

## OUR VIEWS

## Buildings are a lesson in government limits

If you've seen the twin towers at 14 Mile and Farmington roads, you may be wondering, as we are, what the heck that property owner was thinking.

Office space comes at a premium in Farmington Hills, but this - well, it just hoggles the mind. The two-story buildings sit so close to the road, you can almost picture the occasional out-of-control vehicle spinning straight through a first-floor unit.

We could debate the merits of the plan, but there's a larger issue, one over which voters could have some influence. This project, and others like it that are denied approval at the Zoning Board of Appeals, went forward courtesy of our judicial system.

When a property owner is unhappy with a Zoning Board ruling, he or she has the option of filing a lawsuit. The settlement of that lawsuit, called a "consent judgment" receives the blessing of both sides.

Consent judgments put cities in the unfortunate position of battling over the use of private property, a battle property owners seem to win all too often - leaving neighbors angry and feeling abandoned by their own local government. In this case, the City of Farmington Hills settled rather than fight J. Robert Langan's lawsuit, which was filed in 2001.

The truth is that cities have to carefully choose their battles. Langan's property sits at an intersection where Oakland County plans to install traffic roundabouts which will likely involve right of way purchases. What good is spending scads of money on litigation over a project that probably won't exist in its current form 10 years from now?

Farmington Hills officials made a defensible decision. The lesson in this, folks, is how the current financial climate limits what your elected officials can and are willing to do.

Citizens do have some recourse. Zoning Board of Appeals meetings are broadcast on Channel 8. If a case heads into court, follow it. Make your concerns and complaints known at that level, too.

As state and federal funding cuts and a poor economy force government to make cost-based decisions, citizens will be expected to do more.

Yes, it's too late to stop this project. It's not too late to keep anything like it from happening again.

## Courage comes with decision and reversal

Decisions of principle and conscience never come easily, and we admire those who openly stand in support for what they believe.

In the case of Mercy High School officials, we also admire the courage it took to reverse their stand based on a deliberate and thoughtful reconsideration of the facts. On Monday, Mercy reinstated a "Lunch with Gov. Granholm" auction item, which had been withdrawn over Granholm's position on abortion.

Granholm has said she personally opposes abortion, but won't impose her faith and beliefs on the entire state. Given that she was elected to serve all voters, pro-life and pro-choice, we believe that's a defensible position.

Reasonable people can disagree, and that element was missing from the decision to pull the auction item. By walking away, school leaders virtually eliminated a chance for meaningful debate on a topic too often clouded by extreme points of view.

They reversed their decision after a special board meeting Sunday and the protest resignation of Mercy board trustee Agnes Mansour. On Monday, school officials got behind a position that seems to better reflect the school's purpose: educating young women who make a difference.

No one ever made a difference by withdrawing from the opportunity for real, honest dialogue about an issue like abortion. Nothing changes when we get our way by threatening or walking away.

True change comes not from what we abandon for the sake of our principles, but what we embrace.

We applaud Mercy officials for embracing this opportunity, which the Governor has graciously re-accepted. We encourage educators to leverage this opportunity into a learning experience for the entire student body.

Of course, that learning experience is already well underway. Late Monday afternoon, school officials issued this statement:

"Critical thinking is at the core of our curriculum as a Catholic school. We teach critical thinking in an atmosphere that is compassionate and supportive of diversity. We believe that providing Mercy students and mothers with the chance to meet with Gov. Granholm is a valuable educational opportunity and fully consistent with our school's philosophy, mission and values."

Amen to that.



This building is one of two under construction at the corner of 14 Mile and Farmington roads, the result of a consent judgment in a lawsuit filed against the City of Farmington Hills by property owner J. Robert Langan. City officials say they didn't have the financial resources to fight this battle and urge residents to attend zoning-related court proceedings.

## LETTERS

### Commends school

As a Mercy graduate (1976), I commend Mercy High for withdrawing the "Lunch with Governor Granholm" item from the upcoming auction.

I'd like to know why the item was even an option in the first place. Mrs. Granholm is basically the Michigan Planned Parenthood spokesperson these days, having accepted \$400,000 from Emily's List. She campaigned for expanding the number of abortion mills in our state, lamenting the fact that 81 percent of Michigan counties lack facilities to provide abortion "services."

She shouts from the mountaintop for "choice." Finish the sentence, Jennifer. The "choice" you speak of is the "choice" to end the life of an innocent unborn baby; yes, permit a mother to kill her own child.

This is the value Mrs. Granholm, mother of three and our governor, upholds. As governor, she makes decisions daily which impose her beliefs. And she is imposing the culture of death on us by advocating for abortion rights and homosexual marriage, adoption and benefits.

Essentially, Mrs. Granholm rejects a formal teaching of the Catholic Church. Such rejection makes her a heretic since heresy is defined as: "The obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same." We cannot hold up heretics as good role models for our young women.

Rosemarie Denton  
Novi

### What's being taught?

Mercy High School has now decided to go ahead with auctioning off its "Lunch with Governor Granholm" Saturday evening at its annual school fund-raiser. They say that they want to be diverse.

What they are teaching their girls is that they are selling-out for money and power. They are demonstrating their weakness to stand-up for our universal pro-life Church.

Mercy High School is Catholic only in name. The recent bishop's statement made it crystal clear that a Catholic politician cannot work to keep abortion legal - that what Granholm does is immoral and sinful.

Why, then, would Sister Regina Doelker make this huge point to reinstate this lunch? Jennifer Granholm is an unforgotten Catholic. We must pray for her conversion and show her that we will not give up on her - she is our sister in Christ.

These beautiful teenage girls need to be mentored by faithful Catholic women who follow their Faith. All Mercy pro-life parents and students must stand-up to defend life and to defend "Our Lady of Mercy," the Blessed Mother. She is the best role model for these girls. John the Baptist leapt in the womb of St. Elizabeth when Mary entered their home pregnant with baby Jesus. Was that a fetus leaping for joy?

In an e-mail response from a Mercy teacher to the teacher, the teacher exclaimed that a baby in the womb is just a "fetus." Catholic parents are paying \$6,000 a year for their girls to be taught this philosophy?

You couldn't pay me to have my daughter attend this school. We will be there Saturday evening at 5 p.m. to pray for the conversion of all pro-abortion people involved with Mercy. They are in grave moral danger and we owe them our prayers and time.

Claudia Taffe  
Farmington Hills

### Censorship

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's views regarding abortion rights has prompted school officials at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills to disqualify her from speaking with Mercy students (Mercy High drops Granholm lunch, February 13).

Despite an extremely busy schedule, Gov. Granholm graciously availed herself for lunch at the capitol with two Mercy High students, upcoming winners of a school fund raising auction.

There is a plethora of issues that are relevant to students that Gov. Granholm could address. It is reasonable to assume that the students would have benefited from the opportunity to meet with the governor and would have benefited from the experience.

Censorship is an effective tool when the objective is to conceal facts or opinions. It contradicts the spirit and values of America. While the school has the right to determine who speaks with their students, the decision by school officials to ban Granholm begs for clearer understanding.

Perhaps some at Mercy forgot about the basic fundamental rights that differentiate America from many other nations. Imagine students in Baghdad, Pyongyang or Shanghai having lunch with and challenging their high level political leaders to dialogue and debate.

Raymond Dublin  
Farmington Hills

### Death penalty?

I applaud Sister Doelker and the Mercy High school community for their principled stand in refusing Gov. Granholm's generous offer of assistance to the school.

I genuinely hope that she and the school community will take a likewise principled stand and refuse any offer from Mike Cox since his and his political party's stance in favor of the death penalty stand in direct opposition to Pope John Paul's teaching denouncing the death penalty.

Robert W. Kirkland  
Farmington

### A parable

Once there was a fine restaurant on the corner of Power and Shiloh avenues. It was difficult to get a reservation at this restaurant, but our family of six was fortunate to get in.

We requested a high chair for our youngest child, but the manager told us he could not accommodate a high chair and if we didn't like it we could leave. We were a little offended at his attitude but decided to stay, after all it was a pre-paid dinner.

A while later, the manager came by to tell us to move over, additional guests were going to be seated at our table. Chairs were pushed very close together and we told the manager it was too

crowded. He told us if we didn't like it we could leave.

At this point we considered leaving, but we were hungry, the children were settled and we actually enjoyed the company of our new table guests.

The children at the table were getting a little restless. The manager came to the table to tell us to quiet the children. We asked for crayons and placemats. The manager refused, believing that children's artwork was lucky. I wasn't surprised at the response "If you don't like it you can leave."

Finally the moment we had waited for, our entrees arrived. We were given food we didn't even like. The manager refused to discuss the issue, simply stating that at his restaurant "you get what I decide to give you."

As he was walking away, the Monsignor, I mean the manager, again declared "If you don't like it here you can leave." We packed up our children, said good-bye to our friends and we left.

It's not hard to get a reservation at this restaurant anymore.

Anne Gambick  
Farmington Hills

### Still working

I want to thank your newspaper for printing my article advising people to contact my office if they were having trouble collecting unemployment benefits. As a result of the article some 20 people have contacted me about such problems.

We have been able to help most of them and are working on the others. This is an example of what happens when government agencies forget that their primary purpose is to help people.

During the last weeks of the Engler administration the unemployment bureau was almost completely shut down with all but three statewide offices closed, staff reduced and claimants relegated to calling a phone number that they could never get through on.

Governor Granholm has taken major steps to correct the problem by reopening offices, rehiring staff, appointing a new acting bureau director who has instituted a filing by Internet procedure.

Persons still having problems can contact me at (248) 474-3655 or my Lansing office at (517) 373-1793.

State Rep. Alide Yagmozz  
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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### QUOTABLE

"Layoffs are an absolute last resort, because I have no appetite for putting someone in the position of going home and telling his or her family that, through no fault of their own, they no longer have a job."

- County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, on 2003's bleak economic picture

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