

### Deja vu

## Enough talk, time for action

**S**urely by now Detroit Edison officials, as well as members of the Michigan Public Service Commission, must be tired of hearing the same old complaints from Farmington area residents.

It must be *deja vu* for them. It certainly is for the utility consumers in this area whose way of life includes recurring power outages — and they aren't always small ones.

It must also be *deja vu* for city officials who year after year talk to both residents and Detroit Edison officials about the outages that leave homeowners so long without power that food spoils and sump pumps are inoperable, allowing basement water to rise and, in many cases, forcing to families move into hotels.

Yet again these residents offered their horror stories, this time to the Michigan Public Service Commission.

It's always nice to be heard when you have complaints, concerns, worry or anger. But it's time residents got more than a kind ear.

It is time for action, whatever is necessary to resolve the recurring power outages that have plagued the Farmington area for years.

While Detroit Edison officials claim they have made some changes, obviously not enough change and improvement have occurred to help the Farmington area.

It was equally disappointing to hear public service commissioners tell the crowd that, in essence, their hands are tied. The PSC's purpose is to regulate the state's utilities, but it is governed by state law and by interpretations of those laws by state courts.

Public Service Commissioners David Syan-

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da, Robert Nelson and chairman John Strand said they would sit down with Detroit Edison and try to hammer out some type of settlement.

"If not, it will become a contested case that will go to the Appeals Court and likely will take several months to resolve," Strand said.

So, residents are back to square one. Again they are waiting for someone with some authority to demand action and to follow through on that action.

And while residents continue to pay their utility bills and wait for answers, bureaucracy continues.

Shame on Detroit Edison. More needs to be done than lip service. Sure, trees cause a problem with power lines. But there isn't a season of good weather when contractors for the utility company aren't out trimming.

With a new year in the offing, the only resolution that should be made is that Farmington-area consumers of electricity will not be again plagued in 2000 with the power outages that put the community on the list of storm detail for the Detroit media.

The new year must be a time for action by city officials, Detroit Edison and the Michigan Public Service Commission.

## No to more charter schools

**H**orse trading is an essential part of the democratic process.

Politician A wants Politician B's vote on a matter he thinks is especially important and he's willing to trade away his vote on something he thinks isn't quite as important.

That's called compromise and that's how legislation gets done. When the U.S. House changed hands two elections ago, a group of inexperienced political novices came to office with the stated position that they weren't about to horse trade. They had their convictions, and, by gum, they were standing by them. The result was legislative gridlock, a stalled court system and a couple of confrontations with the president from the other party, who constantly trumped them.

On the state level, the Legislature and the executive are from the same party, but there is still a need for horse trading with members of the opposition and recalcitrant Republicans.

Gov. John Engler is a master at this sort of political gamesmanship and is generally admired across party lines for his understanding of how the game is played.

But there are times when the average citizen might wonder, is this really the best way to run a state, aren't there some principles that can't and shouldn't be traded away?

This past two weeks, Engler and House Republicans have been furiously trying to raise the cap on university sponsored charter schools from 150 to 200. They face a tight deadline of Dec. 31 if the cap is to be lifted in time to get schools running by next fall. The issue seems dead in the House and even if it passes the Senate, it might be too late for joint legislation.

We have expressed our serious reservations about raising the cap and about the quality and accountability of charter schools. We are also concerned about the level of games playing involved in trying to push this legislation through.

It was reported that House Democrats were willing to trade away their votes on the charter cap in return for killing off a bill that would eliminate residency requirements for city workers. Democrats claim the offer was initiated from the governor's office.

As Speaker Chuck Perricone (R-Kalamazoo) rightly notes these are separate and unrelated issues. As it turns out, what Perricone was really concerned about was that several Republicans were ready to bolt on the cap issue if the House leadership made a deal on residency.

What a tangled web we weave.

We believe the future of public education is an essential state issue, not to be lightly traded away or compromised. If Republicans, and some Democrats, believe the future of our education system depends on the increase of charter schools, why would they abandon that issue so blithely?

We believe that the majority of Democrats in the House and Senate along with thoughtful Republican supporters of public education such as Rep. Gerald Law, Plymouth, and Patricia Godchaux, Birmingham, should remain skeptical about raising the cap.

This is one of those core issues on which both sides should work to find the best answer rather than working to horse trade for their position.

GEORGE BROOKS



### LETTERS

*Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to: Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335, faxed to Joanne at (734) 459-2700 or emailed to jmaliszewski@oe.homecomm.net*

### Fine young people

**W**e would like to congratulate Leanne Young and all the students who participated in the recent production of "The Miracle Worker" at Farmington High School. It was a wonderful show.

This talented group of performers, crew members, make-up artists, costume designers, and other production workers gave the Farmington school community another reason to be proud of their young people. The many hours of hard work spent in preparation for the performances showed during each night of the play. Those who missed seeing this production missed a marvelous opportunity to see some very fine young people in action. They certainly proved to be all who were in attendance that not all of the talent in the high schools resides on the athletic courts and fields. We encourage everyone to make an effort to see one of their future productions.

Jack and Susan Ward  
Farmington

In conclusion, there will not be any more smoking by anyone on the grounds of any Farmington Public School. If anyone decides to break it, strict consequences then come out of it.

Beth Harwood  
Sophomore  
Farmington High School

### A blind eye

**T**his is in response to the cartoon by Geof Brooks appearing in the Oct. 28 issue of your paper illustrating the ongoing controversy over the over-zealous enforcement by local governments of commercial trucks.

When Mr. Brooks graduates to color comics, he'd be welcome to make light of the color photograph enclosed herein. The photo shows a yellow city of Farmington Hills-owned tandem axle dump truck, No. 231, driving south on Drake Road right past a sign posting a 2 1/2-ton weight limit immediately south of Grand River Avenue.

To the casual cartoonist, this may not be particularly noteworthy. To a person who knows trucks, the irony of the photo is remarkable because of the fact that the type of truck shown in the photo weighs 30,000 pounds — that's 15 tons — when it is empty, as seen in the photo. Needless to say, if the truck was loaded, the transgression would be even more severe — as if 15 tons were not overweight enough.

If Mr. Brooks were truly a professional journalist, one would suppose he would take the time to familiarize himself with the true issues before rendering his artistic verdict. Perhaps political cartoonists do not adhere to the same journalistic principles as the rest of the newspaper.

My example is just one of many that demonstrates the contrasts in the current truck enforcement climate prevalent in most metro Detroit municipalities including Farmington Hills. Municipal governments are very active in a bounty system of enforcement that penalizes small, private companies involved in commercial trucking, while at the same time turning what seems to be a blind eye to the violations committed by their own trucks.

John E. Malloure  
Farmington Hills

### No smoking

**D**uring the construction process at Farmington High School there have been concerns regarding the construction workers. The problem is with them smoking on school grounds. All Farmington Public Schools are drug and alcohol free, according to the student code of conduct. When construction workers are working and students walk by open doors, everyone can see them smoking.

When walking the school grounds after school, people will find a lot of cigarette butts on the ground. There are teachers who have admitted to seeing the construction workers smoking on the job.

The administrators for Farmington Public Schools should enforce that there will be no more smoking on any drug-free school ground by construction workers, staff, and students.

Therefore, if the construction workers get caught for the first time, a warning will be given. If caught the second time, a pay cut will be given. If caught a third time, you're suspended. If anyone fails to follow through with this, then they will be spending court time and possibly time in jail. This plan will then get the construction workers to follow the rules.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

What really happened to the Mars Explorer space probe?

We asked this question at Starbuck's in downtown Farmington.



"It drank too much Starbuck's coffee, went past Mars. It's on its way to Jupiter."

Dan Soren  
Farmington Hills



"It smacked into another lost probe."

Andrew Beckmann  
Ann Arbor



"It went into a black hole. Who knows what's on Mars?"

Chris Busso  
Livonia



"They didn't pay their MCI bill, because when I don't pay mine they turn off my phone."

Carl Christoph  
Farmington Hills

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— Philip Power