

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.

Takin' it to the streets?

While Farmington Public School officials were able to squeeze by with a round of budget adjustments last year, they're facing a whole new ball game today.

Even funds recouped through the Oakland Schools millage, money that had been spent to fully fund special education, won't keep the district out of the red in the next fiscal year. Superintendent of Schools Robert Maxfield said board members could be looking at cuts in the neighborhood of \$5 million to \$8 million.

And that neighborhood isn't kid-friendly.

Maxfield said while officials were able to avoid cuts that directly affected classrooms in the last round, this time they won't be so fortunate. A committee of administrators from all areas, as well as the district's leadership council, which includes union representatives, have all begun to take a look at what the future holds.

A "hold harmless" district when the state switched school funding sources from property to sales taxes, Farmington has watched revenues decline steadily, while expenses have risen with the cost of inflation. While there is talk in Lansing about making some changes to Proposal A, the truth of the matter is, we're in the midst of tough economic times.

School officials probably won't have any choice but to start cutting a lot deeper than delaying road repairs or trimming administrative staff. Maxfield described last year's changes as "low hanging fruit" — the easy pickings.

"This year is going to be different," he said.

We urge officials to not only examine these inevitable cuts from the inside, but to reach out. Only about a third of the households with only two children in school. All taxpayers will be affected by how these cuts are made, because the quality of our schools affects the value of our properties and the reputation of our communities.

Farmington Public Schools has a reputation of excellence evidenced by state champion marching bands, sports teams and academic honors. Beechview Elementary is celebrating a Blue Ribbon School designation, a national honor.

More than ever before it's important to ensure all parents and taxpayers who don't have children in our schools are informed and involved. These cuts won't be about educating kids. They'll be about how to best preserve one of our community's most important resources.

In addition to facilitating greater participation in public comment, going out into the buildings would send the important message that we're all in this together.

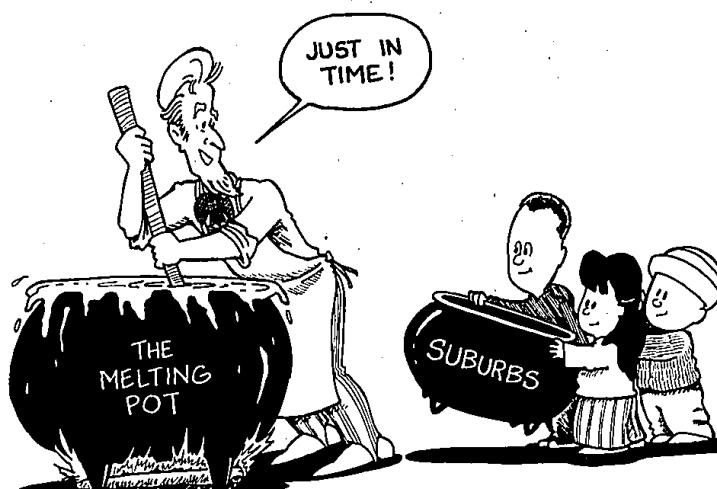
Teachers and administrators have been recognized on the state and national level for their contributions to education. If the district has to cut millions in order to balance the books, elected officials are looking at some tough decisions. We hope they'll look to the community for help, and not just by inviting the public to meetings held high on the hill at the Schulmann Administrative Center.

More than ever before it's important to ensure all parents and taxpayers who don't have children in our schools are informed and involved. These cuts won't be about educating kids. They'll be about how to best preserve one of our community's most important resources.

We all benefit from good schools — they produce top-notch students who will one day help drive this country's economic engine. They make our community attractive to new residents, business owners and developers.

So wouldn't this be a great time to take board meetings on the road? To education facilities, greater participation in public comment, going out into the buildings would send the important message that we're all in this together.

Because the truth of the matter is, we are.



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LETTERS

Education

"There oughta be a law." Whatever it is, there probably is a law already on the books. Here in the U.S. we live and survive in a sea of laws, not unlike that of many of the older European countries whose laws, not unlike that of many of the older European countries whose laws have allowed their citizens civilized lifestyles.

By "civilized," I mean the ability of the majority whose abilities to achieve are encouraged by their societies rather than curtailed. I mean, an environment in which intellect is used for good and intellectual pursuits prevail. A civilized society protects the lives, minds and bodies of all its citizens, the sick, weak and fragile as well as the strong and healthy. Because humans are barely a step above animals, we still have animal instincts burning inside. We those instincts to survive, but we need to keep our animal instincts in check.

Good education for all is the key. Education unlocks the doors to civilized lifestyles. It gives us insight to the world around us. And in the U.S., education for all is the law. We ain't perfect, but are headed in the right direction...one step at a time.

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

Girls CC

How about doing a story on the girls cross country all area team. You have no less than seven stories this week on Harrison football. Almost two weeks ago, the Farmington Observer had the boys all area team with pictures and quotes but nothing has been written on the girls.

Farmington schools have two girls on the all area first team and two on the 2nd team. These girls were the top in their regionals, state qualifiers, and fastest in the conference.

I believe it is a real slap that nothing has been written about these top athletes who have run hundreds (if not thousands) of miles in the last six months to accomplish their goals. The Farmington Observer should be embarrassed by the over coverage of Harrison Football while deleting the local cross country stars.

Richard Butten
Farmington Hills

Grant thanks

Thank you for your endorsement. (I am fairly certain you endorsed me). I appreciate the support of the local paper and your participation in keeping the voters informed regarding the candidates and the issues.

This was a difficult campaign for me, probably the most difficult since my first. We had four qualified challengers and worked hard to get their messages out and familiarize the electorate with themselves and their positions. I congratulate them all on very well run campaigns and hope that they will all continue to be or become involved in the process and bring some of those "new ideas" to the council bench for us to consider.

I want to thank the community for the confidence that they have shown in me by re-electing me to my fourth term on city council. I have enjoyed my service to the community, albeit sometimes seemingly thankless, the gratification of the job comes at this time when the community strongly supported the work I have done by re-electing me from amongst a field of strong challengers that worked hard to convince the voters it was "time for a new voice on the council."

On a more personal note, to my friends throughout the community... I am very grateful for your support, your help and your friendship. This is a truly great community and your are all a part of the reason that it is.

To the Mayor and my Council colleagues, my thanks for your strong support and encouragement throughout this campaign. I know we all took some hits based simply on the fact that we believe we have a strong council, that works well together, has done positive things for the community and is worthy of re-election.

To my wife, my children and my best friend... as always you are right by my side when I need you most. I love you all.

As I enter my 13th year of serving you on City Council you again have my word that I will do my best to fairly represent the interest of every resident in Farmington Hills. This is not an easy job, and sometimes it is very difficult to make decisions you know may not be popular amongst a certain group of residents testifying in front of you at the time for what they believe is best and right for Farmington Hills.

Please be sure that I always hear you. I always consider the positions that our residents present so well, and whenever I can park my interest to meet the best interest of the community at large, I do and I will continue to do so.

Now that the campaign is over, I am ready to get back to work. We do have important business before us that I felt a strong responsibility to remain a part of. During the next few years we will develop nine more holes of golf, redevelop the commercial district at 14th Orchard Lake/Northwestern and work on redevelopment in other key areas throughout the city.

I have no doubt that we will face some difficult budget decisions over the next few years as we realize the effects of the economic downturn we have experienced and the continued erosion of state revenue sharing. Rest assured that I am prepared to make those difficult decisions and to do everything in my power to maintain and continue to enhance the high quality of life we are fortunate to have in Farmington Hills.

Again, thank you for your confidence. I look forward to representing you and working with you for another four years.

Jon Grant
City Councilman
City of Farmington Hills

When those planes slammed into the World Trade Center towers, we all wanted to do something to help the victims and their families. We wanted to do whatever we could to prevent such a thing from ever happening again. I am hoping that we can work with equal determination to prevent alcohol related crashes...to prevent people who drink from slamming their cars into innocent people.

Please remember, especially during the upcoming holiday season, that it's not just drunk drivers who are the problem. Even one drink impairs your abilities...and not just your physical abilities, but also your ability to judge whether or not you are capable of driving safely.

And if people ask why you are refraining from drinking or from serving alcohol, just tell them that a friend of yours was killed by someone who drove after drinking. Anna would have been glad to be called your friend.

Debra J. Bonde
Livonia

Thanks, Falcons

The Falcon Society of Farmington High School recently held a dinner dance and silent auction at Vladimir's to raise money for the on-going improvements to our outdoor facilities at Farmington High School.

With nearly 300 people in attendance, it was a huge success and these are the hard-working volunteers who made it all possible: ticket sales, Linda Hellesbuck; 50/50 ticket sales, Debbie Washer; basket coordinator, Mary Miller; typing auction booklet and signs, Julieutton; thank yous, Dorothy Welsh and Colleen O'Brien; recording/filing gift certificates, Dee Oliver; auction folders, Gail Atkins; place cards, Penny Sage; and other committee members, Bill Boskey, Jana Chrumka, Mary Ellen Ellis, Karen Matthys, Teri Mizzi, Sue Pacer, Patty Reff, Mary Stahl, and Pat Turk.

Also special thanks to the nearly 200 businesses who donated goods and services for our silent auction. We have published your names in our auction booklet and monthly booster bulletins to encourage our parents and staff to patronize your establishments.

We also wish to recognize a special guest, State Representative Andrew Rackowski, who has been so supportive of our endeavors. Let's hear it for the parents of Farmington High School...what a wonderful group of people...it was a fabulous night.

Co-chairs Sue Boskey, Phyllis Surma and Cindy Walsh.

Drinking & driving kills

On Sept. 11, we were horrified and devastated when thousands of people were struck down in a violent, senseless act. Each year, 16,000 people are struck down in violent, senseless acts. Each year, 16,000 innocent people are killed by people who drink and drive. This year, my daughter was one of them.

Anna was only 19. She was beautiful, smart, and talented. But more important than that, she was kind, giving, and full of joy. She had a wisdom and faith beyond her years. She was a friend to everyone she met, young and old alike. She touched so many lives that the church couldn't hold all the people who came to her funeral. But she could have touched so many more.

Share your opinions

We welcome letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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COMMUNICATIONS
NETWORK

Don't let terrorism stall progress in tolerance

After all the talk about embracing diversity over the past three or four decades of America's history, we are now being forced to look hard at the very core of those beliefs.

The first terrorist attack on American soil has put us at war with a group of extremists who use their religious beliefs to justify barbaric behavior and violent intolerance of anyone who opposes them. We all understand that we are dealing with the Taliban, with Osama bin Laden. We know in our hearts not every Arab citizen in the world took part in or condones these terrorist acts.

But how are we, as a nation, responding?

In the days following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, people of Middle Eastern descent faced the prejudice of those who failed to understand the Taliban doesn't represent their interests any more than Timothy McVeigh represented every American's point of view.

Since then, our nation has tightened its grip on immigrants and visitors of Middle Eastern descent. In a land where our Constitution guarantees citizens the right to a fair trial, government officials have given themselves free rein to try suspected terrorists at sequestered military tribunals.

Local police departments have been asked to help with "voluntary" interviews of that target Middle Eastern men. In Detroit, federal officials have agreed to soften this procedure by sending letters to the men, rather than knocking on their doors.

The ever gracious Kenneth Starr, who made a name for himself investigating president, has suggested we have the right to torture suspected terrorists, to get them to tell us the truth.

Torture?
In America?
Why not?

Our government has decided it's OK to institute different standards for "fairness" based on ethnic heritage. When will it be OK to round up all people of Middle Eastern descent, "just in case" one of them might know something or might have a relative or friend who might know something about the Sept. 11 attacks?

Where is the line we will not cross? More importantly, who draws it?

Those of us in quiet suburban communities, where no one was benten and one who was benten, we are aware of an increasing diversity and are working to build understanding, may not be able to do much to stem this rising tide of suspicion and intolerance.

Perhaps we can agree that desperate times call for desperate measures. We may believe the horrifying tragedy our country has endured and the continuing threat of terrorism are reason enough to risk these encroachments on rights as endemic to our nation as the soil upon which it was built.

We are a nation still suffering the after-effects of grief. We face the additional threat of what federal officials have said is likely domestic terrorism — the anthrax scares that have struck with a frighteningly random and deadly force.

We are angry. We are afraid. We have a thirst for vengeance most of us dare not admit in public. All these things color our vision. We are improving "homeland security" and provide an internal justification for unreasonable actions against a group of people who have, themselves, done nothing wrong.

As those who enjoy the relative peace and comfort of suburban life, we have a responsibility to carefully examine the actions our government proposes and respond to them by asking our elected leaders to stand against intolerance and carefully walk every step they take toward the kind of hysteria that led to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Since the dawn of the civil rights movement, we have worked to build understanding and tolerance among all people, regardless of race, creed, color, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religious belief. Clearly there is more work to do, but we have made it. Let us not let the continuing work of governments and citizens in our communities to foster goodwill and address difficult issues as they arise.

We cannot allow these acts of terrorism, no matter how painful, to take all that away from us.