

LETTERS

Beef with chief

The article in your Oct. 19 edition ("Slow response to fire criticized") struck a raw nerve and I take exception to much of what Chief Marinucci had to say. I am a full-time professional firefighter with close to 24 years of experience. I am also a former Farmington Hills firefighter having served as a volunteer and was among the first group of full-time personnel hired in the late 1970s. I went to work at another fire department in 1978.

I have long felt that the Farmington Hills system is inadequate. The last time I checked, fires and medical emergencies occur 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and are not limited to 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. In this business, response time is everything. The first five minutes is critical in fire suppression and will usually make or break the outcome of that incident.

Response time for medical emergencies is crucial as was correctly pointed out in the article. In a cardiac arrest situation, you have only a four- to eight-minute window of opportunity for successful patient survival. After eight minutes, survival rates drop dramatically. The 18-minute response time cited in the article is totally unacceptable; if it were my house that burned, I would be talking to an attorney.

Chief Marinucci's statement that volunteers can provide a faster response because they can come directly to the scene is ridiculous. Without the proper basic firefighting equipment such as water, hose and self-contained breathing apparatus, the personnel who arrive at the scene before the apparatus can do nothing but stand around and watch.

The proper and generally accepted response to any structure fire is a minimum of four firefighters for each engine company. I have been told that Farmington Hills's on-scene times are recorded when personnel (but not necessarily firefighting apparatus) arrive on the scene and call in on their portable radios.

Response times should reflect only the arrival of fire apparatus and not individuals in their own private vehicles.

Chief Marinucci's statement that his system is better able to handle multiple emergencies is also in error. I don't believe that having volunteers necessarily provides better coverage. They

still must respond with the appropriate equipment.

Marinucci's frequent use of the term "volunteers" is also in error because these "volunteers" are actually paid by the hour but do not in any way resemble a full-time staff since they are alerted by radio papers and respond from home and elsewhere when incidents occur.

The city of Farmington Hills should move into the 20th century. They have the facilities and equipment to have a first-rate fire department. I am astonished that with a run volume of over 4,600 annually and climbing and a population of approximately 80,000, they still see fit to operate with a full-time/part-time system.

Let me make it clear that I do not fault any of the personnel, either full time or volunteer as some of them are long-time acquaintances. However, I do fault the administration for continuing to support the current system, which has not changed in almost 20 years.

The supporters of the Farmington Hills system of fire protection claim that 24-hour shift firefighters are a waste of money and they do nothing but sit around; but that's another subject which I won't go into here. I work for a fire department that provides first-rate, full-time, 24-hour-per-day fire and EMS service. Our response times average 3-4 minutes even at 2 a.m. I suspect that Farmington Hills response times at 2 a.m. are much greater.

I also live in a community that provides first-rate, full-time, 24-hour-per-day fire and EMS service. I refuse to live in any community that provides anything else.

The residents of Farmington Hills (and every other community for that matter) owe it to themselves to find out exactly what level of fire protection their community provides. The next time you drive past a Farmington Hills fire station remember the lights may be on, but chances are no one is home.

Steven Kuzmanovich,
Southfield

Board speaks

W e, the members of the Walled Lake Schools Board of Education, are writing this to alert district voters to the importance of your vote in the millage renewal election on Nov. 18.

This renewal will not raise taxes. It will continue our students' educational programs without interruption.

The millage to be renewed represents about \$20 million in revenue for the next school year. That's nearly a quarter of our schools' annual budget. Many of you have asked us to determine exactly what will be the impact of a millage loss. In response to those requests, our administration has recommended, and we have formally adopted, the following list of reductions:

- At least 150 teachers will be laid off. Class sizes will rise as high as 35 students in the elementary and class size averages in secondary schools will rise into the mid-forties.
- All transportation, except that mandated for special education students, will be eliminated. Eighty drivers, four mechanics and two dispatchers will be laid off.

- All middle school and high school athletics will be eliminated.
- Counseling services and substance abuse prevention services for students will be reduced.

- The Outdoor Education Center will be closed.

- Teaching supplies, textbooks, library books, music and art supplies, gifted and talented services, media services, Reading Recovery programs, bilingual tutors and paraprofessionals will all be reduced.

- Seven administrative/district support positions will be eliminated.

- Twenty five and one half custodial/maintenance positions will be cut.

- Eleven and one half secretarial positions will be eliminated.

- All renovation projects will be cancelled.

All of the listed reductions will have to be implemented for the coming school year in order to achieve the necessary savings. In addition, if the renewal fails, immediate measures, such as freezing supply and staffing accounts, would be implemented for the remainder of this school year. This would be necessary in order to cover the unemployment costs that would ensue as a result of massive layoffs.

If you care about our students, our community, and our property values, please vote Saturday, Nov. 18. Polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you don't know where to vote or wish to cast an absentee ballot, call 960-8379.

The Walled Lake Board of Education:
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Magic feeling

The Walled Lake Consolidated School District has been getting a lot of bad press lately. Of particular concern to many Farmington Hills residents is the redistricting which took place last spring.

At the time, approximately 450 children were removed from Maple Elementary to Meadow Lake, a building leased from the Birmingham district. As a parent of three of those children, I was not thrilled at the idea. Unhappy as I was with the change, however, I have to admit that I am really pleased with what I have found at Meadow Lake.

Our kids have bigger classrooms, with new furniture, books and supplies. The school lab is filled with state of the art computers. The gym is the largest in the district, and there are separate rooms for art and music. The media center is huge, there is a bathroom in every classroom and the school has city water.

The benefits of the facility itself are nothing compared to the feeling you get when you go inside. It is a feeling of well, magic. There is a quiet energy that fills the halls, a sense of order and peace. It's almost electrical. You may not believe me, but it is there. I feel it every time I go to the school.

I give much of the credit for this feeling to our principal, Mr. Scott Little. Mr. Little was the principal at Maple Elementary, which is where I learned of his great love for our kids.

Mr. Little has surrounded himself with a group of talented and enthusiastic teachers and staff who share his philosophy. Some of the staff transferred to Meadow Lake from other schools within the district, including Maple. Many of them are new hires. Each one adds to the magic in his or her own way.

I feel like I cannot say enough good things about what is happening at Meadow Lake. Children are happy. Teachers are happy. Parental involvement is high. I love to be there, and I volunteer every chance I get.

Don't get me wrong. I hate that my kids have to go to a school six miles

away. I hate that they have to get on the bus at 7:30 a.m. (which, by the way, was a decision made by us parents, not by the district), and I hate that any time I have to (or want) to go to the school, it takes me a lot longer than it used to. But at least we have a school.

I fear what will happen in four years (when the lease at Meadow Lake runs out) if a bond hasn't passed and our children have no school to attend.

I am trying to be hopeful that voters will eventually approve a bond. I look forward to the time when our children will be able to attend a school that is actually located within our district. But until then, we have a good thing going at Meadow Lake.

To you parents who are still doubtful, don't take my word for it. Go to the school. Spend an hour in your child's classroom. Get to know the people with whom your child spends a big part of his/her day. Be a part of things. Find out for yourself what the magic at Meadow Lake is all about.

Leslie Reeder,
Farmington Hills

Overdue thanks

Years ago, I discovered on my aunt's kitchen counter a cardboard circle with the words "round to it" written on it. When asked what it meant she said, "Oh, someone heard me say once that I never got 'round to it,' so they gave me one." Well this thank you is far overdue and its about time I got around to it; around to thanking the people of the Farmington community for so generously supporting the Farmington High School Music Department in its fall can and bottle drive.

On a crisp sunny September Sunday, Farmington High School music students walked Farmington's by-lanes, highways and driveways; climbed front steps and side porches, entered garages, and asked "Please, can't you spare a bottle or can for music at Farmington High?"

To all of you who filled our trunks (Mr. Pop Machine Vendor, we're sorry we never did ask your name); to those who cheered us on with chants of "go Falcons" (didn't realize there were so many alumni among us); to those who chased us down the street (with one more overlooked bag of bottles), we truly thank you.

Nanette Reid,
Farmington High Music Patron

One of best newspapermen had impact in community

Obituaries — we call them "obits" in the newsroom — have a certain sparse and predictable linearity to them. Organized with spurious precision around certain dates — birth, marriage, career milestones, death — the good ones provide a reflective reader with enough nuggets of fact around which to construct an appreciation of a good life well spent.

So when I heard last week of the death of a famous Michigan community newspaper publisher, Enoch T. (Ink) White, I was anxious to see the obit.

"The son of Enoch T. White, Sr., and Jacqueline Eggleston, Ink graduated from Lapeer High School, the Asheville School in Asheville, N.C. and the University of Michigan. In 1934, he became editor and publisher of the *Gladwin County Record* in Gladwin, MI."

Those were the days when the faculty at U-M actually deigned to teach journalism, now regarded as an inferior trade school subject. And those were the days when a young man with energy and fire could get, right out of college, a job as both editor and publisher of a perfectly respectable county seat weekly newspaper.

How many newspaper companies today would take such a chance on a young man, fresh from college? Frankly, not enough.

"In 1945," the obit went on, "he acquired the *Clinton County Republican News* (later the *Clinton County News*) and became its editor and publisher until 1965." Clinton is the county just north of Lansing; St. Johns is the county seat.

So, just 10 years out of college, Ink White had saved enough money to evolve beyond employee to proprietor.

And as proprietor, White recognized that his local newspaper had to understand and reflect the essence of the community in order to grow and survive. "Because Clinton County is principally an agricultural area," he wrote in the paper, "we are going to give special attention to the farmer and farm problems."

Beyond defining news coverage in terms of community interest, however, White recognized what all local newspaper folks feel in their bellies: They have an obligation to contribute — editorially and in person — to their communities.

White wrote about how "strong outspoken newspapers in rural areas can help bring about a better understanding of farm problems."



PHILIP POWER

And as the years passed, he erected an enormous presence in Clinton County. He joined the board of directors of the Clinton National Bank and Trust Company and eventually became president. He served on the vestry and as senior warden of the local Episcopal church. He was a member and president of the Michigan Press Association. He was chair of the Clinton County Republican Party, and he was elected in 1961 to the state Constitutional Convention that wrote our present constitution.

When I first came into the community newspaper business nearly 30 years ago, a friend of my family said, "Oh, you want to be somebody like Ink White." So it was with some anxiety that my company some years ago acquired Ink White's old paper, the *Clinton County News*, at that point sadly run down.

I happened to be in St. Johns one day, talking with Pres Odette, Ink White's successor as publisher. "Where's Ink White these days?" I asked.

"Oh, he's still living right here in St. Johns." "Why don't you ask him if he'd like to write a column for you," I wondered. And so he did.

I got a note from Pres a while back. "In my 25 years in this business, I've seen very little that generated acceptance and excitement like Ink's column... I've been fortunate to be able to work with some of the very best in the business. We just lost one of the best."

So today I write to celebrate the life of a community newspaper man who drove his paper to greatness, who loved and served his community and whose influence affected his entire state. I hope to God there are many, many more like him.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (513) 953-9047 ext. 1880

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