

## 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.

## Couple's questions are well worth asking

We've got to hand it to Mark and Teresa Gordanier — they're committed to the cause they've championed with passion since their house burned in 1998.

It has since been rebuilt, but putting their lives back together has been a troubling experience for the Gordanier family. Since the fire, they've questioned the competence of the Hills Fire Department, claimed harassment by the Hills Police Department and been harshly critical of Mayor Nancy Bates and city council members, accusing them of turning a blind eye to incidents alleged in a \$10 million lawsuit.

Although they've dropped the lawsuit — citing concerns related to Sept. 11 and the national effort to honor emergency services workers — the Gordaniers have waged a war of words in public and private correspondence, making no secret of their personal distaste for Police Chief William Dwyer.

We're not apologists for the City of Farmington Hills, the Fire Department or the Police Department. Records stand for themselves. But we're not so naive as to assume everything runs perfectly well. Indeed, we quite often hear rumblings of discontent.

Why don't we publish them? Because every organization has its nay-sayers, its complainers, its fault-finders. Because people aren't perfect, and we are very, very careful how we treat reputations. Once something's in print, it's there forever.

You can't take it back. And if you don't have the facts to back up your allegations and/or on-the-record testimony, you can't and will be held accountable in a court of law.

The Gordaniers have come up with an interesting bait to draw out those who might have information about wrongdoing at city hall. They firmly believe there's actionable activity afoot, and they've offered \$10,000 to anyone willing to come forward with proof.

This isn't an original idea. Dr. Thomas Prose, owner of *Your Community Crier* in Plymouth, made the same offer earlier

this year. Through his newspaper, Prose said he was willing to pay \$10,000 for information on actionable activities by any municipal worker.

So far, he's had no takers. Maybe there just aren't enough brave people in the world. Maybe there just aren't enough honest people, heroes willing to stake their careers and their integrity on the truth.

Or maybe... the level of corruption Dr. Prose expected simply doesn't exist, and people wonder whether he's using the reward to gather ammunition for a \$100 million civil suit he filed against the city.

Either way, his newspaper has been chastised by the *Plymouth Observer* — and an authority on newspaper ethics — for using a "reward" as bait. And rightly so.

What the Gordaniers are doing is a little different. They've dropped their lawsuit. And they're not a public institution, responsible to an entire community.

We believe cash tends to tint the truth rather than bring it out. Whistle-blowers are most credible when they come forward with absolutely nothing to gain, out of a sense of conscience or a duty to do what's right.

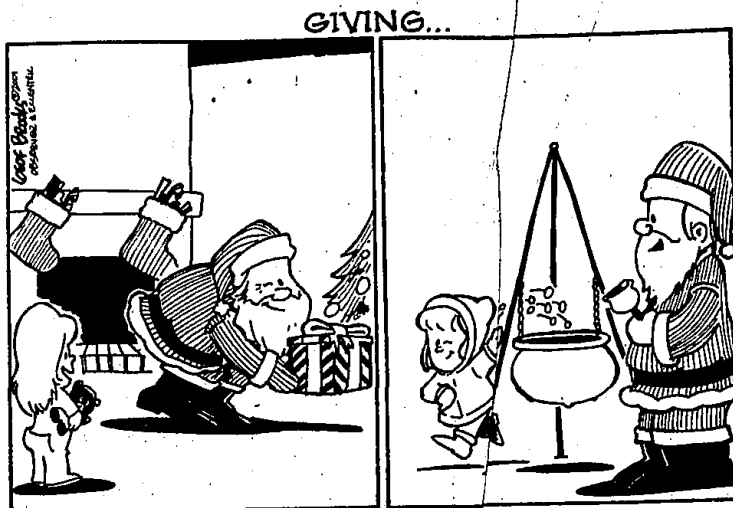
Still, it's hard to fault the effort, and we are certainly more admiring of these folks than those who operate in the shadows, spreading gossip and unsubstantiated accusations.

Officials seem confident they can withstand any additional scrutiny. We hope that's all this reward brings about. Having it become a greed-motivated witch hunt would do little to serve the citizens of this community.

Is corruption afoot at Farmington Hills municipal campus? Will an informant come forward and blow the lid off a raging cesspool? Or will the Gordaniers find themselves in the same boat with Dr. Prose — waiting for a day of retribution that may never come?

We won't hazard a guess about the answers to these questions.

Perhaps it is enough that they have been raised.



... THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

## LETTERS

### ■ Won't spill the beans

I read with great interest the article by Paul Pace about the \$10K reward offered for info about Farmington Hills city official misdeeds.

I have never met Mr. Gordanier in person, although I have spoken to him on the telephone in the past. As the mayor, city manager and chief Dwyer know, I could give anyone an earful about city misdeeds and back it up with written records I have kept.

Chief Dwyer's statement that the city's police department is sterling and recognized as one of the most professional departments in the state and country may be true on paper, but not where the rubber meets the road.

What I have witnessed by Farmington Hills police on occasion is enough to gag a maggot.

However, I will say this: In the last few years, I think I have seen a large degree of improvement in police officers in the city. Maybe it has something to do with the many complaints I and others have directed to Mr. Dwyer in the past.

Maybe he is laying down the law to his motley bunch, and they are beginning to get the message that the party is over. Every military group has its "goon platoon." Those are the ones that march out of step with the rest.

Probably most Farmington Hills residents do not know that Chief Dwyer came up through the ranks in the Detroit police department working under one of the crookedest police chiefs in the country, who spent several years in prison for looting the drug money fund in the department.

Chief Dwyer is smart and tough cookie with a good reputation, certainly nothing like that of his former boss. I have no interest in spilling my guts for Mr. Gordanier's \$10K reward. And I am quite sure city officials who could possibly earn the reward would not do so, for a variety of reasons. But things change.

Kenneth Kemp  
Farmington Hills

### ■ OAA response

I would like to respond to Mr. Elsey's letter to the editor on 12/13/01.

First of all, my opinion is we (in the athletic department and FPS community) are doing what is best for students, particularly student-athletes. The public was invited and informed to make a decision in the Athletic Department made regarding the move to the OAA.

As the secretary to the Athletic Director, and the person who answers the telephone there, I was well aware where and when the meetings were. I passed that information onto anyone who called, despite their name.

In fact, there were two meetings that were published to the best of my ability in short notice due to the time constraints. The reason for two meetings was to meet the needs of our religious community, as one of the meetings was on a religious holiday.

I invite Mr. Elsey to join our Athletic Advisory Council, that meets once a month to discuss athletics in the FPS. The entire community has been invited to join this (with invites in school Booster Bulletins and in the *Observer*).

Here we are currently discussing the expansion of middle school sports. A

survey was sent out to the public if you complete yours Mr. Elsey?!

As for block scheduling, having had two high school students who successfully went through this, my husband and I think (as well as our children) that this is the best thing since sliced bread.

Our children hate the day when a "traditional schedule" is running. The benefits are endless, as Farmington Schools academic progress has proven. More academic classes can't be taken, as well as further participation.

Lastly, an extensive process is in place to select our coaches. Highly qualified people are involved in the process to select coaches. Further, we have a program (PACE) for further education of our coaches. We also have continued training for our coaches and are initiating a mentorship program for our younger coaches.

We are proud of the continued academic success, as well as the athletic success, our students have here in Farmington. I wholeheartedly believe we have done what is best for students.

This letter is being sent as a parent of FPS students, not a school district employee.

Jody Militello  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Donor thanked

On Monday, December 17, 2001, a kind gentleman appeared at the Farmington Hills Police Department lobby and gave the Command Officer at the desk a \$20 donation in cash, to the Farmington Hills Police Benevolent Association.

Since this kind gentleman declined to identify himself, we would like to express our appreciation through your public forum. The money will be put to good use in the association's charitable endeavors.

Whoever you are, thank you very much and Happy Holidays!

William J. Dwyer  
Chief of Police  
Farmington Hills

### ■ Trojans showed a lot

To the 2001 Clarenceville football team and coaches: Thank you all for enduring the event and pain required to earn that trip to the Silverdome. The outcome was disappointing, but Dundee, Country Day, Crockett, and Capac watched the game on TV.

If you feel sad about it, remember that you played hard the whole game, did not resort to cheap shots or other unsportsmanlike behavior (like going for it on 4th down — twice! — while ahead by 6 TD's), and made several thousand alumni and fans who attended proud and elated just by being there. I spoke to many people I knew from my days at CHS, and this sentiment was unanimous.

Hopefully you all learned a few things from this experience as well:

1) No matter how talented Tim Shaw is, you won and lost as a team, and as a team you can return to the final, and win.

2) Continue to respect the game. Character counts more than trophies. I'd rather see a clean program that stresses education than a school that recruits and offers scholarships like a

university. This is high school! It's supposed to be for the love of the game.

3) Next time, don't show up the band from the opposing school. 4) The whole state now knows who Clarenceville is, and the meaning of "TROJAN PRIDE."

I had more fun watching football this year than any I can remember. I had not been to a high school game in 30 years, but I will definitely be back next fall. Thanks again.

Michael Galffe — class of 1974  
Livonia

### ■ DSO spools New Year's

This letter is in reference to the DSO's New Years Eve Party for 2001 and their late cancellation.

My family, friends and I purchased tickets for \$40 each for their New Year's Eve party. Later, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra canceled our New Year's Eve tickets due to Sept. 11, 2001.

Three months later, on Dec. 10, my friends and I received a letter from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra stating that our previously paid tickets for New Year's Eve were canceled and being replaced for a dinner that cost \$1,000 per plate and that we could attend, if we paid \$1,000 per plate.

It has been three months since the tragic events of September 11. The DSO has had its choice of evening performances since Sept. 11. Why then did the DSO take New Year's Eve? Why did it take three months to notify its former patrons? Or was it cleverly timed leaving no time to protest this injustice?

The DSO has left a faithful audience with little or no choices for this New Year's Eve.

I would like to request that the DSO either inform their patrons on a more timely basis, honor their patrons' previously purchased tickets or at least offer another suggestion to replace their New Year's Eve plans.

Mary P. Miller  
Farmington Hills

### Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your 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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