

## OUR VIEWS

# Is it fair?

## Partnership raises thorny tax question

It sounds like a simple proposal: The Bloomfield Township Public Library wants to form a partnership with the Bloomfield Hills school district to offer its resources and services to students.

There are many potential benefits for students under such an arrangement. The library could acquire material for school projects for the students to use, it has access to a wide selection of online databases and, of course, it has lots of books.

It's also open evenings and weekends when schools aren't, so the kids can use it on off-hours.

Sounds simple.

Nothing is simple, and as soon as the school board and library announced they would have a joint meeting to consider the proposal, voices were raised by some who objected even to the concept of the partnership.

It would be simple to write them off as perpetual critics, but nothing is simple, and they do raise a valid point. Especially now, after the library has gone through a bruising battle with the residents of Bloomfield Hills over what they would pay to have access to the library.

Opponents of the plan note that not all students in the Bloomfield Hills district come from the library's service area — meaning the folks who pay taxes to support the library. Some of the kids come from Bloomfield Hills and West Bloomfield and other towns that do not pay the library millage. Indeed, West Bloomfield Township has its own excellent library — and millage.

So is it fair to allow essentially non-residents the right to full access to the library that residents pay for?

The answer to that question is maybe.

The library board and school board have held all of one meeting so far to consider the proposal, and it was barely more than an introduction. But the issue of access was brought up, and it will have to be addressed soon if the plan is to go forward.

The boards' next joint meeting is set for Feb. 9, so there is time to give this thought.

Perhaps a solution to this question can be reached. It's too soon to say it can't.

But all persons who are in favor or against this concept should consider that the primary focus of any discussion should be what's best for the students — not taxpayers, not the school board, not the library board.

The students.