

Farmington Observer

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Memorial Park should stay close to nature

When Farmington Hills officials first considered plans for a Memorial Park on property at the corner of 11 Mile and Middlebelt, they took a kind of "sky's the limit" approach.

The 3.2 acres was donated by Hospice of Michigan and sits along a busy intersection where Mercy High School and a shopping center are also located. Officials decided to turn it into a memorial park in 1998 and back then, the plan was to keep it simple.

Over time, that plan evolved. Last year, a citizens' committee presented findings that officials approved in concept late last year. Features like an eternal flame, courtyard and permanent chess tables sounded wonderfully unique and very much in keeping with the city's style.

But also in keeping with that style, more conservative voices seem to have prevailed.

No matter how good it looks, a \$250,000 eternal flame still costs about \$8,000 a year to maintain. While it may be possible to find a corporate donor willing to shell out that kind of money, eternity is a very long time — long enough for taxpayers to be on the hook for keeping that flame lit.

We don't fault anyone involved for proposing the more elaborate vision, but

the location, which doesn't have easily accessible parking and sits adjacent to a hospice, begs simplicity.

To be dedicated in mid-July, the park will have a granite monument and brick pavers, trees, birdhouses and benches, all of which provide opportunities for residents to memorialize community residents who have died. In addition to approving a price list on Monday night, officials also OK'd the beginning of a very low-key marketing plan.

The flame and other elements have been left for "future phases," and we hope that that future is a long time coming. City officials have taken plenty of calls about letting the natural grasses grow along the boulevard. They've had to put a sign up telling residents this is part of the plan.

Doesn't it make sense, then, to limit development and leave the vast majority of Memorial Park in that natural state, with elements that require little or no maintenance?

As we approach Memorial Day this year, we would also like to suggest the park would be the perfect location for a monument to Farmington Hills' war dead. This community's rich history includes the stories of many who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and it's long past time to honor their contributions.

Memorial Day, 2001



NEVER FORGET THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

LETTERS

Trusts Christian

Pam Christian is an excellent candidate for the Farmington Public Schools Board of Education.

As a relative newcomer to Farmington Hills, Pam has quickly become involved in many community activities which support her children and those of other families at Forest Elementary, Warner Middle School and North Farmington High School. Pam has become an effective community member because she has a friendly, warm and positive attitude with all people and is someone who devotes the time and energy required to accomplish her goals. If elected, I believe she will pursue the job of board member in this same professional manner.

As a graduate of Farmington Public Schools myself, with three children currently in the school system, I trust that Pam Christian will represent my family's best interests and those of all the children in our school district with enthusiasm, common sense and dedication.

Karen Boleen
Farmington Hills

Christian committed

It has come to my attention that Pam Christian has declared her candidacy for the Farmington Board of Education. I am pleased that she has a desire to continue her involvement in the Farmington district, and I am certain that the district will benefit from her continued commitment.

As a teacher in the district, I have had an opportunity to work with Pam in a few different roles. Her dedication to the student body as a coordinator for the North Farmington Cheerleaders Parent Booster Organization has been second to none. Consistently, Pam has selflessly provided students and cheerleaders alike with a role model. Ever-caring, students look toward Mrs. Christian for support.

As a member of the school board, I am sure that Pam Christian will be a tremendous asset to students, parents and the Farmington community. I enthusiastically encourage all to vote for Pam Christian so that she may continue to serve her community.

Kurt Campbell
Farmington teacher

Sharpen pencils

The City of Farmington Hills is seeking a budget increase of \$6.5 million for fiscal year 2001-2002, for a total of \$75.7 million, an increase of 8.5 percent from the previous year's budget of \$69.2 million.

This increase is more than double the inflation rate. City management claims the increase will not increase property tax rates, at least for this year. My objection is the city should not be spending faster than the rate of inflation. Cities, like households, must learn to live within their respective budgets.

I urge the Farmington Hills City Council to ask City Manager Steve Brock to sharpen his pencil and prepare a revised budget more in line with the rate of monetary inflation. There is plenty of time to revise this budget proposal before the City Council votes on it at the June 11, 2001 meeting. Our property tax rate of 10.165

mills, which has remained the same for six consecutive years, is due for a large increase if the city continues to spend at more than double the rate of inflation.

Ron Oliverio
Farmington Hills

Supports Goshorn

I'm writing in support of John Goshorn for school board. I had the pleasure of working with John when he was president of the North Farmington High School Football Boosters. Always prepared, helpful above and beyond the call of duty, and computer-savvy, he was dependable for any assistance.

What most impresses me about John, though, is his love and deep loyalty for family, traveling long distances to attend his sons' activities. Even though the NFHS football team had some difficult times, John and other die-hard parents/fans never gave up on them.

John Goshorn would bring hard-earned experience to the school board. Count on him to get the job done.

Lori S. Johns
Farmington Hills

Firefighters are the best

Is there a medal for extraordinary firemen? Each and every person who works the 911 calls should receive one. Our family has needed the service in the past year. These people are so professional, caring and considerate of the patient, as well as the family. They are the best.

The Fitzpatrick Family
Farmington Hills

Where is patriotism?

A letter of concern to the Farmington School Board:

I am a longtime resident and supporter of mileage increases and bond proposals for education in Farmington. However, a recent experience has got me wondering about some of our educators, (both administrators and academics?)

On May 16, I had occasion to attend a wonderful band concert, reflecting hard work and presentation from both teachers and students. As I sat in the auditorium before the concert began, I could not help but notice there was no American Flag present in the room. When the evening concert began, there was no national anthem played either.

Where is our pride or patriotism or more importantly, are our "Farmington High School Educators" afraid of "offending someone or something"? What has happened to including in our educational process, the teaching of pride and patriotism in America? I did not go into combat in World War II to "preserve" this kind of lack of National Pride and Patriotism.

On May 17, I drove by North Farmington High School and there stood their main flag pole, in front of school, at 11 a.m., on a school day, minus our American Flag.

Is this non-patriotic or non-caring attitude spreading like a disease?

Warren R. Dolan
Farmington

Award was a shoo-in

Well, congrats to Tim Smith for winning a writing award from the Tri-County Alliance for Public Education.

The Farmington Public Schools' superintendent nominated him. And why not? Tim Smith has been an unpaid, one man, public relations hack for our local public schools since he became the education reporter for the Observer.

Mr. Smith has been unable to find a single problem with the public schools since he assumed his position. The mutual admiration that has taken place (Smith about the schools; the schools about Smith's book on premature babies), has left a void in unbiased education reporting.

Since Larry O'Connor was forced out as education correspondent, no one has reported that: whole language, invented spelling, Reading Recovery, self-esteem programs, etc. have been thoroughly debunked. No one has reported why so many children are leaving the system to be home schooled or to attend private schools. Not a dime of waste has been discovered and no decisions have been questioned. No one has done any real investigative reporting.

If Mr. Smith would just do a little research on education curricula that work before he continues to gush about the local programs, the community would better understand why so many first graders can't read, so many students can't spell or distinguish between basic homonyms, and why so many graduates are taking remedial classes in college.

Smith's award from an alliance FOR public education is like the Pope being named "Catholic of the Year" by the Vatican. Both are shoo-ins.

Patricia A. Alsapach
Farmington Hills

Editor's note: Larry O'Connor was not forced out of the education beat; he accepted a transfer to different duties in Farmington. Later he applied for and received a transfer to the Livonia Observer staff.

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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Her work at Madonna a legacy of accomplishment

Sister Mary Francilene Van deVeer, the longest serving president in Madonna University history, will step down June 30 but she leaves behind a 25-year legacy of accomplishment. She has enhanced Madonna's campus, curriculum and the larger southeast Michigan community during her tenure.

It took her only 11 years to move from Madonna graduate to president of what was then Madonna College.

The oldest of six children, she grew up on Detroit's east side and decided as a teenager to join the Felician Sisters. She made music education and piano her major studies at Madonna and after graduation taught first in an elementary school in the Detroit area and then at Ladywood High School in Livonia.

After a few years it was back to school — Wayne State University — where she received a master's degree and a doctorate — and then to Madonna to leave her mark on the school she loves.

What was then Madonna College became a university now offering classes in more than 50 undergraduate majors and 18 master's programs. In 1972 when Madonna celebrated its 25th anniversary there were 727 students. Today the university has an enrollment of more than 4,000.

Minority enrollment has grown. Sister Francilene's administration has been quick to address and sensitive to the needs of Hispanic and African-American students in this region.

Madonna built a \$4.1 million library/classroom addition. Madonna assessed and developed programs that offered flexibility and innovation to both older and traditional college-age students.

The Board of Trustees was enlarged to include lay and religious members with expertise and enthusiasm for academic planning and management.

The university attracted new students to programs which offered expansive careers paths in business, computer science, teaching, nursing, criminal justice, fire technology, gerontology, hospice care and sign language. Madonna is the only institution in the state that offers a four-year degree in sign language/interpreting. It is also the first university to offer a degree in hospice education, which is the only university-based curriculum of this kind in the nation on the graduate and undergraduate level.

The university has expanded faculty outreach programs to business and industry.

The university partnered with area community colleges and other colleges and universities to offer students more opportunities and flexibility in obtaining a college degree.



Sister Mary Francilene Van deVeer

A resourceful, energetic and creative leader, Sister Francilene's vision has been instrumental in establishing Madonna University as a leader among private colleges. Under her guiding hand, Madonna has remained true to its Catholic mission and its cherished legacy of independence to choose its direction in responding to society's needs.

To those who have had the privilege of meeting or working with Sister Francilene over the last 25 years, they know of the passion she has for her work. Her post as president of Madonna University never was simply "a job" but rather a higher calling to do God's work.

During her tenure as president, Madonna has grown, changed and positioned itself to enjoy a bright future. One of her greatest strengths is reaching out to others and enjoining them in her mission of academic excellence which inspires contributions to society. She has accomplished much over the last 25 years and her legacy is one of academic, community and spiritual nourishment.

We wish her success as she embarks on her professional and personal transition. The Madonna University community and the entire region is better for having experienced her vision and leadership. Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey counts himself among Sister Francilene's wide circle of friends.

"She is one of the most spectacular people I've ever met," said the mayor pointing out her dedication and enthusiasm to Madonna and the community at large.

"She has made a difference."

As Madonna University moves forward that difference will indeed be felt by the thousands of future students and faculty members who take advantage of its gifts. As she gets ready to move into her new role as administrative adviser, we salute her accomplishments and wish her well as she takes on new challenges.