

## OUR VIEWS

### Grant changes worth waiting for

Those darn Main Street consultants have certainly shaken things up in downtown Farmington. Their suggestions have included a delay for – and possibly moving – this summer's pavilion project, replacing the school district's Training Center on Thomas Street with residential development, even approaching the State of Michigan again about parking on Grand River.

Is nothing sacred?

When it comes to making the kinds of transformational changes this program can bring, the answer to that question is absolutely, unequivocally "no."

Consultants are thinking about the big picture, looking "outside the box." And they're not the only ones.

All around our communities, change is in the air. The Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council steering committee has begun to wrap up its efforts to forge a new path and revitalize that organization. Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce members recently participated in a visioning process that involved a dialogue among community leaders.

Both Farmington and Farmington Hills are now mature cities, virtually built out and ripe for redevelopment. With every new idea, however, comes the death of an old one – and the need to let go of the past.

We appreciate Farmington residents' frustrations with the lack of significant change over the past several years, even after many participated in the city's visioning process. We've heard more than once the words "What's different this time?"

We see a two-fold answer to that question. First, Farmington now has the clear-eyed vision of outside consultants who see not only what's here, but what could exist in the future. They are in the business of change and have probably seen communities with far worse problems than ours.

The Main Street program brings with it the experiences of cities across the nation, the lessons they've learned and the battles they've won – all an invaluable resource for change.

Second, as nearly as we can tell, lots of people are closely watching this process. Stonewalling won't be an option, not with the kind of public scrutiny that comes with a Main Street grant.

Change won't come instantly. This is, after all, a three-year process.

But we believe it will be worth waiting for.

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### Stay sober, safe this prom season

Every year at this time, we join other newspapers across the country to warn young adults about the dangers of alcohol.

Proms and graduations are prime time for teenagers to get wild and use alcohol to take away their inhibitions. It's a dangerous decision that leads to deadly auto accidents, unwanted sexual situations and violence.

It is all too common during this season for the *Observer* to bring the tragic news that some group of young people have been injured or killed in a drunken driving accident, or that they have injured or killed someone else.

We tell the stories and show the pictures. A senior class picture shows a handsome young man, a pretty young woman, full of confidence in the future. The accident photos show the mangled steel, the shattered glass, the death of dreams.

Family, teachers and classmates remember the young life that had so much promise.

But every year the story repeats itself with a depressing regularity.

We can cite the statistics, we can repeat again the effects of just one drink on the body of an underage drinker, we can admonish about the dangers of peer pressure. But we know that our words will have little impact on those young people as they set out in their tuxedos and gowns to the big night.

The responsibility is primarily with the young people to understand what they risk.

Parents need to avoid sending any mixed messages. Do not contribute to the problem. Do not allow prom or graduation parties at your home where alcohol is served to minors. It is illegal to provide alcohol to minors. Parents can be sued if someone suffers a personal injury because of the actions of an intoxicated individual who received a drink on their property. Parents are responsible for the destructive behavior of their children.

Stay sober, stay alive and live your dreams!

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Jeannette Carlisle, Leah Stillman and Lauren Herby of the Viking Chicks team concentrate on getting another correct answer during the Battle of the Books, held last week at the Costello Center in Farmington Hills. The annual contest is just one of the educational programs offered by the Farmington Community Library for children of all ages – and everyone who's a child at heart.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## LETTERS

### Pacifism

Pacifism is on its own an admirable thing. Some people even equate it as a central element of Christian thought. So what I am about to say takes the previous two sentences in mind.

There are a number of "No War" signs which can be seen in our community. I firmly respect everyone's right to freedom of speech, and I suspect that some people displaying these signs have a deeply held conviction about not going to war. Some may even be veterans of previous military conflicts.

What I want to know is where were all the "No War" signs when Bill Clinton was sending U.S. Armed Forces into the Balkans? Or other conflicts where our previous Commander-in-Chief sent our personnel? I didn't see a lot of protesting by the current anti-war crowd back then.

The behavior and statements of some of these people certainly allows them to be categorized as useful idiots. I can respect true pacifists. I won't respect people who protest for partisan reasons.

I do think it is important that we, as citizens, support our elected government in matters of foreign policy. It is even more important that we let the American military know that we support them as individual soldiers, and realize that some may make the supreme sacrifice for our country.

Christopher M. Cummins  
Farmington Hills

### Insensitive headline

I am writing with great disappointment about the insensitive manner in which the serious subject of the public opinion of Harrison High School was presented on the front page of the April 24 edition of the *Observer*.

The sensational headline "HHS principal afraid of getting beat up" conveys exactly the opposite public image for Harrison that the actual news story is meant to present. At a glance, which is the way most people read the newspaper, the article appears to be about physical violence toward the administration of HHS.

As parents of Harrison students for over 10 years, we have experienced an excellent environment for the varied interests of our children and an excellent academic program, but we are also very concerned about the public image of the high school.

I ask the *Observer* to think more carefully about your own contribution to the image of the high school by considering your own headlines and the slant that is presented in a story, as well as how much press is given to actual positive events and occurrences in our high school, rather than the attention grabbing headlines and sensationalism.

Please make the *Observer* a promoter of Harrison High School, and think more carefully about the way in which future articles are presented.

Paula Springer  
Farmington Hills

### Harrison's wonderful

It is very upsetting to think that anyone would think that Harrison High is anything but wonderful. Especially if you have children anywhere in Farmington Public School and love the school district.

Curriculum is the same in all three high schools. Any poor choices that students are making at all high schools everywhere. My boys had a hard time at Harrison because they made poor choices. It had nothing to do with Harrison. Harrison gave them every opportunity to succeed and provided them with wonderful educators.

When my daughter was ready for high school I never hesitated for a minute to send her to our home school of Harrison. She loves Harrison and is flourishing there.

If your child is making poor choices, please don't blame the school or the school system. If we start picking apart the individual schools within our very own community, what does that show others outside our community about our great school district?

Harrison, Farmington and North are your youth in Farmington/Farmington Hills. We should be a team and all work together to strive for their success. Working together will produce unbelievable results.

My family and I walk proudly wherever we go – we are Harrison Hawks and part of the wonderful Farmington/Farmington Hills community.

Lynne Walker-Wagoner  
Farmington Hills

### Supports Bolsen

The up-coming Farmington school board elections are, I believe, one of the most critical votes citizens can make that directly affects their own lives, and the lives of their families.

Our school board unlike any, the U.S. Senate, has a direct influence on us as individuals. And we voters, in turn, can make a difference in how well our school board works. While it may make us feel patriotic to vote in a presidential election, the impact of that single vote pales when compared with the importance of a school board vote. The decisions made by the school board determine how and what our children are taught.

The reason I and my family are going to vote for Karen Bolsen for school board is that she has proven to understand the importance of building a community.

Her extensive volunteer background work with the Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Cultural organization shows her ability to listen, comprehend and respond to concerns from widely differing points of view. She has shown to be much more than a single-issue candidate who wants only to focus on one subject, while filtering all other issues through a mind closed to compromise.

To me, that sounds like pretty good

training for the school board. We need people like Karen Bolsen on our school board. We need to remind ourselves to vote on this critical election day.

Charles R. Paul  
Farmington

### Jobs not a right

Good jobs are not a constitutional right but likely the result of free enterprise. Investment to build products comes from capitalists, prudent wage earners and retirees that buy stock.

Workers then purchase goods, creating a circle of prosperity. The circle becomes global as workers buy imports and products are manufactured abroad.

We cannot block out the world, nor do we want to. Tariffs and subsidies save inefficient industries that should change or quit. High taxes stifle investment and kill jobs. President Hoover wrote the book on those remedies, and if we don't want a Depression sequel we must learn to compete internationally.

Benefits meant to improve jobs increase our disparity with foreign pay – healthcare, retirement and minimum wages don't apply to the unemployed. Labor laws protect minorities, handicapped and union members but make production difficult and do nothing to enhance product quality.

Environmental and NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) hassles obstruct many types of development. Our government breaks up successful companies as monopolies. The high tech market is not saturated – it is over-regulated. Consumer protection agencies often become political, demanding prices that are lower than costs. A product glitch can draw punitive settlements that enrich lawyers and bankrupt employers. Taxes that take 60% of dividends leave no incentive to buy stocks and very little money to purchase products.

It is time to stop class warfare and work together. Everyone is richer when investment is better.

Hank Borgman  
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  
Farmington Observer  
3341 Grand River  
Farmington, MI 48335

Fax:  
(248) 477-9722

E-mail:  
jhured@oe.homecomm.net

## QUOTABLE

"Your media is one of your best friends. Those little steps make great stories. Celebrate those successes."

– Bob Donohue, principal planner for downtown redevelopment for Oakland County

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