

POINTS OF VIEW

# As a politician, McNamara's a pro

**W**ayne County Executive Ed McNamara was sworn into office for the fourth time last Friday. Newly elected Attorney General Jennifer Granholm and U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon Keith administered the oath in front of some 400 supporters gathered at McNamara's old school, Redford High.



PHILIP POWER

nesses in Wayne County that helps provide inexpensive health care for firms unable to afford it.

The only negative in Metropolitan Airport. It's still a mess. But McNamara is building a new mid-field terminal that should eventually resolve the problems faced regularly by air travelers. He boasts that economic development in Wayne County spawned by his administration has increased property valuations by \$7 billion.

How does Ed McNamara get things done? Simple. He has built a political machine, one that rivals John Engler's.

He picks good people, people like Mike Duggan, Charlie Williams, Larry Tukarski, Vickie Hertell and David Katz. Over the years, McNamara has placed something like 200 appointees in offices in Detroit and Wayne County. Assisted by Ron Thayer, the best Democratic fund-raiser in Michigan who got his start when Jim Blanchard was a congressman, McNamara raises tons of money.

You can't name more than 10 prominent Michigan business people who are Democrats, but Democrat Ed McNamara's fund-raising list is 90 percent business.

What's McNamara's style in getting things done? Simple. He's effective because he's practical.

Last fall, Geoffrey Fieger's doomed campaign for governor threatened to bring down the entire

Democratic Party. Frank Kalley, the "eternal general," had finally decided to retire, leaving no fire-wall between the Engler-led Republicans and the rest of the Democratic ticket.

McNamara first identified one of his appointees as a prospect for attorney general, bright and personable Jennifer Granholm, Northville Township resident and at that time the chief lawyer for Wayne County. He sent around to hundreds of Democratic leaders a letter and a video featuring Granholm. Unlike most other Democratic party bosses, he agreed to help Fieger's flailing campaign, assigning staffers to bring some order to chaos.

McNamara then called in his chips. He "persuaded" Fieger to back Granholm as his candidate for attorney general. A complete political newcomer, Granholm was elected by a wide margin. Of course, Granholm's election campaign was managed by another McNamara appointee, Triah Stein.

A lot of do-gooder types don't like Ed McNamara because he's an old-fashioned politician who raises tons of money, has lots of appointees scattered all over the place and cuts deals in the back room.

That's precisely why I like and admire McNamara. He's an unabashed pro at what he is, a politician.

We should take time to note and admire his performance in office over the next four years. We're not likely to see the job of effective politician ever done much better than by Ed McNamara.

Phil Power is chairman of Home-Town Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail: ppower@online.com

# Libraries make noise.

Libraries, once known as quiet, almost reverent places, these days are making a lot of noise.

It's the noise of construction, as community after community around our part of Oakland County expands its libraries to meet the demands of technology and growing populations. For example:

■ The West Bloomfield Main Library expects to reopen early next year, with a facility more than double in size. Voters approved the addition in 1997.

■ Farmington-Farmington Hills voters in August approved a millage to expand the Farmington Hills branch. The money will also establish longer hours and buy more books, computers and audio visuals at Farmington Hills and its sister branch in downtown Farmington.

■ Southfield hopes to join the ranks, as that community seeks March 9 voter approval to build a new 95,000-square-foot library. The current 44,000-square-foot facility opened in 1964.

It's also the noise of interaction as community after community seeks resident input - and output - to improve services. This includes taking a page from the big bookstores which offer creature comforts with their books. For example:

■ "Library hopes to offer coffee with classics," read the recent banner headline in the Troy Eccentric. "We want to try the big trend now which is having coffee and snacks for the public," says Troy Library Director Brian Stoutenburg. He also proposes another idea borrowed from the big bookstores: using displays to market the collections. And he plans to create a new meeting room where teens can study without having to be quiet. So far, the Troy Library can manage all of this out of its current budget.

■ West Bloomfield, too, has creature comforts in mind, for its new facility. Library Director Clara Bohrer says a coffee house is under consideration. More definite plans are for a



JUDITH DONER BERNE

number of rooms with a view. A periodicals room and terrace have casual seating and look out on the adjacent woods. An outdoor programming area and a story-time terrace off the youth area do the same. And the Youth Services area will double in size with walls between it and Adult Services so that the young people don't have to be quiet.

Meanwhile, it's somewhat ironic that as West Bloomfield works manfully to build a state-of-the-art facility, some users are enjoying the convenience of the library's temporary relocation to a West Bloomfield shopping mall.

She also has had calls from residents of Livonia, Farmington and Dearborn, who came upon the library as they were shopping in West Bloomfield. "They congratulated us for being on the cutting edge," Bohrer reports. "They said it's a service to go where the people are."

Bohrer says she can envision a small storefront stocked with popular materials, such as best sellers, books on tape, periodicals and video rentals - almost a self-serve situation.

Who knows, perhaps the next big noise in our communities will be the tiny library boutique.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is former managing editor of The Eccentric Newspapers. You can comment on this column by calling (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1997 or in a letter, or fax (248) 644-1314 to the editor of this newspaper.

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