

Marks hitting the road for municipal league

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Councilman Ben Marks is racking up the miles this year, traveling throughout the state, but he's not doing much sightseeing.

Marks, who is president of the Michigan Municipal League, is visiting 150 communities, including several in the Upper Peninsula this week, to spread the word that home rule is where government should start.

"The league, which lobbies for concerns of cities and villages throughout the state, plays an important role in making sure state laws reflect local concerns and don't duplicate or add unnecessary laws, Marks said.

"Home rule is better than handing down laws from the state because it reflects what the people want," he said. "The state is chipping away at control of zoning and other issues that should be decided at the local level. Lawmakers should consult us first, or at least early in the process."

That's the message he's taken to places from Dearborn, with a population of more than 90,000, to Marine City Village in Michigan's thumb, population 233.

"People are enthusiastic in these cities about the league," he said. "They're surprised that I've come to their meetings."

The league lobbies state legislators for cities where, for the



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nances regarding the issue.

"They've made rules about zoning, about music lessons and day care, when cities already had addressed the issue," he said. "But the state came down with those commandments. Then they found out that most cities had already addressed the problem. They had just caused more problems without looking into the issue first."

Since most city councils meet on Monday nights, Marks has had to schedule casual meetings over coffee or lunch with many city councilmen. He had visited more than 30 cities as of last week and is in the Upper Peninsula.

"It's a big organization," he said. "A lot of people don't know who I am or that they have a real voice. At least this is a way to get the ball rolling and make an impact in Lansing."

Vote from page 1A

"It's a little bit of everything," Flanagan said.

The strategy worked, judging by the 4-to-1 margin of support.

Officials predicted a 4,000 to 5,000 turnout, which is typical in school elections. Though for a money issue, some thought there might be more.

Precinct 8 in Gill Elementary was indicative of the support and turnout, approving the renewal 468-109.

The flow of voters was steady, but not overwhelming.

"This precinct usually has a good turnout," said election worker Carol Pankas. "It's been a little

slow today."

Pankas had time to show Eric Pierce, 7, and Adam Pierce, 9, the voting process while their father, Mark Pierce, was doing the real thing. He echoed what showed in the final tally.

"I think we have to support the schools," said Pierce.

Plaza from page 1A

The 48-inch clock face would be level at 20 feet under the new drawing.

The clock tower includes a mansard roof, designed to fit in with the look of the Masonic structure.

Wzacy stressed the plaza would turn the corner into a more active pedestrian area.

"We feel that this will be a pretty conservative solution that will be positive to the community," Wzacy said.

Others expressed support.

Shirley Richardson spoke for the 125th Anniversary Celebration committee, which came up with the idea of a clock as a "lasting tribute to the community."

'I just wish we could landscape the corner in a way to enhance the building . . . To me, that's (the clock) just more clutter.'

Betty Borgman
opposing clock plaza plans

Richardson heads a subcommittee that allotted \$7,000 in seed money left over from the anniversary celebration and raised an additional \$14,000 for the project. The DDA has agreed to pay up to \$65,000.

"It's really in your hands," Richardson told the DDA Board. DDA chairman Robert Heinrich added designing a downtown

focal point has been a longstanding goal.

The clock plaza was to be completed by the Founder's Festival in July. That's expected to change as concerns have been raised.

"We're happy to have excited citizens," Wzacy said during the meeting.

"Well, you have one here," Leonard retorted.

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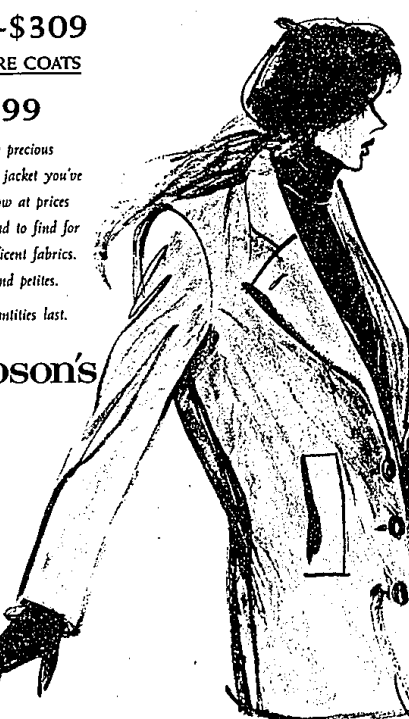
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