

Farmington Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

Joan Hubred
COMMUNITY EDITOR
Hugh Gallagher
MANAGING EDITOR
Susan Rosiek
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Tom Nori
GENERAL MANAGER/PUBLISHER

Jaana Tewar
VP, EDITORIAL
Dick Aglinan
PRESIDENT
Phillip Power
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

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.

City's council, citizens owe each other fair treatment

Government, particularly on the local level, is not always an exact science. However, there should be consistency. Not the "foolish consistency" that is the hobgoblin of little minds, but a fairness and a sense that all citizens are heard and heard equally.

City council meetings in Farmington and Farmington Hills both afford citizens the opportunity to not only comment on public hearings, but to talk about almost anything that's on their minds. In the Hills, particularly, public comment can take up a fair amount of time.

That is time well spent. Citizens should not be denied the opportunity to talk in a public forum with the government officials who represent them.

However, citizens also have an obligation to treat that forum respectfully. And if they don't, officials have every right, and perhaps even a responsibility, to bring their meeting back under control.

But how far residents can push the envelope of civility and decorum before it's time to bang the gavel?

At a recent Farmington Hills city council meeting, one resident's turn at the microphone was cut short as Mayor Nancy Bates declared a brief recess, effectively cutting conversation off. Mary Johnston, an outspoken opponent of the 11 Pines project, had been asking pointed questions about the city's budget.

City manager Steve Brock did arrange to meet with Johnston to go over the balance of her questions and address her concerns. But Johnston believes she was treated unfairly, particularly since citizen Mark Gordinier, who is on record offering a \$10,000 reward for information about any criminal wrongdoing by city officials, was allowed to speak for quite some time.

There are many sides to this issue, but two in particular concern us. First, whether Johnston's presentation was appropriate for the venue and second, whether Bates and city council members were out of line walking away from her.

Johnston believes expenditures for the 11 Pines/Marino Golf Course expansion project are being "silted" into the city's budget, by placing them in other funds. With all due respect, we don't believe extensive questions about the city budget should be asked during the public comment period, and we commend Brock for volunteering his time to review her concerns.

However, it was also inappropriate for officials to call a recess in the middle of a citizen's comments, particularly when they have no hard and fast rules regarding this portion of the agenda.

We suggest that if officials are concerned about how long public comment takes, they ought to adopt formal rules and then enforce them equally. If residents know they have three minutes or five minutes to speak, they can tailor their comments accordingly - or make a formal, written request to have their particular concern considered as a regular agenda item.

Cities, townships and villages all across the country deal regularly with the delicate balance of public participation. Too little, and people feel separated from their government. Too much, and government won't ever get anything done.

It seems to us the solution is simple: All citizens should be treated fairly when they step up to that podium, and those citizens should treat their government fairly as well.

Campaign season shouldn't be messy when it comes to signs

Take a drive down Grand River these days, and you're likely to feel as though you've stepped into Election Central.

From Dmitri's restaurant in the heart of downtown Farmington to Bob Saks' auto dealership at Drake, campaign signs have sprung up like dandelions in spring. And they're just as tough to get rid of.

We all have a love/hate relationship with this time of year. Campaign signs, bumper stickers, television commercials all become annoying after a while. But they're a necessary evil, part of a free election process and a powerful testament to our constitutional right to free speech.

When we are tempted to complain, we should probably remember men and women have fought and died so that we could have this problem. However, political candidates can do their part to keep it under control.

We're not saying limit the number of signs you post. But please keep track of where they are, and remove them promptly after the election.

We're not saying monitor them every day. But please check them after a storm or high wind, to make sure they aren't blowing around or laying in the street.

Politics, they say, is a dirty business. Campaign signs shouldn't be.

This July 4 remember holiday's true meaning

Since Sept. 11, this country has been full of bursting with a renewed sense of patriotism. The terrible events of that day reminded us of how precious this country and its freedoms are and, also, how vulnerable we are to the rages of others.

We approach the national holiday July 4 with pride in our nation but also apprehension for the future.

The United States continues to wage a war on terrorism. We are worried for our security. We are anxious that the lapses in intelligence that may have contributed to the success of the Sept. 11 attack are not repeated in the future. At the same time, we don't want to surrender the very freedom that we are seeking to defend.

Following the attacks, President Bush reached out to the Muslim community in the United States with strong statements that the war on terror was a war on Muslims or Arabs. He and other political leaders decried any attempts to link the religious beliefs of mainstream Islam with the fanatical actions of Osama bin-Laden and his followers.

But since that time serious questions have been raised about government actions in pursuit of terrorists at home and internationally. Questions have also been raised about a climate in which the government and the Bush Administration place themselves above criticism.

Independence Day is the perfect time to reflect on what this country symbolizes so many around the world.

This country was born in dissent. It was dissenters from the official religion who were among the first settlers. It was dissenters from a distant and unresponsive government who led a rebellion and declared this land free from its ties and obligations to Britain. It has been dissenters who have made sure that the freedoms guaranteed in our Bill of Rights apply to everyone.

The idea of freedom has never been static. When the new nation was formed, slavery was officially sanctioned and slaves were counted as less than full people for census purposes. A terrible war ended slavery but only constant struggle has brought full rights to those freed from slavery.

Others have fought for the rights of women to vote, the rights of workers to organize, the rights of those with unpopular political views to express those views.

The history of the United States is a history of balancing our desire for peace and security with our desire to live free. It is ongoing and needs constant vigilance to be sure that security doesn't become tyranny and freedom doesn't become license.

This Fourth of July more than most, we have much to consider. While parades, fireworks and hot dogs on the grill are wonderful traditions of this day, it is also a good tradition to take some time and reflect on the rich gift that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution have bestowed upon us and upon others around the world yearning to be free.

"THOSE WHO EXPECT TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF FREEDOM MUST, LIKE MEN, UNDERGO THE FATIGUE OF SUPPORTING IT." -Thomas Paine



LETTERS

Supports Vagnozzi

Regarding the letter "Officers endorse Knol" from Wayne Beerbower who apparently is the spokesperson for Farmington Hills and Michigan Police Officers Associations, printed in the June 6 issue of the Observer:

I don't know anything about Valerie Knol, who is also a candidate for State Representative, a seat also being contested by Aldo Vagnozzi, a long time steadfast supporter of Farmington Hills police officers. Maybe Knol is a good and viable candidate, but it seems to me Beerbower is betraying Aldo Vagnozzi.

Is he really speaking for the majority of police officers in the above-mentioned association, or is he speaking his personal opinion? Which is it? I read what he wrote, but can we believe it? And if so, why should it have any sway with voters? What is his point when it comes to benefiting the community? It is the community's benefit we are concerned with, isn't it?

Frankly, in the last election I did not support Vagnozzi, instead I supported Raczowski, who betrayed me, and now I know I was wrong. But Mr. Vagnozzi, in my humble opinion, has the right issues going for him this time, namely, quality of health care issues, affordable and accessible prescription drugs for seniors, safe and clean environment issues and others.

Aldo Vagnozzi may be getting old, but his mind and body are in better shape than most one-third his age. He would be a new voice in Lansing, but he is not new to knowing how to go about getting things done.

And that is what it's all about, isn't it? Getting things done. He has the energy, determination and loves doing these kinds of things. What else is there anyone could want in a candidate?

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

NFHS says thanks

North Farmington High School had a wonderful All Night Party for its high school graduates on Sunday, June 9 following graduation. All night parties for seniors have been a tradition in most metro communities for many years, as a way to help graduates celebrate safely after graduation. This year marked the 30th consecutive All Night Party at North Farmington High School.

The party began at 11 p.m. and ran until 5:30 a.m. Over 90 percent of North graduates attended (276 of a graduating 305) a fabulous party. Highlights included: a dunk tank, where graduates could dunk favorite teachers from North; Starstruck Studios where graduates could make music videos with friends; a casino with parents acting as the dealers; a live raffle, a professional hypnotist show, and an inspirational speech by Principal Rick Jones to end the party. The party is put together each year by parents of seniors, and this year over two hundred parents volunteered their time in a variety of ways to make the party a success for their kids.

Many thanks also to the following local businesses and individuals in the community who donated good and services to make our party such a success.

Anita's Kitchen, Antonios, Banana Republic, Barry Auster, MD, Bean and Bagel, Bed Bath & Beyond, Bravo Coffee, Buddy's Pizz, Busch's Market, Cookies By Design, Cooper Creek, East-ern Mountain Golf Course, COSTCO, Danto Furniture, Dolly's Pizzeria, Domino's Pizzeria, E.G. Nicks, Emyra's Creative Jewelry Exchange, Club Fami-

Chamber shocker

Your Sunday, June 23rd article "Chamber rates county, state candidates" was a real shocker!

The Farmington area Chamber of Commerce rates Aldo Vagnozzi as unqualified? Give me a break. I probably shouldn't be surprised...but I am amazed that the Chamber sees fit to play partisan politics with the candidate evaluation process. Rating Democrat Aldo Vagnozzi unqualified and only endorsing Republican candidates may be their prerogative, but it certainly calls their credibility into question.

Or is this retaliation because Mr. Vagnozzi opposed legislation they supported in Lansing to strip local communities of 21 areas of local control?

Mr. Vagnozzi was joined by hundreds of locally elected officials from around the state who did not want outside business interests or Lansing bureaucrats to dictate local policy and the measure was defeated.

The citizens of Farmington/Farmington Hills have a clear choice this election year. If you want your local elected community leaders to continue managing zoning, billboards, oil drilling, code enforcement, building rules, cellular towers and many other areas, then vote for Aldo Vagnozzi.

Dan Greenberg
Farmington Hills

Thanks to Fitzpatrick

Anyone who ever had a child participate in the South Farmington Baseball/Softball program owes a debt of gratitude to Roxanne Fitzpatrick. My children played for several years and I coached and served on the board.

Roxanne's energy, dedication and true love for the leagues was apparent in everything she did. To volunteer for 20 years is remarkable. The South Farmington Baseball Leagues will continue without Roxanne, but will never be quite the same.

Howard Gutman
Farmington Hills

Serious business

When this writer was a child, it was a great occasion when the circus came to town. The elephants were so obvious, but what was not obvious were those sad looking men who followed in the wake of the elephants carrying brooms, shovels and waste barrels.

In November 2002 the reign of term

limited Governor will end. The elephant party has tightly controlled the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Circuit Court, District Court and Probate Court and appointments to the Workers Compensation Board. The Legislature has been overwhelmingly followers of the elephant philosophy.

I recall when I was a paratrooper after a jump in Germany that while marching through Germany all the citizens said "Ich Bin Keing Nazi All Nazi Gas Yec." Now that Mr. Power has caused attention to the abyssal state of the economy in Michigan, what entity will admit fault or blame. Will the Mahouts admit that they directed the elephant.

The elephant party in our two cities speak not of the coming fiscal crisis. The astute observer can only think of Loves Labors Lost, Much Aldo About Nothing, A Midsummer Nights Dream and As You Like It.

This citizen wants to hear policy, planning, and prudent platform. The brooms and shovels will have to be manned by the elected officials.

This is peoples business. This is scrious business.
Richard F. Krandle
Farmington Hills

Aldo takes high ground

Thank you for the June 13 editorial *House candidates urged to take high ground*. It was timely and to the point. Arinomy and divisive personal attacks divert the public from a clear understanding of complex issues and the candidate's position on these issues.

Any candidate elected to represent the 37th District, whether Democrat or Republican, has a responsibility to respond to all citizens with civility, courtesy and respect regardless of differences on positions and issues.

Such a person is Aldo Vagnozzi, the former mayor of Farmington Hills and the Democratic candidate for the 37th District. When he knocks on your door and introduces himself, he does indeed say, "I want to represent you and here's what I believe."

Albert Zack
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.

Mail:
Letters to the Editor
Jonl Hubred
Farmington Observer
33411 Grand River
Farmington, MI 48335

E-Mail:
jhubred@oe.homecomm.net

Fax:
248-477-9722