone, with McLain or Newman in the studio fielding calls and turning them over to me.

I remember being surprised at how free the callers — mostly white males, I gathered, in many cases on car phones — felt to express their anger about what was going on. Part of it, I suppose, came from the liberating effect of anonymous distance that a call-in show provides.

But part is something much deeper, something that has increasingly been on my mind as we come down to the last few days before the 1994 election.

Talk radio is a new medium, just as new as radio was in the '30s and TV in the '50s. And a big part of the history of politics in this country is the story of smart people learning to use a new medium for maximum political effect.

Consider President Franklin Roosevelt, who mastered radio and personally entered into every living room in the country in his fireside chats. Or think of President John Kennedy, who combined a nimble wit with the new medium of television to create a national impact with his press conferences, only to be outdone by Ronald Reagan's acting talent (not to mention his handlers' exquisite skill at arranging media events, perfectly made for TV).

So when I first stumbled onto talk radio, I wondered how long it would take for somebody to figure out how to exploit it politically. Then I listened to Rush Limbaugh sometime in 1992. It didn't take long to figure the 1994 election would be a doozy.

It has turned out that way, but with a very special quality of personal savagery that makes this campaign certainly the nastiest I ever have experienced.

Here's why: It isn't that the politicians suddenly are nastier. It's the underlying effects of a new medium.

Talk radio is remarkable for many reasons, but especially so because there are no gatekeepers standing between the emotions and opinions of ordinary folks and the awesome distributive power of a mass medium.

Think about it. The only people who got on



PHILIP POWER

radio in the old days were those the producer thought were newsworthy. The only way to get onto TV is for a news director to consider you (or the event in which you are involved) important. And, of course, the way stories get into newspapers like this is for editors to make a judgment that the story is newsworthy enough to print.

Producers and news directors and editors all function as gatekeepers to the media. As such, they not only make judgments about who and what are important, but they also perform a moderating role. Somebody who has a history of lying just won't be allowed to appear on traditional news media. A person who makes a perfectly absurd charge or passes a violently personal remark will quickly find a gatekeeper setting the record straight or finding an authoritative person to rebut it.

But with the new medium of talk radio, there are no gatekeepers. Certainly the host of the show answers the calls and cuts off any obscenity. But the host does not pretend to judge the accuracy of the claims, nor the legitimacy of the charges, nor the factual basis for the emotions expressed.

This has brought a fundamental change to a growing part of our national discourse. The opinions of any person, informed or not, are as valid on talk radio as the whimsy of anybody else. Some may think this has democratized our politics; others may think it has debased them. But it is certainly different.

Which is why this campaign keeps sounding a lot like a cross between The National Enquirer and an argument between 6-year-olds: "Liar!" "No, you're the liar!"

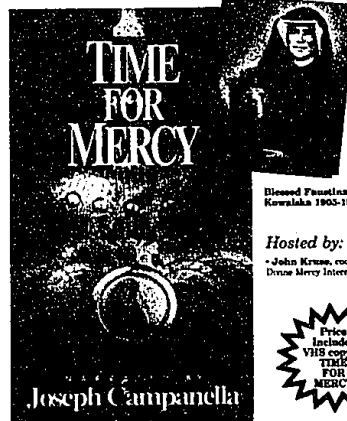
The medium is the message. Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-2047, ext. 1890.

## — THE METRO DETROIT — PREMIERE of an inspirational new film

Join Emmy award nominee actor Joseph Campanella as we explore thought provoking questions and examine what the events of this century may be revealing to us. Learn of the startling revelations of Jesus Christ to a young Polish nun in the heart of Poland and the incredible message of Mercy given to her for the world.

## Presentations by

- From the Marian Helpers
  - Fr. Seraphim Michalevsky, MIC, director of the Association of Marian Helpers and Vice-Postulator for the Cause of Blessed Faustina.
  - Fr. George W. Kosicki, CEB, author of *How Is the Time for Mercy* and administrator of Divine Mercy International (DMI).
- From Marian Communications
  - Drew Mariani, producer of the acclaimed film *Marian Apparitions of the 20th Century* and *Belona: Land of Grace*.



Blessed Faustina Kowalska 1905-1938

## Hosted by:

John Kruse, coordinator of Divine Mercy International (DMI)



Saturday, November 5, 1994  
7 p.m. at the

## — BIRMINGHAM THEATRE —

211 S. Woodward Ave. • Birmingham

Tickets available at all Ticketmaster Centers and box office the day of the event.

## Ticket Prices

Film Premier ..... \$25  
Film Premiere and Reception (Black-tie optional) ..... \$75  
Thirty-five dollars of each Premiere/Reception ticket is a Charitable Donation.

LIMITED SEATING

Reception at Fox & Hounds after Movie and Presentations