

Condo abuses legislative target

By HOWARD RONTAL

Legislators are being asked to strengthen a proposed bill which would spell out regulations governing the building, buying and financing of condominiums.

Testifying before the House Towns and Counties Committee at hearings in Troy and Westland, developers and buyers pointed out to Chairman Thomas Brown (D-Westland) abuses which have plagued the industry.

Thomas Myers of Farmington, a resident of Side Place Condominiums testified the developer abandoned construction before his condominium was completed.

He said roads were left unfinished, carpentry incomplete and basements leaking. Owners are unable to sell their units, thanks to the unfinished state he said. He added a lawsuit has been languishing in the courts for nearly two years.

BROWN AGREED the new law could not help Myers, but he predicted it would be able to prevent similar situations, if passed.

Condominiums are now regulated by the Michigan Department of Commerce, which has no enforcement powers. Under the new bill, the department would have the power of subpoena and would be able to deny, revoke or suspend a building permit as well as be able to stop construction. The bill would also require:

- Full disclosure of a condominium's finances to buyers.
- Establishment of an escrow account or provision of other security to cover the cost of those items which were promised but not provided.
- Co-owner maintenance of a reserve fund for major repairs and replacement of common property.

The bill also contains a provision enabling courts to sentence fines of up to

\$10,000 and imprisonment of up to one year.

REPRESENTING THE STERLING Commons Condominium Association, Leroy Pletten of Sterling Heights offered a list of suggestions to beef up the bill.

He argued that where a condominium pays for street maintenance, snow removal or other services normally provided by municipal government, owner taxes should be reduced.

He criticized a section of the bill which

calls for assessments left unpaid by one co-owner be made up by other co-owners.

"Mortgage companies are in business for profit and charge interest based on the risk they take," Pletten said. "In case of foreclosure on a co-owner, unpaid assessments should be made the liability of the mortgage company."

"The mortgage company can pass on the cost when it sells; purchasers can consider late assessments when negotiating the purchase price."

A Westland man wants a reverse of one of the present provisions.

According to Gary Makower, a co-owner is responsible for the condominium association's court costs and legal fees if the co-owner loses the suit.

Makower suggested the association paying the legal fees of the co-owner if the co-owner wins in court.

According to Brown, another reason for tightening controls on condominiums is their increasing popularity thanks to the high cost of single family units.

He said if the bill is passed this legislative session, it would be enacted in January.

October's great for stargazing

By MARTHA SCHAEFER
Oranienburg Institute of Science
Planarian Demonstration

Hunter's Moon won't be the only interesting heavenly display for the month of October. Skywatchers with or without binoculars or telescopes will find something to reward their efforts almost every clear night this month, including some very bright planets and a meteor shower. Evening skies the first of the month will be dominated by the Hunter's Moon, which

officially rises Tuesday. It will appear to be full for several nights and will rise at almost the same time each night because, at this time of year, the moon's path lies closer than usual to our horizon.

If there is a clear horizon, look for a very bright object low in the west, the planet Venus. More difficult to find this time of year is the Big Dipper, which is much lower in the north in autumn. But shining brightly above the North Star will be a "18" of stars named in honor of Queen Cassiopea.

A GOOD WAY to locate the rest of her royal family is to look for what appears to be a huge dipper of stars stretching across the sky high in the east. Directly under the "W," the first star marks the head of Perseus (the prince), and the next three stars help locate the Princess Andromeda (the constellation that, with the help of a telescope, helps locate another galaxy). She is attached to the great square part of the group.

Sky-gazers can direct their questions to Cranbrook Institute of Science at 855-3225.

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