

Peace on earth

Goodwill to our suburbs (please)

It's that time of year when thoughts turn to what went right in 1996, what went wrong, and how to make things better in the new year.

Often, several local communities are struggling with the same issues. With that in mind, following are key issues our Oakland County editors saw in their communities, along with their suggestions for 1997:

■ **Southfield-area resolutions:** Can they all just get along? That's the question many Southfield residents asked last year when it came to the city council. After an acrimonious process, lasting nearly the entire year, council members finally picked Myron Frasier to replace late councilwoman Vicki Goldbaum. Council watchers shook their heads in amazement that the process could take so long. Meanwhile, the usual cracks in relations between council members became chasms. This year, council members must refocus on the city's best interest — eliminating the personal politics. Otherwise, with five seats up for grabs in the next city election, voters might find folks who can.

■ **Rochester-area resolutions:** It's all about respect, and we'd like to see a little more cooperation in that area, particularly where residents and elected/appointed officials have to make decisions that affect everyone. (do we see a multicomunity trend?)

■ **Birmingham-Bloomfield resolutions:** That Bloomfield Township open its governmental process to include public participation and

real debate on important issues. And that when the time comes to replace current administrators, the procedure is fair and open to all interested parties.

It also would be a good idea for the Birmingham School District, which serves part of Southfield, and the Bloomfield Hills School District to continue to search for ways to cut costs and share services to maintain the current educational excellence.

■ **Farmington-area resolution:** Like other school districts, Farmington Hills is looking at still-growing student numbers, aging buildings and increasingly costly computer/technological needs. All of that adds up to a big \$110 million price tag that voters will face this spring. We hope school officials know the mountain of difficulty they'll face selling that big a bond issue to voters who will also face a millage renewal in the same election. We hope school officials resolve to do their best to answer each and every question and issue the public offers before expecting the public to vote approval.

■ **Troy resolutions:** First, let 1997 be the year that Troy City Council finally comes out of the Dark Ages and recognizes cable TV as one more way to reach out to the people of the community. Governing bodies of surrounding cities have cablecast their meetings for years and years and its time Troy did the same.

Goodwill from Lansing (please)

Catching up what has (not) happened in the last year in Lansing:

• **ROADS.** For a decade, Oakland County's state freeways and county roads have been deteriorating. Our Leaders in Lansing just aren't embarrassed by it. They would rather boast about "21 tax cuts" than about "21 worst road problems fixed." In the lame-duck session, the Legislature juggled a few million out of the Secretary of State's office for road and bridge work, but it was a fraction of what is needed.

So local communities have given up waiting and are voting their own bond issues and taxes to take care of city streets. Lazy Lansing has succeeded in shoving the problem onto the locals. It's a bad solution, but locally voted taxes may be the only way around the state's political quaking at the "T" word.

• **ARTS.** Sen. Mike Bouchard, R-Birmingham, wrote a bill to allow southeastern Michigan to vote taxes to support the arts, but it expired in the House. Maybe it's just as well. The truculent Detroit City Council is adamant that it won't surrender an inch of political control over the Detroit Institute of Arts. Ditto with the Zoo. Suburbanites, for their part, will be unwilling to pump tri-county money into a department of one city's government.

This year, state arts funding continued to shrink; the jewels don't sparkle. We have to expect that. Clearly the region needs to find not only a funding mechanism for the arts but a governance system, too. A great opportunity lies ahead for the Big Four — Oakland Executive L. Brooks Patterson, Wayne Executive Ed McNamara, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer and whoever emerges from the Macomb County brawl.

• **MORE ARTS.** Oakland Community College, with a reputation for technical and college preparatory education, also is making important contributions to ceramics, pottery, painting, music and performing arts. Unfortunately, too few people know about it, despite the advent of cable television with dedicated channels. Hint, hint.

• **COURTS.** Oakland's influence rises as voters elevated appeals Judge Marilyn Kelly to the state Supreme Court and the governor promoted Circuit Judge Hilda Gage to the Court of Appeals.

Meanwhile, big things will be going on as the circuit and probate courts share more powers; we're inching toward a single "trial court" system. Moreover, the legal cognoscenti, prodded by our Tom Kienbaum of State Bar fame, are probing "merit" selection of judges — a potentially vast improvement over blindly picking "name" candidates at the polls.

• **URBAN SPRAWL.** Michigan's population continues to hover around the 9.4 million mark, but we are following a czarist "scorched earth" policy in paving over hills, woodlands, lake shores and farms for development and abandoning existing infrastructure. The three new state laws allowing communities to buy "development rights" from farmers are unlikely to be used.

• **SCHOOLS.** The attack is still on against public schools by those who would raid the treasury for "voucher" money. Oakland's public schools will fight back Feb. 2 with "Pride Day" at Summit Place mall on Telegraph Road in Pontiac with a celebration of their progress.

manager for Farmington, effective Feb. 1, by Farmington City Council. Deadman was selected after it became apparent there would not be enough time to hire a permanent replacement for outgoing city manager John Dinan by Feb. 1.

■ **TWO YEARS AGO — DEC. 26, 1994 (OBSERVER)**

City of Farmington announced Lawrence Tech architectural students were going to do a study of the Grand River corridor and provide suggestions for aesthetic and landscape improvements.

Farmington Board of Education was drawing up a list of what to grade new superintendent Bob Maxfield on for his first job performance review.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

■ **40 YEARS AGO — DEC. 27, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)**

The final report for the 1956 Farmington Area United Fund and Community Chest lists total contributions of \$23,064 — the largest ever.

Nineteen postal vehicle drivers in Farmington passed safety exams.

■ **25 YEARS AGO — Dec. 20, 1971 (ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER)**

Robert Deadman was appointed acting city

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Do you make New Year's resolutions?



'No, I guess I don't believe in it.'

Eric Peterson
Farmington



'I do make one, but I haven't thought about it this year. I've been too busy with my new business.'

Deb Watson
Farmington



'I probably won't have one. If I'm going to do it, I'll be doing it during the year anyway.'

Al Kounellis
Farmington



'Yes, I haven't made it yet. I make the same one every year.'

Onaloe Kihn
Farmington Hills

We asked this question in downtown Farmington.

LETTERS

Foxed out

Time Warner is refusing to offer the Fox 24-hour News Channel to our area. They are doing this because the Fox network is a competitor to the Turner empire and CNN. I have no involvement with the Fox network nor do I know anyone who does.

However, with all the bias and partisanship in network TV news today I believe we need all the news alternatives we can get. It is also very fundamental that a cable operator who has an exclusive franchise should not have the right to freeze out a competitor.

We all do have at least one option and that is satellite TV which may appeal to some people. Others, however, may not be able to take advantage of it because of the initial cost. I suggest we all prevail upon Time Warner to do what is right and/or encourage other providers such as Ameritech to enter this market. Where Ameritech is now competing in other parts of Oakland County it has had a very beneficial effect upon price and programming options.

James E. Collins,
Farmington Hills

Move Is Inappropriate

Recent programming changes on Time Warner Cable have been much appreciated. However, the decision to remove CICO (Channel 21, TV Ontario, Canadian Public TV), is inappropriate and unfortunate.

Opportunities to hear different points of view on important issues from those who live outside the U.S. are not generally available in local news media. Our proximity to Canada makes it possible for us to receive their excellent radio and TV programming. It is a one-of-a-kind channel which should not have been dropped, as we already have several home shopping, sports, and news channels available for viewers.

In a recent conversation with Mr. Bob McCann, local manager for Time Warner, he indicated that there is not enough viewer interest in this channel, which we have been fortunate to have for the past several years.

Your calls and letters may convince him that he is wrong in his assessment and hopefully this quality cable channel will be reinstated. Don't wait. You can reach him at Time Warner Cable (810) 553-7303. Also your contacts with S.W.O.C.C. (Southwest Oakland Cable Commission) at (810) 473-7286 would be most helpful as they have the responsibility for oversight of Time Warner.

David and Jeannette Sharpe,
Northville

Nothing wrong with Social Security

A while back I called our local federal congressman Joe Knollenberg's office

with a question about Social Security. There are all kinds of proposals being put forth on how to save the social security system from going broke in the year 2029.

Some of the proposals suggest investing the funds in the stock market, among other things. But none of that will save the system. Here is an excerpt from Congressman Knollenberg's letter to me, which is dated Oct. 30, 1996: "Social Security does not contribute to the deficit. It is one of the few programs actually producing a surplus. Unfortunately, the federal government borrows the surplus to finance its deficits. As long as the government runs deficits the trust funds will continue to be raided. This must end. We must protect the integrity of the Social Security trust fund and live up to our commitment to those who have paid into the system over the years."

So you see, there is nothing wrong with the social security in its present form. What is wrong is that our federal government is made up of fiscal incompetents who do not see the real problem or admit they have screwed up their own fiscal system and plan to continue robbing the Social Security trust to cover their own ineptness. You cannot stop the bleeding of a gaping wound by putting a Band Aid on it.

Kenneth Kemp,
Farmington Hills

Pet owner suffers

This letter is directed to the individual who hit our dog with their car on 12 Mile Road between Guy and Rock Creek on the evening of Dec. 17 between 6-6:30 p.m. While I know there are times when those things are unavoidable and everything you know tells you that to swerve and create an even more serious accident is the wrong thing to do, I do find it unconscionable that you would not at least stop. The dog (who was wearing a collar) was just left in the middle of the road. Where has humanity gone?

To some people "it's just a dog," but to us Augie was a member of the family.

Mary Cumming,
Southfield

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, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

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— Philip Power