

County makes waves over water bill

By TIM RICHARD

State Rep. John Bennett (D-Redford) is trying to put out a political backfire from neighboring Oakland County as he guns his twin water board bills through the Michigan Legislature.

So far, Bennett has fought off attacks from some Detroit lawmakers loyal to Mayor Coleman Young. But last week the Oakland County Board of Commissioners began giving his bills a bad time.

Bennett, a long-time critic of Detroit water board practices, thanks his Oakland friends don't understand his bills which are scheduled for house action this week.

required to hold a public hearing before the establishment of a water or sewer rate which is necessary for debt retirement under outstanding bond obligations.

The key words are "debt retirement," said Bennett. "The attorney general said that section had to be in the bill or else it would endanger the city's credit rating."

The bill still provides that the water board would have to hold a public hearing 120 days before any operating rate increase could take effect. And it would require the city to use an outside certified public accountant to audit its books—a requirement that currently applies to every city in the state except Detroit, he said.

THE OAKLAND board objected to Substitute House Bill 4018's provision allowing the Detroit Common Council to continue to have final rate-making authority.

"I got an attorney general's opinion," said Bennett, "that under the constitution, we (the legislature) can't take away the council's rate making authority. We'd have to amend the constitution."

"But that council has so many things to do, it can't run the water department anyway. It just takes advice from the water department."

HB 4018 still has many protections for the suburbs, Bennett said. It provides that an assembly of local government representatives can elect four members of the water board who won't be subject to removal by the mayor of Detroit. At present, Mayor Young can—and has—fired suburban representatives in mid term.

Some suburbanites have objected that the mayor would still have five appointees on the water board compared to four for the customers. But Bennett points out, "Detroit has a charter. The suburbs can't take control of their department away from them."

ALTHOUGH BOTH bills are scheduled for a vote this week, Bennett said it may be next week before the actual voting occurs. The reason is that some Detroit representatives may request more time to "study" the bills, and such a courtesy to a colleague is rarely denied.

Both bills got through the house in 1976, after a big furor over a proposed 39 per cent rate increase, but died in the senate.

Bennett expects senate leaders will want to do some political horse-trading—getting consideration for their pet bills—before they agree to take up the water board reforms.

College dream impossible?

Sending a youngster away from home for four years of college is becoming "the impossible dream" for many Americans, says Jack Bologna, candidate for the Schoolcraft College board of trustees.

Bologna told an audience of supporters in Hillsdale Inn April 28: "With typical tuition, books and board costs now running about \$1,000 per year and little hope for hardship grants if family income exceeds \$20,000, the only recourse for most middle class parents is the community college."

"The importance of community col-

leges in general, and Schoolcraft in particular, should not be taken lightly," said Bologna, a Plymouth Township resident and self-employed management consultant making his first bid for public office.

"The continued growth and development of our communities, our youth and our adult learners depends largely on the quality of decisions made by the Schoolcraft College board of trustees. Trustees provide vision, guidance and direction so that priorities are based on the changing needs and demands of the learners—both youth and adult."

Low bidder named for I-96 work

The low bid was \$323,961 when the State Highway Commission opened bids on repair of 11 miles of pavement on I-96 in western Oakland County.

Blue Water Construction Co. of Port Huron

was lowest of six bidders for erosion repair work on M-39 in Avon Township. Blue Water's price was \$19,235 for repairs of the major east-west highway at the Ferry Drain, 0.7 miles east of M-150.

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