Voice of the People

Mishawaka breeding slumlords, vacancies

What has happened to our neighborhoods? We live on the west side of Mishawaka and have started taking a good look around us. In all of my 44 years in this town I have never been so sickened by what I see today.

Mishawaka has become a breeding ground for slumlords and vacant buildings like I never could have envisioned. Doesn't anyone take pride in their homes, yards and overall surroundings anymore? How did this happen? I blame the leadership of this once beautiful city of friendly neighborhoods, where everyone knew each other and kids had someone to play with and feel safe. You could leave your car and house unlocked because you felt safe. You could sit on your front or back porch and enjoy nature and not the loud booming music or the noise from carefree neighbors.

We have started noticing suspicious activity in our neighborhood now, too. There are different cars and people you haven't seen before showing up at houses, not to mention at all hours of the day and night.

My suggestion is that the city start taking better care of its neighborhoods and stop worrying so much about Grape Road and Main Street. Bring life back to the downtown area where there is (for now anyway) a beautiful park system. The city should stop all of these rental properties from expanding and give us back our neighborhoods without the hoods.

Charles DeMeester
Mishawaka
Rural life

There is a valuable, non-renewable natural resource under attack by developers in our country: our farmland.

I have grown up in Warren Township and was taught to respect and cherish the land. Currently, a developer is attempting to cross the urban boundary to build a new subdivision at U.S. 20 and Rose Road. This would set a dangerous precedent in allowing development in an area with high agricultural importance.

Our farmland needs to be protected not just for the current generation but for generations to come. With the concerns of the energy crisis, crops will need to be grown for use in the new technology of biofuels.

We, as guardians of the rural way of life, must step up and let our voices be heard to the St. Joseph County Area Plan Commission and St. Joseph County Council. People can make a difference with a simple letter.

Please write the Area Plan Commission, 1140 County-City Building, 227 W. Jefferson Blvd., South Bend, IN 46601 and the County Council, County-City Building, Room 411, South Bend, IN 46601.

Ramona Willis
South Bend

School days

As a parent of two South Bend Community School Corp. students, I would like to voice my displeasure with the decision to change the school year calendar effective the 2006-2007 school year.

In the past it was always nice for the kids to be in school in the cooler month of May, and to have them home during the heat in August, enjoying swimming and other nice summer family activities. It was also great to not begin the school year until after many other schools had, because it seemed that there were many more great vacation deals after the first two weeks of August. We generally took our family vacation during this time and enjoyed the discounts by doing so.

Now it seems we will be starting back this year on Aug. 15, and finishing on May 24, 2007.

I think this is a win-lose decision, and unfortunately the kids and families lost.

Pam Kolozsvary
South Bend

Post bond

Could the Indiana Republican Party post a $3.8 billion bond to cover the state's reputed financial loss if Major Moves legislation is delayed by court hearings, as is being asked of plaintiffs by lawyers for Gov. Mitch Daniels?
We remember, after all, reports that Republicans in a party line vote passed Major Moves.

The constitutionality of Major Moves needs to be determined in court. The state request that a $3.8 billion bond be posted in order for court hearings to proceed suggests a belief by Daniels that Major Moves can eventually be found unconstitutional.

The sooner a determination can be made in court, the better.

Gunnar S. Jenson
South Bend

**Toll Road suit**

The latest move by the Republicans to stop the lawsuit against the Toll Road lease is another example of how they are forcing this down our throats. Let's remember this come Election Day.

The law that they are using should itself be challenged as unconstitutional as it practically makes it impossible for residents to challenge any law. Remember, we do not get to vote on issues, so we are actually a dictatorship, once we choose our General Assembly. We should be prepared to challenge this all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. Election Day should be a day that the Republicans will remember and pay for a long time.

Even if a Republican is running for dogcatcher, he or she should be defeated.

Ralph J. Becker
South Bend

**Play it again**

I have been following the evening news reports about the strike at Conn-Selmer with some interest. The other evening I saw some of the strikers standing around playing their guitars. They were pretty good musicians. Tell me again -- what kind of instruments do they make in that factory?

Bob McGrath
Warsaw

**Returned**

I just wanted to thank the good Samaritan who found my purse April 29. I'm assuming that I left it in a shopping cart outside of the Portage Avenue Meijer store. When I discovered that I had forgotten it two days later, I was very worried because it contained money and all of my credit cards. Someone returned it to the customer service desk and I really appreciate it. There still are good people out there!

Rachel Ernst
South Bend
Keep as is

Congress should vote to keep the Internet as it is now. Even our newspapers are hesitant to print everything that people submit to them. This is one venue that allows people the opportunity to speak their minds freely without any interference. I view this as our constitutional right.

Protect the Internet as it is now.

Emil Toth
South Bend

Illegals

When I hear about these immigrant rallies, I get very perturbed. We all know the history of the United States, a nation founded, built and defended by immigrants from around the world. What these rallies conveniently fail to mention is that the vast majority of immigrants have entered legally.

Millions of immigrants were processed legally through Ellis Island and other places along our borders. But for years we have had an invasion of illegal aliens sneaking across the border by night, hiding in the undocumented crevices of society. They then rally to demand the protection of the same laws they flaunted with their first steps on American soil. When students in California put the Mexican flag above an inverted Stars and Stripes, they slapped the face of every American who is paying to host them, feed them and give them medical attention, many without charge via welfare. And they have the audacity to call their May 1 protest "Nothing Gringo Day."

We are a nation of laws, including those that control how visitors can enter this country, how long they can stay and how they can become citizens. I expect those visitors to obey the same laws that citizens are expected to follow.

Scott A. Krouse
Mishawaka

A bulletin

"Attention -- we interrupt this program (country) with a bulletin: Rome is burning. Nero last seen fiddling around! More news at 11. And now back to our dysfunctional programming."

Wayne Fleming
Mishawaka

Union

Concerning the University of Notre Dame student's interest in a living wage for the university's employees (Tribune, May 2):

I think it very noble that there is a concern and that the matter is receiving this kind of attention. I am a former employee of the university. I was an
employee when it implemented the whole level survey of wages.

My personal opinion is this was all to justify why the blue collar employees do not need a union. The student in the article spoke of workers' concerns about not having a voice. Well, they would have a voice if they had a union as other universities do.

The student also talked about people not being able to read or speak the language to answer a survey. How much should one who does not read, write or speak English earn?

Would the student pay top dollar out of her pocket to a person with these credentials?

People who are skilled in what they are hired for and have an ability to effectively communicate should be compensated well. My belief is that with representation there is a better wage and benefit package.

The St. Joseph County Council voted down a living wage ordinance not too long ago. All this kind of action does is separate the wealthy from the working class even more, as now wages can legally be less.

Dan Stenberg
South Bend

Class

I think we should go back to referring to people as upper, middle or lower income, not by class. I know upper income people with no class and lower income people with a lot of class.

Yes, I know the definition of class can put us in classes by income.

When we say someone has no class we are not talking money, and when we say they have a lot of class we do not mean their money.

I will stick with my class, those who help others.

Don Gilpin
South Bend

Thanks

I want to thank the voters in Warren Township who supported me on May 2. I also want to congratulate Mike Nemes on winning the nomination for trustee/assessor and I wish him well.

I have enjoyed three terms in township government and have gotten to know many residents for various reasons. New fire-fighting vehicles have been acquired during the last 12 years, while expenses and resultant taxes were kept as low as possible. The St. Joseph County property tax assessment system proved to be the biggest challenge during my tenure. Again, thank you so much.
Reward?

Cardinal George of Chicago will not resign since he is anticipating his reward with a promotion from the pope to a soft job in Rome, as was Cardinal Law from Boston fame.

Jerry Hammes
South Bend