

History team is 'promoting the town'

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the Michigan Historical Commission and the State Historic Preservation Review Board.

Miss Sicksels said the commission members probably will receive their "work assignments" at Thursday's meeting.

IN MOST communities, a study committee prepares the report and ordinance and a historic district commission isn't established until after the ordinance is adopted. Since Rochester has already established its commission, the body may grow as the historic district plans evolve.

"If it (the present commission) gets too big, we'll relinquish control and act as a parent group," Miss Sicksels said. "We would then share our knowledge and expertise with the new commission."

After reviewing historic district ordinances in Waterbury and Avon townships, the city of Detroit and other communities in Virginia and Louisiana, Miss Sicksels devised an ordinance for Rochester.

She said the commission is considering the downtown area for several reasons: The preservation of Main

Street, Avon Township Hall, Dillman and Upton's hardware store, Rochester Paper Mill and a number of other buildings that should be preserved for aesthetic and historical purposes.

A public hearing will be held within 60 days after submission of the commission's report to the city council. Most persons affected by the district plans should attend the hearing, Miss Sicksels said.

"Owners of buildings have the right of refusal to become a part of the district," she said. "That type of question can usually be answered at a hearing, when people can determine how it would benefit them, how it may affect their building."

She said the commission would like to obtain historic designation plaques for buildings eventually included in the district.

ACCORDING TO Robert Miller of the Michigan Historical Commission, ordinances can vary from very weak to very stringent. Enforcement procedures also vary, but a property owner hoping to make changes to the exterior of his building always has recourse to the local legislative body—the city council.

Miller also added that the historic

district designation will not result in a decrease in property values.

"On the contrary, it makes the property more desirable because of the protection afforded it," he said. "It's similar to a zoning ordinance. If you buy a home in a neighborhood because you like the set-backs, the big front porches or whatever, you would be willing to spend more if you knew your next-door neighbor couldn't tear down his porch and put in an aluminum awning and cement porch."

"And as in a residential area, the more active the real estate market is, the faster assessments will rise. Most property owners in downtown Rochester have been putting a lot of money

into remodeling their buildings. If there had been a historic district ordinance, the remodeling might have been done to complement the community—the money would still have been spent, but just in a different way."

MILLER SAID establishing a historic district in Rochester would be "one way to develop the review process, to begin thinking about aesthetics and the visual impact of the community as a whole."

"If you have a historic district, you can develop design elements that people can look at when they consider redoing their building. They can pick out details on the building and say, 'Here's the kind of scale, the type of

texture that we're trying to preserve.' There will be a set of guidelines so that any new renovation or new construction fits in with the landscape."

The Rochester commission meets the fourth Thursday of every month at

7:30 p.m. in Rochester Municipal Building's council chambers. Miss Sicksels said the commission may decide to meet more often as momentum on the historic district idea builds.


Art gifts will be exhibited

Meadow Brook Art Gallery at Oakland University will showcase recent contributions in an exhibit opening Feb. 12 and running through March 12.

The exhibition is entitled "Recent Gifts to the University Art Collection." It will represent mainly contemporary art works received by the university from private collectors in recent years.

The works include paintings by Pat Lipsky, Henry Pearson, Genevieve Claisse, and David Einstein, and prints by Pierre Alechinsky and Robert Morris.

The gallery is in Wilson Hall on the OU campus. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 2-6:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, and 7:30-8:30 p.m. on evenings when there is a Meadow Brook Theatre performance. The gallery is closed on Monday.



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No accidents reported in gas-diesel fuel mixup

A mixup of gasoline and diesel fuel at an Avon Township service station turned out to be an even bigger problem than expected. However, no accidents have been reported and Avon Fire Chief Mark Belkoff said that Wednesday most of the faulty mixture has been returned.

The mixup occurred when, on two separate occasions, Jan. 11 and Jan. 15, a private hauler accidentally filled a diesel tank at the Union 76 station on Auburn Road, west of Crooks, with gasoline.

In diesel engines, including trucks and some passenger cars, the gasoline-diesel mixture will cause the engine to sputter and stall. Station owner Walter Simpkins said this posed no extreme danger and the fuel tanks can be cleaned and refueled easily enough.

However, those who bought the faulty mixture for use in home space heaters could be in danger. Gasoline ignites at a much lower temperature

than diesel fuel and could cause an explosion in some heaters.

At first it was thought that only about 300 gallons of the mixture were sold. Bulletins were sent out alerting the public to the danger and Simpkins attempted to track down some of the buyers through credit card purchases.

Later, it was discovered that around 2,200 gallons of the mixture was sold, some of it still unaccounted for. The fuel mixup was discovered Jan. 17 and Belkoff said no accidents have been reported.

How much of the faulty mixture is gasoline and how much is diesel fuel is still unknown, and investigations by the Michigan State Police and the office of the state fire marshal are continuing.

Simpkins said the station tanks are clearly marked for gasoline or diesel fuel and a telephone call to him or a track dispatcher would have told the driver what tank to pump the fuel into.

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