

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.

11 Pines plan is good compromise – finally

After three long years of wrangling with residents and the Department of Environmental Quality, the Farmington Hills City Council has moved forward with plans to develop the 11 Pines property.

The words that come to our mind are stolen from a 1970s advertising campaign: "You've come a long way, baby."

From a 1999 plan that included a 120-unit assisted living center, 80 condominiums and a 325-unit apartment complex along with expansion of San Marino Golf Course, officials have pared density on this 92-acre parcel down to just the 80 condos. The city won't recoup as much – project developer Albert Ludwig will pay \$3.6 million, as opposed to more than \$8 million for the larger project – but the trade-offs are well worth whatever might have been lost.

This deal isn't going to please everyone. Some homeowners still wish the city would simply leave the property undeveloped, or build only the golf course expansion.

We've said it before and we'll say it again: That's not in the best interests of all Farmington Hills taxpayers.

Actually, we've argued that being landowners isn't necessarily in the best interests of taxpayers, but in this case, we've seen tangible benefits.

The city has stepped up to the plate in terms of environmental stewardship, by sealing off a landfill that had never been properly covered. More importantly, however, officials have held their feet held to the fire by the entire community, and not just those who live closest to this development.

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Hundreds have shown up at informational meetings and public hearings to sound off on this issue, and that's just the way the process should work. Without it, who knows what this property might have become? Private developers aren't subject to anything near the scrutiny involved in the public process preceding this development.

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Not everybody's happy. City officials would have preferred more income from the property, residents would have preferred less development.

But this compromise plan moves forward the long-awaited expansion of San Marino Golf Course and sets forth a fiscally and environmentally responsible development on city-owned property.

The road to 11 Pines has been a long one. We hope officials and residents eventually agree that the trip was well worth their time.

Wake up and smell the school start time coffee

Virtually every child who notices that days are set aside to honor both mothers and fathers has asked, "Why isn't there a Children's Day?"

As any parent will tell you, every day is Children's Day. But kids are supposed to outgrow the idea that the world revolves around them. Parents should encourage their children to become independent and responsible, making choices that ensure a healthy, happy life.

We believe a plan under consideration by several local school districts flies in the face of that notion. They've decided high school start times should be changed – at great cost – to allow teens an extra hour of sleep.

The idea has strong supporters, but it's time for those who have championed this cause to wake up and smell the coffee.

Certainly, there's plenty of evidence to show teenagers need more sleep and function better later in the day. Studies have shown adolescents have biological clocks set to a later bedtime and an earlier waking time.

So do many adults. Some of us only recognize one 7:30, and it's not during daylight hours.

But no one who values a paycheck would ever think of walking into an employer's office and asking to start an hour later, because research shows their biological clock keeps them from getting up on time.

Adolescent sleep researcher Mary Carskadon, whose findings were cited in an article published last year in the *Illinois School Board Journal*, has linked changes in sleep patterns, sleep/wake systems and circadian timing systems (body rhythms that occur every 24 hours) to bodily changes that occur with puberty.

We'll buy that. Adolescence is a tough time, what with all the hormonal and emotional changes involved. Kids may suffer from excessive sleepiness.

But what else is happening with today's teenager?

Those who are motivated to attend college often take advanced level classes that require additional study time. Athletes, artists, actors, debaters and musicians spend hours at practices and in competition.

In some families, kids have to work to pay for a car, insurance, concert tickets and other necessities. Holding down a part-time job is common – and some kids bend the demands of extracurriculars or an accelerated academic program on top of that.

And the sad truth is, if you give kids an

extra hour in the morning, those with the most crowded schedules probably won't use it to sleep.

No matter how much we might wish it so, each day consists of only 24 hours. Anyone who doesn't use around eight of those hours to sleep will eventually suffer health problems, or worse.

In a 1994 study, the National Institutes of Health identified drowsiness as a primary cause in 100,000 traffic crashes every year. In more than half of those accidents, drivers under age 25 were behind the wheel.

Sleepiness doesn't just affect academics, it's a real safety risk, a serious problem that won't be resolved by moving the alarm clock ahead a half hour or so. Kids have to learn how to cope with stress, how to prioritize, how to say "no" and keep their lives from becoming so cluttered they exhaust themselves trying to keep up.

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The state and federal tugs of war over special education funding and impacts of a sluggish economy have many districts in dire financial straits, now and for the foreseeable future. We applaud officials in Plymouth-Canton and Livonia, who have publicly backed off the idea because they simply can't afford to look at this right now.

For taxpayers, that's the bottom line, and it's an important one. But an even greater concern should be guiding young people into healthy, balanced adult lives. Moving heaven and earth in their direction, rather than encouraging them to make decisions in their own best interests, won't accomplish that.

We urge any school district still on the school start time band wagon to think twice about giving kids another hour of sleep and pay more attention to what's happening in the light of day.



LETTERS

■ Campaign kick off

I am writing this letter to invite you to join me when I kick off my campaign for State Representative in the Farmington/Farmington Hills district in the 2002 election. The kickoff rally will take place at 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, at the Farmington Hills City Hall (City Council chambers), 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road. The district is exactly the same as it was in the last election when I came within 900 votes (2 percent) of winning.

I believe I have a good chance of winning based on my record and achievements during 12 years as mayor and city council member in Farmington Hills and my continued activities on behalf of nursing home reform, senior citizens, meals on wheels, youth, consumers, multi-cultural, the Goodfellow and other groups since leaving city government.

As you remember, during my tenure in city government I wasn't afraid to take on the utilities, cable company, special interest lobbyists and those legislators who wanted state government to take over many areas of local government. In 1999 I led a statewide effort that defeated a bill that would have taken away local authority in 21 areas including zoning, billboard placement, code enforcement, etc.

In this campaign I will stress the desperate need to improve mental health services, education, health care and protection of the environment. I will also continue my practice of staying in touch with local residents by being accessible at all times.

I will campaign hard as I have in the past, going door to door to some 15,000 homes and walking about 1,000 miles. I will continue to attend many community events and be available to participate in neighborhood group functions.

I hope I have your support in this race and look forward to seeing you at the Jan. 31 campaign kick off.

**Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills**

■ Hearts and darts

And a well deserved dart on Representative Andrew Raczowski.

As former ardent supporters of Rocky, we agree with your well placed dart square on the buttocks of our State Representative, who seems to be running willy-nilly about the state. Personally, we still love our friend and neighbor, but look forward to a more focused and responsive representation in the coming election.

On the other hand, why no dart aimed at Vicky Barnett or Barry Brickner? After all, aren't they also attempting to jump from one level of government to another? We sincerely hope they remain focused and set a good example for those that follow.

**Mark and Jean Gordanier
Farmington Hills**

■ 'Private club'

This is in regards to Phil Power's Jan. 3 editorial on the elimination of straight ticket voting.

Absolute powers corrupt absolutely and I very much doubt if the Democratic Party held the Governorship, controlled both houses of the Michigan Legislature and then held millions of dollars in political contributions over the heads of the Michigan Supreme Court that they would have done any different.

How quickly we forget the 2000 elec-

tion, millions of corrupted ballots, hundreds of corrupted officials and a final decision not coming from the people's ballots but the Supreme Court. We had a "non-partisan" Federal Election Commission chaired by three Democrats and three Republicans deciding millions of dollars in election funding for the Reform Party.

All that bipartisanship talk about campaign finance and election reform, what a joke. Where is it now? We have allowed a very small group of wealthy individuals to divide and then control our democracy. They unite us now not on the basis of peace, love and understanding but rather through war, hate and their own personal greed.

Who will stop all this corruption? The Michigan Supreme Court? An apathetic pro-NAPTA, pro-WTO Democratic Party, the party that set us on this global economic race to the bottom in the first place. There can never be a system of checks and balances under Republican or Democratic one-party rule.

So Democrats, if you still think restoring straight party voting or the ending of having to report every last dollar to the state is campaign reform, walk a mile in the Green, Libertarian or Reform parties shoes. These parties are not even allowed on the ballot in the State's so-called "Democratic and Republican" primary elections.

This is not a Democratic process, but is a private club the Democratic and Republican parties have created by and for themselves. It allows them to exclusively parade their candidate before an automatically divided public. Yet everyone including Independent voters (who are the majority of Michigan's voters) and the people from the other three major parties must pay taxes for these phony elections.

Clearly the only way to fix the election process is create a fair, level playing field for all the parties. However this will never happen as long as the Democrats and Republicans are caught up in this private game of rigging and twisting the election law to their own party's advantage each time.

**Eric Borregard
Farmington Hills**

■ Salvation Army thanks

On behalf of the Salvation Army of Farmington Hills, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for the generous support received from our community this holiday season.

The tragic events of Sept. 11 filled us with anticipation as we approached the holiday season. We didn't know if the generosity that outpoured for those who suffered losses in New York would continue here in our community. As the holidays approached, it was apparent that our community was responding in many generous ways.

Many new and "seasoned" groups, churches, schools and individuals volunteered to stand outside and ring the Salvation Army red kettle bell at various store locations. The monies raised surpassed our goal of \$100,000. Many adopt-a-family sponsors provided Christmas gifts for over 146 families and 27 seniors in our community who are weathering out financially difficult times.

Some people came to our facility (located on the corner of Shiawassee and Inster) during the holidays and brought brand new toys and food, while others came to help organize and distribute these items to those seeking help.

We truly appreciate the community's support of their own residents and

that of the Salvation Army of Farmington Hills and ask God's blessings on all of you.

**Major John and Rachel
Klammer, Corps Officers
Karen Guerrero, Office Manager
Pat Tatum, Caseworker**

■ No simple solutions

If a decision to implement later starting times at school is based on Minnesota's student survey and its related anecdotal evidence, it will be costly and foolish.

Although the study finds statistical significance, it fails to establish a causal relationship between school start times and grades. The study's authors acknowledge that research into the effects of teenage sleep deprivation are in the early stages of exploration and many factors impact student grades. To paraphrase from their report, simple solutions don't exist for complex issues.

Changing start times seems like a smart idea and one can reasonably assume additional sleep would benefit students. However, we can't ignore the costs involved. In the first year, the district would spend over \$600,000 on this unproven attempt to boost grades.

If sleep deprivation is negatively affecting a student's grades, I recommend a cheaper solution – parental responsibility. Let's simply accept that if parents allow their children to stay up late, it's their problem, not the taxpayers'.

If your child is having difficulty staying alert during class, cut back on the extra-curricular activities, turn off the television and enforce a bedtime.

Easy? Not necessarily. Cheaper? Absolutely.

In this particular case, I find it ironic that two years ago the district spent over \$600,000 putting up lights at the athletic fields so the students could play at night.

Now, they want to spend more money because the kids aren't getting to bed early enough. I wonder what the next \$600,000 is going to be spent on.

**Steve Sutton
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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