

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.

Candidates: Please choose substance over sniping

Before the first campaign sign has been posted, before the first political debate, two of the Republican candidates for state representative have already gone on the attack. Candidate Valerie Knol, active in the community but a political unknown, recently took Oakland County Commissioner Terry Sever to task for walking out on what she considered an important vote.

Sever never voted on whether to override county executive L. Brooks Patterson's vote of a February election. Voters were to decide whether Bloomfield Township could reclaim land annexed by the City of Pontiac after township officials nixed a \$2 billion residential and retail project in the Telegraph/Square Lake area.

We don't really see how Sever's decision to walk out on a political boondoggle makes a difference one way or the other. The over-ride failed by three votes, and this Gordian knot will likely be sliced by a judge, sooner or later.

The greater question for us is why Knol started picking on Sever, whose formal declaration of candidacy last week wasn't a big surprise to political insiders. We hope she simply wanted to express her disappointment — as a constituent — in Sever's political decision.

However, Sever's response, published in our letters section today, is brimming with accusations of political posturing, not to mention a little political posturing of his own. In the event this was the first volley in what promises to be a hotly contested primary race, we're putting ALL

our cards on the table right now: Folks, please. We've got six months to go. You can all use that time to talk about where you stand on the issues, listen to voter concerns and encourage people to get out to the polls. Or you can snipe at each other, swing the scythe of sarcasm and accomplish little or nothing in the way of substantive campaigning.

We're not saying you shouldn't criticize someone else's decisions. Just make sure we also know the choice you'd have made. Don't tell us only what you're against. Let us know what you support.

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Governing is about choosing what's in the best interests of all your constituents. Governing is about making good decisions, about realizing what's important and what has the potential to effect positive change.

And elections are about deciding who will govern. When the August primaries roll around, we hope you give 14th District Republicans plenty of substance upon which to base their votes. So enough with the sniping.

Let the real campaigns begin.

Airport authority deal is the right direction

Wayne County commissioners are steamed. A deal has been worked out between Gov. John Engler and Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara to turn over control of the county's two airports — Detroit Metro and Willow Run — to an independent authority, pending legislative approval.

The state Senate Wednesday approved a bill to implement the authority. Now it goes to the House.

The commission wasn't consulted. They wouldn't have been happy if they were. Under the proposal the county executive will appoint four of the seven members of the authority, the governor two and the commission just one.

On Thursday, the commission voted 11-0 to oppose the new commission and some of their allies in the state Legislature have vowed to work on getting more board appointments for the commission.

In other words, it's politics as usual for the county airports. But in this case, politics has really made strange bedfellows. The state's top Republican and the state's most powerful Democrat have agreed on a package. A state Republican senator who has been leading the attack on McNamara for poor airport management is on board supporting the plan. Meanwhile, the predominantly Democratic commission has been left out in the cold.

We always have questions about government policies that develop behind closed doors. We understand the intended imbalance in county government that weighs power in the county executive's favor, but we worry when there is so little communication between an executive and the commission, especially when they belong to the same party.

The commissioners' complaints about the process are well taken. They also have strong arguments about the accountability of elected officials as opposed to appointed officials. And, they have a right to be angry at the county executive.

Still, the proposal has much to recommend it. As Sen. Glenn Steil (R-Grand Rapids), the official GOP airport hound, said last week, "This is exactly what I have been asking for."

The proposal answers many of the complaints about no-bid contracts, cronyism and lack of appropriate oversight. The seven-member board would have a three-member audit committee to review airport financial activities. The authority would be required to use competitive bidding and adopt policies on conflicts of interest. The authority would operate under the state's open meetings and sunshine laws. And, most importantly, the

authority keeps power in the county and short circuits a state takeover of the airports.

In the face of criticism that they hadn't provided proper oversight on airport contracts, the county commission last year implemented new procedures on approving contracts. McNamara said this was his major motivation for agreeing to an authority. He said the commission's procedures are too restrictive and cumbersome. He said if they had been in effect when bids were let on the new midfield terminal, the terminal wouldn't be completed and construction would have been

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over budget.

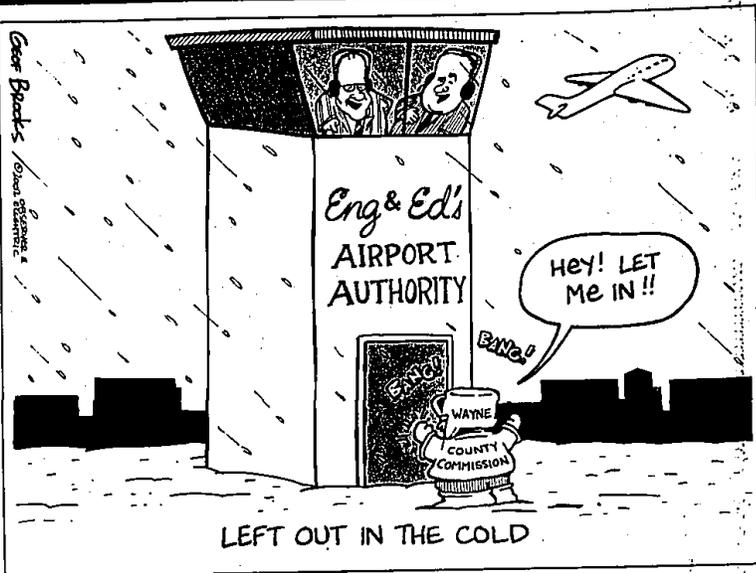
From McNamara's view, the authority provides more flexibility than the county commission. Gov. Engler and Sen. Steil see the authority providing more reliable oversight while also giving the state some stake in the airports' operations. The airports will remain under Wayne County ownership.

If the proposal wins two-thirds approval in the Legislature it will go into effect immediately, giving lame-ducks Engler and McNamara an opportunity to leave their mark on the new authority. Some argue that perhaps it would be better if the bill to pass by a simple majority, in which case the authority would be appointed next year, after they leave office. This is what the county commission is lobbying the legislature to do.

While we have reservations about some aspects of the plan, such as giving the executive a majority of appointees, the problems at the airports need to be addressed now. We believe the public scrutiny that the airports have been under recently will be a strong incentive for Engler and McNamara to make qualified choices.

We regret the manner in which the authority plan was developed. But we believe that this effort by two straggled politicians to work out an honest compromise is the right direction to go.

We support an authority, the sooner the better.



LETTERS

Internet spying?

Congratulations to the Detroit News and Free Press for the excellent coverage of Comcast and its policy of monitoring Internet surfing habits of its users.

The article in the Detroit News closes with comments from Carol Baroudi, privacy expert and author of "The Internet for Dummies." Baroudi said users should not be surprised by Comcast's tracking abilities. "The only difference in this case is that they are admitting it."

"Everybody does it, but they don't talk about it," Baroudi said.

Everybody does it? You mean like Time-Warner's RoadRunner Internet service?

In case the management and staff of the Observer-Eccentric newspapers missed it (again), that was your cue.

Mark T. Gordanier
Farmington Hills

Late start comment

Like Sharon Forgue, I had children attend Farmington High School (four boys).

They knew what time without being told they had to go to bed in order to rise in time for the school bus in the morning. It is good training for life. They all did very well in school in addition to having part-time jobs and taking part in sports.

Her suggestion that elementary school children should wait in the dark for the bus so high school kids could sleep in time for school at a later hour is the most ridiculous suggestion I have heard yet. The second most ridiculous idea is that the school board is considering spending \$800,000, when they have a deficit and are cutting courses and kindergarten classes in order to do so.

Many years ago when I was in school, the idea was to have math classes in the morning when you were the most mentally fresh and alert. What ever happened to that idea and how much did the "study" cost that basically showed if you got more sleep you did better in school?

Judith Madrid
Farmington Hills

Commissions' responses

I'm flattered that Valerie Knol is so worried about me running against her for State Representative that she finds it necessary to attack me six months before the election with half truths and sensationalism. Elections are won through hard work and voter appeal.

My non-vote at the County Board of Commissioners meeting over whether or not the Board should override the County Executive's veto was significant.

First, the non-vote served the same purpose as my support of L. Brooks Patterson. Secondly, I refused to participate in the political gamesmanship. Thirdly, I protested an attempt by fellow Republicans to force me into voting against my beliefs.

It was the last item on the agenda and the only vote I missed. Anyone at the meeting knew exactly where I stood on the issue. I believe that I acted in the best interest of the voters in light of all the pending lawsuits. Emotions run high and my job is not to roll over under the pressure of special interest. I could not ignore Brooks Patterson's position nor could I set aside the fact that our two taxpayer attorneys were giving us conflicting opinions.

The appropriate thing to do was to

make certain the voters knew exactly what they were voting on and what the consequence would be of their vote.

The reference to the impact on Farmington and Farmington Hills demonstrates Valerie's lack of understanding about city government. We are incorporated cities and can not be annexed. Inexperienced, know it all, legislators with no local community background are the reasons that we continue to see poor legislation challenging our home rule authority.

I'm proud of my accomplishments, I'm proud to be an American and I'm proud to be a public servant. The Farmington Hills City Council selected me Mayor by a unanimous vote in 1989. The Republican Commissioners in Oakland County have unanimously voted me Caucus Chairman two years in a row. My 27 years of service speaks for itself.

A number of fine people have withstood unfair, harsh, criticism for their dedicated work in this community. Please, Valerie, place me in the same class of people, like Aldo Vignozzi, who are willing to make sacrifices to make this one of the greatest communities in America.

Terry Sever
County Commissioner

Public-private debate

My thanks to the Observer and to the Farmington Gazette for reporting on the proposed invasion of the public school system into our Catholic school at Our Lady of Sorrows.

The general parishioners were uninformed about this proposal. Only three groups within the parish were aware of the attempt.

Monsignor Henry is a good priest and pastor. I believe he is well intentioned in his efforts, but if he reflects on his own Catholic educational background, and the teachings of the Pope through the years regarding the Catholic education of children, he will realize that this proposal constitutes a further secularization of the Catholic faith.

When Monsignor Hurley and I attended Catholic School, all classes began and ended with a prayer, not just "core" classes, but all classes. Art and Music education were taught to reflect our Catholic faith and to give praise and devotion to God. In physical education, we were reminded that our bodies were created by God in His likeness, and as such, were the "Temple of the Holy Spirit," and should be treated accordingly!

Under the proposed plan how can this Catholic faith-based teaching be perpetuated? The answer is that by definition of the proposal, it can not be.

If I were in Monsignor's Hurley's position as pastor, entrusted with the education of Catholic children in mind, body and soul, I would quake in my shoes if I were told to remove or reposition even one crucifix, religious picture, etc. in that order to make the premises acceptable to allow for this secularization attempt.

Our Lady of Sorrows Parish and School has been richly blessed thus far, both spiritually and financially. I do not see this proposal advancing the spirituality of our Catholic education. Perhaps it will advance the parish and the public school district. Is that what we are about?

Cortland R. Book
Farmington Hills

Not a joke

A letter, published in the Thursday, February 21 edition of the Observer by a Robert Blair, belittled not only American

teenagers but the entire public education system of our country, tiling it nothing more than a "cocktail party joke."

Mr. Blair disagreed with recent proposals and discussions of late start for high school students. Well, Mr. Blair, I am afraid you are sorely mistaken.

You imply that all high school students are lazy and over-coddled. Please be aware I am taking time out of my average five-to-six hours of nightly homework to write this letter. As a junior at Farmington High School, I certainly do not feel lazy or over-coddled as I am an active member of both the Student Council and the National Honor Society, a member of Varsity Pom Pom, and take numerous honors and Advanced Placement courses while maintaining a high grade point average.

I also hold a job at a local bungee shop which involves working at 6:00 a.m. on Saturdays and complete over thirty hours of community service per semester. Lazy? Over-coddled? I don't think so. And my activity is not unusual, except it may be smaller than many others. A countless number of my peers exceed these activities and spend even more time on school work, even waking up at the wee hours of the morning to do more school work before school starts at 7:30 a.m. None of this would change with later school hours, except we might get more than five hours of sleep each night. That would certainly be nice.

As to Mr. Blair's reference to the alleged "culture shock" high schoolers would receive in the future, I would have to dispute that as well. Farmington High School has done an extraordinary job of preparing its students for college. This would not change with late start. First of all, you would be hard pressed to find many colleges that start any classes before 8:00 a.m. and quite frankly, Mr. Blair, I think you will find more college students studying the night before class than "watching Seinfeld reruns." The Farmington Schools have taught us better than that.

The administrators who are proponents of late start are the people who know the students who stay up until 2:30 a.m. doing homework. They want only to foster a learning environment where students, as well as teachers, are fully rested and ready to work.

Late start will not affect the amount of work students do; it will only affect the time that students do it. If student want to work and are eager to learn it would not matter if we went to school at 4:00 in the morning or at noon.

We will learn. We will work. So where's the harm in late start?

Emily Morris
Farmington

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.

Mail: Letters to the Editor

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