

Vagnozzi strikes back with press event

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Let the press conferences begin. Saying a precedent has been set by his opponent for the state house seat in the Farmington/Farmington Hills, Aldo Vagnozzi, the Democratic candidate, will be holding press conferences touting his campaign. Republican opponent Valerie Knol last week announced plans to hold several more "Valerie's Visions" press conferences before the November general election.

On Wednesday at Farmington Hills city hall, Vagnozzi pointed out reckless spending habits in Lansing and vowed to work hard at balancing the state's budget if elected state representative for the 37th district. The seat is being vacated by Andrew Raczkowski, due to term limits.

Vagnozzi pointed out that more than \$30 million went to the "E-Michigan" campaign to rapidly increase access to the state's services and information for citizens, businesses and state employees through leadership and coordination of relevant and innovative technologies.

"One of their first orders of business was to establish Internet reservations for yacht slips and golf tee times," Vagnozzi said of E-Michigan.

"This shouldn't be for the rich," he said. "It's obvious things need to change in Lansing. We have budget gimmickery going on and we need to put a stop to it."

The former mayor of Farmington Hills suggested an independent audit of government departments to see where money could be saved.

He said he's familiar with balancing budgets in his four years on the school board and 12 years of service on the Farmington Hills city council.

"I'm frugal enough I know how to balance budgets," he said.

Regarding tax statements, Vagnozzi said he supports them only if the companies seeking them produce jobs.

"If it just shifts jobs that I'm not for them," he said.

Vagnozzi also pointed out state grants for corporations that are wasteful.

■ A \$370,000 grant to Meijer to teach store managers public speaking and computer skills.

■ A grant to the Budd Company to provide German language classes to top 10 executives.

■ \$1.1 million to General Motors to train employees in group dynamics.

■ \$52,000 to Ford Motor Company for air fare to Germany so that employees could learn how to use forging equipment.

■ About \$750,000 per year for the Japan Center in Hikone, Japan, for the study of Japanese language and culture.

Splitting the Department of Natural Resources into two bodies that now include the Department of Environmental Quality is also wasteful, the candidate said.

Vagnozzi said combining the two departments would save the state millions in administrative costs.

"Instead of money for a Japan Center or air fare to Germany, we should be spending these funds on our schoolchildren, healthcare or protecting the environment," he said. "...Michigan's families must once again come first."

Knol said after the meeting that eliminating wasteful funding in the state is a goal of hers as well.

"I have business experience," she said. "I have done value analysis and value engineering."

Knol said in value engineering, the process involves producing a product the most efficient way possible without jeopardizing quality.

In value analysis, the process involves reevaluating a product or process and see what can be changed to speed up the process or what new materials can be used to save money.

"So I can say I have real world experience in that," she said.

pace@oe.homecomm.net | (248) 477-5450

Judge approves sale of Laurel Park Jacobson's

A federal bankruptcy judge approved the sale of the Laurel Park Place Jacobson's property to Davenport, Iowa-based Von Maur Wednesday.

The judge's OK paves the way for the upscale retailer to begin renovations on the 150,000-square-foot Jacobson's store, which closed recently after the chain failed to reorganize under bankruptcy protection.

The Laurel Park store is expected to open in fall next year.

Extensive interior renovations will begin in spring, company officials said.

The Livonia store will employ 225 people. Von Maur, which has 19

stores through the Midwest, also bought the former Jacobson's 100,000-square-foot site in Ann Arbor's Briarwood Mall. Von Maur paid \$12.5 million for both, reports said.

"The Ann Arbor and Detroit areas are key additions to our expansion plans and we're excited about entering these markets," said James von Maur, company president.

The 130-year-old chain opened a store in Wichita, Kan., and has another outlet planned for Glenview, Ill.

The Livonia and Ann Arbor stores will be Von Maur's first in Michigan.

by Larry O'Connor

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CITY OF FARMINGTON SPECIAL STUDY SESSION (Summary)

A special meeting of the Farmington City Council was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2002 in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan. Notice of the meeting was posted in compliance with Public Act 267-1976.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Mitchell.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Bush, Campbell, Harrison, McShane, Mitchell.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Clerk/Treasurer, Cantrell, City Manager Luthoff, Attorney Schultz.

Council met to discuss the selection process of the City Manager position and concurred to hire a consultant to lead the recruitment effort.

JAMES K. MITCHELL, Mayor
PATSY K. CANTRELL, City Clerk/Treasurer

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