

Second try Board heard feedback on bond

Farmington school district voters get a second chance to provide for their facility needs this fall.

The school board spent plenty of time in recent weeks studying its focus group/community meeting input in the wake of the voters' rejection of the original \$110 million plan on March 25. That plan featured \$92 million in facility needs and another \$23 million in computers and other technology needs.

Credit the board members with actively seeking out input and listening to it.

They heard the community say the district shouldn't pay for its computers with long-term, bond payments; they heard the community say \$110 million was just too much money; and they heard the community ask for a better choice than the last all-or-nothing, yes-or-no plan.

With that input, the board spent many hours debating on May 12 before deciding on May 13 that they would go back to voters in September with a two-part plan.

This new plan drops much but not all of the computer/technology part of the original plan. Those needs are still there, but the board will instead work out piecemeal computer upgrades through regular operating budget spending, budget surplus and alternative funding. It isn't the quickest way to bring bunches of new computers and technology into the schools, but it's a more frugal route. One part of the original \$110 million plan that remains is the purchase of the fiber optic computer network, which might put off voters who believe such a system should be leased.

The new, two-part plan starts with a "nuts and bolts" building improvement plan of \$74

■ They heard the community say the district shouldn't pay for its computers with long-term, bond payments. . .

million. It gets rid of the portable classrooms and adds classroom space, as well as improving high school science, fine arts, middle school cafeterias and some media centers. Heating and cooling upgrades would be done and central kitchen facilities renovated.

The second part is another \$21 million of improvements for instruction. It would pay for renovating elementary cafeterias, middle school science facilities and media centers at two high schools. It would also cover adding applied technology areas and auxiliary gymnasiums at two high schools, and deepening the Farmington High pool to regulation size.

Superintendent Bob Maxfield is aiming to have the plans called Facility Needs I and Facility Needs II, so as not to imply the second plan is some kind of wish list. Overall, it seems like most of the original building improvements have been maintained, just that they've been split in two parts. That gives something to strong supporters and the opposition. Since we endorsed those building needs in the first bond issue, we're looking favorably on both parts right now.

However, we expect to learn and share more details on the plans in coming weeks. In the meantime, we'd urge school officials to try to answer as many questions as possible, perhaps even finding a way to invite inquisitive voters to get inside the schools and view the problem areas for themselves.

Memorial Day: truly special

"Those who expect to reap the blessing of freedom must undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

— Thomas Paine, American patriot

Sure there are other lures — sleeping in, stoking up the barbecue, working around the yard, cleaning out the garage, heading to the beach, going to a picnic, watching a soft-ball game.

But there's something else worth doing on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26 — typically a day off from work but not your typical holiday.

It's a day to remember America's war dead and war veterans, lest we forget their contributions to the freedom we take for granted.

Since Thomas Paine's fiery patriotism during the American Revolution 221 years ago, nearly 1.6-million Americans have died in battle protecting the U.S. Constitution.

Memorial Day is a time to honor their memory. It's a time to pay homage to those who paid the ultimate price — who gave their lives — in defense of "the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Their supreme sacrifice opened the gates to 43-million immigrants from around the globe, many of whom are our forebears.

The day also provides a backdrop for re-evaluating our reason for being in past overseas conflicts.

For many war veterans, Memorial Day is a time of introspection, not of wild flag waving. The day gives them cause to stop and remember. No matter what their role, war marked a turning point in their life.

Oakland County's Vally Christensen says he enlisted in the Army as a 17-year-old babe in the woods, three days after graduating from high school in 1952. He left the service four years later, a sergeant in the Army's 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team — and toughened by the starkness of war and frugality of life.

Newly retired from Ford Motor Co.'s Wixom Assembly Plant and long active in the American Legion, Christensen describes Memorial

OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

Day as a time for all veterans "to remember their service, then hang their heads and say, 'We're still here, but we haven't forgotten those no longer with us who gave their lives in combat or served their country in peacetime.'"

Memorial Day also serves to remind war-hardened vets about life's simple joys — a warm bed, a hot meal, a walk in the park, a roof overhead.

In mapping family plans for Memorial Day 1997, consider one of the parades or observances on tap in these Observer & Eccentric communities: Birmingham, Beverly Hills, Clarkston, Farmington, Keego Harbor, Independence Township, Lake Orion, Rochester, Sylvan Lake and Walled Lake. (Southfield's observance has been moved up to Friday, May 23). Don't expect Disney-sized floats or Budweiser's Clydesdale horses on any of the parade routes. Instead, look for such noncommercial hometown fare as marching bands, Scouts, ROTC students, floats, antique cars and fire trucks amid stirring tributes, moving salutes and color guards. Some parades even plan Air Force flyovers in honor of the 50th anniversary of that branch of service.

The morning not only should lift your spirit but, more importantly, provide meaning for a truly memorable day.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

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

40 YEARS AGO — MAY 23, 1957 (ENTERPRISE)

Construction bids were approved for paving Floral Street and portions of Lilac and Hawthorne streets. Storm sewer construction was also part of the project.

25 YEARS AGO — MAY 24, 1972

The Farmington Township Board of

Trustees approved contributing \$12,000 to Farmington Area Advisory Council and \$5,291 to Farmington Youth Assistance. The first group operates Rap Line and other anti-drug programs, while the second conducts summer work camps and works with referrals from juvenile court and police.

2 YEARS AGO — MAY 22, 1995

The Farmington Public Safety Department reached an out-of-court settlement with the family of a Farmington Hills woman who said her civil rights were violated in two traffic stops in 1993.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

With Memorial Day coming up, would you like to publicly remember someone?



'I've never lost anyone in my life. Even my great-grandmother is still alive.'

Erin Downs Howells



'My aunt. Her husband died in the war and she raised her daughter alone. She was neat. She had her life together.'

Erin Selson Detroit



'My grandfather. He was always there for me. He passed down his history through his stories.'

Cheryl Pinsott Redford



'My eighth grade teacher, Mr. Pobanz. His approach to teaching influenced me. What he taught, me is what I want to do with my life.'

Andy Gignac Livonia

We asked this question at the Mercy High School soccer game.

LETTERS

Clevey 'can do'

As the owner and operator of REMAX Great Lakes in Farmington Hills, I am very interested in the quality of the public school system. My customers, employees, business associates and I can not afford for the schools to be anything less than excellent. I am very concerned over the fact that the recent voter rejection of the technology and infrastructure bond, and the subsequent public meetings, has raised serious questions about excellence and financial accountability in our schools. Given this concern, I urge my colleagues in the Farmington area Real Estate business to vote for Mark Clevey in the Monday, June 9, school board election. I know Mark and believe he is the kind of qualified, "can do," innovative, fresh-idea person we need for our schools.

Mark works in funding for new technologies and believes we can get a lot more government, corporate and foundation grants to supplement the bond funding. For example, at the May 6 school board meeting TRW Corporation was honored by the school board for just this type of contribution to the schools; including \$45,000 in computer software. I agree with Mark, we need more of this. Lots more! Apparently the Blue Ribbon Committee and the school board did not even consider alternative funding when they recommended the \$110 million bond proposal.

Finally, while Mark supports the bond issue, he has some great ideas about how to make sure the money is spent wisely. For example, he wants to establish a special school board level task force to find ways to link school funding to academic achievement and the MEAP scores. He also wants the schools to generate money by mixing their energy budget with a new energy management program. Finally, I really like his idea that the local business community contribute to a dedicated technology endowment fund for our schools. In contrast, I understand his two opponents in this election support the school board's plan to simply repack the original Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations and bond proposal into a series of smaller pieces and take it back to the voters in stages.

I hope you will join with me in helping Mark win this election. He stands for "financial vitality, accountability and responsibility" in our schools. I look forward to pointing to him as an example of excellence in our schools when I am selling real estate in the future.

Jim Manna
 Farmington Hills

Reid is prepared, committed

Public schools require constant change to keep up with new and innovative approaches to the education of our students. In addition to other qualifications, school

board members must be qualified to make decisions on programs that will prepare our students for their future.

We feel that Frank Reid meets these requirements. Frank is not only current on technology, but is a citizen who has volunteered many hours of his own personal time to the community.

He is a dedicated family man with high moral standards and would be a tremendous asset to the Farmington Board of Education.

We support a vote for Frank Reid in the upcoming Farmington school board elections on June 9, 1997.

Ken and Linda Chiara
 Farmington

Run news, not bashing

I was very disappointed to see the article, "Beanie Babies Promo Questioned," rate front page coverage on May 8.

I thought the article portrayed Veena Bhathia as an insensitive retailer, that is "out to get" her customers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I do not know Veena personally, but have shopped at her store for eight years now. I use to drive to her store in Canton before she moved to my home town of Farmington Hills, six years ago. Let me tell you a little about Veena. She has always been helpful, polite and kind. She will order anything you want that she can or gladly direct you to a competitor that carries what you need. She often gives discounts. She always gives a 10 percent discount to any senior 52 and older, everyday of the week. Her store is always bright, cheery and clean.

I don't see why anyone would complain about Veena's promotions. People pay \$5 to get in the William Costick Center to buy Beanie Babies. At McDonald's, people were throwing away the Happy Meals they had to buy to get the toy.

I am sure that the one person Larry O'Connor mentioned that was unsatisfied, could have avoided all her stress had she just asked Veena about purchasing the Beanie Babies without an additional purchase. Also as a "collector" with over 70 Beanie Babies I wonder if she ever paid more than \$4.99, the retail price. It is too bad she didn't go to Veena's when Veena ran the promotion that if you bought four Beanie Babies the fifth one was free. I guess this didn't get front page news. Maybe Veena should have held a raffle to see who could buy the dolls, like Mojfer did with the Tickle Me Elmo dolls. Or she could sell them privately through this paper's classified section and charged much, much more than \$4.99.

I would rather see news on the front page, not the groundless bashing of a reputable retailer.

Laura G. Mauck
 Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power