

Engler, McNamara should work together on airports

Memo To: Governor John Engler
Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara
Re: Monument To Your Careers

You two are among Michigan's most effective politicians ever. By remarkable coincidence, both of you will be retiring from public office at the end of this year. But there's still time for you to work together to bequeath an enormous legacy to the citizens of our state:



Phil Power

What could become the single largest economic development project in Michigan history. Later this month, the new midfield terminal and runway at Wayne County Detroit Metropolitan Airport will go into service, making it one of the premiere passenger hubs in the world. Just 12 miles to the west, renovated Willow Run Airport already ranks third in the nation in freight traffic. Linked together, competently managed, effectively marketed and promoted, the two airports could create an "aerotropolis," a powerful economic development district arising from the competitive advantage that comes from air-based passenger and freight transportation.

For years, scholars have pointed to transportation hubs as the main drivers of economic growth: seaports in the 18th century, railroads in the 19th century, highways in the 20th century. Powerful evidence is emerging that giant airports will be the engines of economic growth in the 21st century. Los Angeles International Airport, for example, has already led to 400,000 new jobs and generates \$60 billion in annual business.

There's no reason this couldn't happen right here in Michigan. Professor John Kasarda, director of the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina and a world authority on airport-driven economic development, is enthused about the prospects of linking air passenger and freight hubs in Michigan: "Nowhere in the world have I seen anything like the potential Wayne County Metro and Willow Run have if they're put together right."

The big stumbling block, of course, is "put together" right.

As you both realize, the key is to figure out a governance structure that works. Right now, both Willow Run and Wayne County Metropolitan airports are owned by Wayne County and managed through an impenetrable thicket of inscrutable politics between the Wayne County Board of Commission-

ers and Ed McNamara. But just wait. If things at the airport are bad now, just think of what they'll be like next year with a new Wayne County Chief Executive and Board of Commissioners.

So now is the time to sit down and put together a governance structure for both airports that is not infested with the cronyism of local politics, that is transparent to public scrutiny and that supports an effective professional management that could exploit the terrific economic development potential of an aerotropolis right here in Michigan.

I'd hesitate suggesting how to do this to you guys, both savvy and experienced dealmakers. But certainly an airport board with governance authority over both Detroit Metropolitan and Willow Run could be created by an act of the legislature. The Wayne County Executive could appoint some members outright and pick some from a list of names submitted by the Wayne County Commission, while the Governor could appoint some others. Members shouldn't be solely from Wayne County; maybe there should be some representation from metro area counties like Oakland and Washtenaw.

Regardless of how the details work out, cutting this deal is in both your best interests.

Ed, as you come to your final months in office, your distinguished career is at risk of being soiled by continuing management and contracting problems at Detroit Metro. The Republicans are already pounding your protégé and Democratic gubernatorial candidate, Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, trying to tie her to "scandals" at the airport. Plainly, it's in your interest to make a fresh start with the way the airport is governed and managed.

And, Governor, you've got a bunch of state legislators who are just dying to snatch Metropolitan Airport away from southeastern Michigan. Can you imagine the fuss that would erupt when politicians from Detroit and Wayne County start screaming about outstate Republicans stealing first their courts, next their schools and finally their airport? Collaborating on a fix for the airport solves a big political problem for your party and helps burnish your legacy.

It won't be easy. Governor, you'd have to keep some of your own legislators from hijacking the process to smear Ed McNamara and slam Jennifer Granholm. And Ed, you'd have to keep the Board of Commissioners and other miscellaneous Wayne County politicians from screaming that another pet project has been stolen from them. But if you guys can't figure out how to do this, I don't think anybody can.

Time's running short, gentlemen. You've both got only a few more months of power left. Why not use them to put your stamp on something genuinely important to the future of our state?

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net.



Joni Hubred

natorial candidate forum, held at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids.

Asking nine politicians to speak for only a minute or two on serious matters like Proposal A and the Freedom of Information Act is nothing short of absurd. But it did provide an interesting look at the FULL slate, not just Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus, Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, former Gov. Jim Blanchard and U.S. Rep. David Bonior - the names we recognize.

Perhaps the most strident among these obscure candidates is Ed Hamilton, described as a "staunch and hawkish defender of the American capitalist way of life and its free enterprise economic system." Hamilton believes government in Michigan is getting too expensive and claims the state has the third largest bureaucracy in the country. The Democrat turned Republican said, "I want to life." He doesn't support strengthening the state's "sunshine laws," which guarantee public access to government, because he believes the press doesn't use what's already available.

The Green Party's candidate is Douglas Campbell, a professional engineer who has taught physics and math at the college level and is a licensed pilot. He's taking his first shot at public office because, he said, "I think people are ready for a professional problem solver, rather than a professional politician." Campbell supports Proposal A and feels government should revamp the way it taxes people, levying higher taxes on things that are bad for you. For instance, he would favor sales tax adjustments on vehicles based on how their mileage per gallon compares with the national standard. Campbell believes people are generally dissatisfied with government and said he offers a candidacy that runs on people power, rather than money.

It's tough to call Sen. Alma Wheeler Smith or Sen. Joe Schwarz "obscure," because both are well known and hold leadership positions in the Senate. But in this race, they are among those who aren't getting the lion's share of press.

Schwarz serves as President Pro Tempore in the state senate, where he represents the 24th district. A physician and U.S. Navy veteran, Schwarz headed up the successful campaign to get Michigan behind U.S. Sen. John McCain's candidacy for president. A self-described moderate "Bill Milliken" Republican, Schwarz is a strong advocate for the

All candidates should have their minute in the sun

Journalists have a kind of twisted sense of humor. That's the only explanation I can offer for Friday's Michigan Press Association gubernatorial candidate forum, held at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids.

state's education system and will emphasize health policy, particularly as the nation faces the threat of bioterrorism, as well as chemical and nuclear threats. While he voted for both the business and individual tax cuts, he said, "I would advocate putting them on hold for two years. You gotta get out of that 'supply side tub.' It is not un-Republican to do so, it just makes common sense."

Smith, who began her political life at age 10 in the first campaign to desegregate Ann Arbor, won her first election to school board after fighting for open meetings. She's Democratic vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and is running on a fairly simple basic principle: "The color of your skin, the depth of your wallet and the place where you live shouldn't determine your quality of life." Public health management, she says, should be more than just disease control. Smith believes Proposal A has leveled the playing field, but wants more emphasis on the pre-school component to education, making sure every child is prepared for school.

And then there's Angelo Scott Brown. Perhaps the most unlikely political candidate, he is a security guard and evangelist who has started a number of churches and founded the Hebrew Israelite Jewish Christian Rainbow Victory Club and the "We Are All Brothers and Sisters" Organization. This is his third candidacy, and he plans to seek the Presidency in 2004. His political views can be a little confusing. For instance, while Brown advocates freezing taxes, he wants to look into creating some new ones. He believes the education system needs a total overhaul, starting with the school buildings and equipment, and wants contracts that will entice more qualified teachers. His campaign flyer mentions putting the state lottery back on the ballot and investigating alleged civil rights violations connected to it.

All of the candidates urged members of the press to be more vigilant, to ask tougher questions and to give everyone a chance to be heard. But perhaps Jennifer Granholm put it best - and in keeping with the tenor of the event, most succinctly - when she said, "Please describe what comes out of the mouth of the candidate, rather than how they look."

I'm not fooling myself into believing I've somehow enlightened the public here. The best I can hope for is the best these candidates could do - pique interest so that voters pursue additional information. Elections are not for the faint of heart. Everyone who runs for public office has earned the right to be heard. And for a great deal more than a minute.

Joni Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments by mail to 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; by FAX, 248-477-9725; or via e-mail to jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

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