



Questioning: Marie Weigold and Lois Vagnozzi listen to candidates debate as Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi writes down a question to ask at the Council of Homeowners Association's candidate forum.

Forum from page A2

riding issue here. We're not talking about pork, or useless spending."

Watchdogs

The creation of a Mental Health Authority to take over from the state the overseeing of services for Oakland County prompted varied responses.

It should be up to elected officials, such as county commissioners, to be accountable for such services, Sever said.

"I'm not sure that's going to happen," Sever continued. "But I can assure you that, as a county commissioner, I will make an effort to become involved and stay responsible."

That involvement will be critical after state money dwindles while needs "continue to grow. A lot of times, that's where you find out if your elected officials have backbone."

"I think the most important issue, in the transition to an authority," said Moffitt, "has been accountability ... to taxpayers, to the county commissioners. Unfortunately, it is no longer very accountable to any of those groups." And the state hasn't met its budgetary obligations, he

added.

Goldberg said the move to an authority began with "three strikes against it," and that the commission must be vigilant.

"We have to, as county commissioners, watch the day-to-day budget, and make sure there is proper money," she said. "If there isn't proper money, and we can't get the state or county to up their contributions to this, then we're going to have to repeal it."

Gesund said more direct involvement from the commission in running the authority is needed.

Money for roads

One question where there was more-painted discussion involved the quality of roads in Farmington Hills, particularly the job done by the Oakland County Road Commission in managing and maintaining them.

"I'd like to do away with the county road commission," said Goldberg. "It would better serve Oakland County if it was a department. It is not responsive because it's not accountable to the people."

Moffitt said he took exception

with the dismissal of the road commission's performance, noting that it has "done a remarkable job with what incredibly little they have."

He explained that the road commission is basically an extension of state government, and that "they are still working with the same number of employees they had 15 years ago ... the budget they've been given out of state funding is exceptionally unfair."

That budget is "only enough to fix the road problems that effect today," Moffitt said it would take 55 years of current budgets to take care of the county's road woes.

Sever said county officials, however, must "start squeezing the state and federal government for more money. Until we have the money, we won't have the funds for the projects we need."

"I think we should almost bring the state candidates up here, to ask them what they'd do about the roads," said Gesund. "It seems to be more of a state issue than a county issue."

Senate candidates butt heads

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
tsmith@oc.homecomm.net

Feistiness reigned during the second half of last Wednesday night's candidate forum, when state Sen. Bill Bullard and his challenger, Ruth Fuller, answered questions about everything from roads to assisted suicide to drug testing for welfare recipients.

As could be expected, the Republican incumbent and Democratic challenger butted heads on virtually everything.

Throughout the Oct. 7 session, hosted by the Council of Homeowners Associations of Farmington Hills and held at Farmington Hills City Hall, Bullard defended and touted his record since taking over as state senator in the

15th District in 1996 - when he took over from David Honigman, who resigned due to health reasons.

Fuller, meanwhile, seemed to relish hurling some barbs toward Bullard.

Audience members such as Carl Christoph took notice. "It got a little feisty," Christoph said. "But I don't think it got personal."

He added that incumbents tend to be at a disadvantage during such forums, simply because they have a record that can be attacked by challengers.

There definitely was some of that going on during the forum, during which Bullard and Fuller answered questions from panelists, audience members and those who phoned in their questions.

Following one segment about whether or not welfare recipients should be drug tested, an initiative backed by Bullard, Fuller retorted, "I think we should drug test the Senate."

Another time, she quipped that "I don't think Sen. Bullard gets out much."

Those on welfare About the drug testing of welfare recipients, Fuller stressed that there has to be greater awareness, starting early in life, about what drugs are.

"We have to be concerned about alcohol," Fuller said, "and people who drink are abusing their children. It's not only the people who are using heroin or crack."

"... To say welfare recipients should have drug testing, I'm totally against it, and what we need is more rehabilitation, more education, more training. We need education in our schools to teach our children what substance abuse is."

Bullard had stressed his viewpoint that welfare recipients who use drugs are, in effect, causing a form of child abuse.

"When you're a drug user, you're taking away financial resources that children sorely need," said Bullard, noting that the issue of drug testing is something the state Legislature intends to seriously address over the next year or so.

Interestingly, both candidates did agree on one issue, that negative campaigning - the kind taking place in the Engler-Fieger race, for example - is not productive to anyone.

According to Fuller, candidates should "stick with the issues... People want to know what the issues are, they don't want a soap opera."

Bullard called negative campaigning "a sad trend that seems to be accelerating each year."

Before he answered the question, Bullard half-jokingly said "I'll make a deal with Ruth right now. I won't throw mud at you if you don't throw mud at me."

Assisted suicide Answering a question about the assisted suicide proposal, Bullard said he would oppose the bill, largely because of too many loopholes and a lack of stringent guidelines.

"You can see a psychiatrist, someone you've never met before, and in an hour session, ...

(who) can certify you mentally competent. You can go to two physicians to certify you're terminally ill."

Fuller, meanwhile, hedged on how she would vote on the issue, until later pressed by Farmington Observer editor Joanne Maliszewski, one of the panelists.

The challenger originally said it should be a person's own choice, adding that doctors already perform a type of assisted suicide by prescribing non-stop drugs for terminally ill patients.

Pressed to choose, Fuller later said she would vote in favor of it, but "only because it will bring the issue on hand. And if I'm in the Legislature, which I will be, I hope to help with the dialogue."

The issue of roads in Farmington Hills - which comprises a large portion of the 15th Senate District - provided Bullard another chance to defend his record and Fuller a chance to rip it.

Bullard said he helped pass into law a gas tax hike that has "increased the pot of money available in the state." And he is a proponent of changing the system for distributing road money from linear to lane miles.

"Orchard Lake, a four-, five- or six-lane road, counts the same as one two-lane road up north, which is ridiculous," he said. "We have to make that change and other changes so that our fast-growing area gets the road money it deserves."



Bill Bullard



Ruth Fuller

timely finds throughout the store

right style
right price
right now

\$99

waterproof boots

Jacobson's exclusive leather boots, guaranteed waterproof. With side goring, full-length zipper and flexible skid-proof soles. Black or brown. Full and half sizes 6-10M. Women's Shoe Salon



\$449

camel hair coat

Full-length baby camel hair coat. Made in the USA. Camel or black. Sizes 4-16.

Costs Also in Pottes, sizes 0P-14P Sizes 1X, 2X, 3X in Clearwood.



\$99

1-piece knit dress

With animal trim collar and cuffs. Acrylic/nylon. Imported. Black/java. Sizes XS-L. Dresses

celebrating 130 years

Jacobson's

Birmingham • (248) 644-0900 Livonia • (734) 591-7696 Rochester • (248) 651-6000

SHOPPING HOURS • MON-SAT 10-9 • OPEN SUN AT NOON
Gift Certificates Complimentary Silver Gift Box Jacobson's Charge