

Questions City Folks Ask About Consolidation

By EMORY DANIELS
There were plenty of questions asked and answers given at last week's educational meeting on consolidation for city residents.

Sponsored by the Joint Study Committee and attended by about

50 residents, the meeting was held in Farmington Junior High. A selection of questions and answers follows:

QUESTION (directed to Jo'll Allen): John Richardson says consolidation will somehow keep industry out of the city. As a small minority in the new city, won't we have less to say?

ANSWER: "It is obvious if you have a small city with fixed boundaries," Allen answered, "you can determine what happens. If you incorporate as one city there are no boundaries to protect you when tax problems require greater taxes. And the other areas will be the first to be hit."

Richardson replied that usually less desirable developments are located along the outside ring of a community. "If the township decides to line our border with apartments or factories, we as a city would be saddled with the resulting problems. We have no control over township actions, we are at their mercy. But if we are part of the consolidated city, we will have a voice and will be in a much better position."

QUESTION: If we consolidate, our government will dissolve. Would we be several years without a zoning ordinance? Also, the city has applied for a federal grant and one of the federal requirements is that the city have a master plan including provisions for recreation. The township doesn't have a master plan for parks and it would take 3-5 years to prepare one. Will consolidation jeopardize the federal grant?

ANSWER: Fred Lichtman, the moderator, explained that the law provides that when a new city is formed from an old city, the zoning ordinances and

master plan remain in existence for one year "which is ample time to allow change." Lichtman said the township is working on a master plan (the "701 program") and six of the seven phases are now completed. "If federal government participation is based upon the master plan, the plan will still be in existence for at least one year after the charter is approved."

Lichtman added that Farmington Township was the first to initiate and successfully defend in the State Supreme Court a density control zoning statute.

QUESTION: How will the new city residents under consolidation be able to enjoy the same police and fire protection the city has now?

ANSWER: Richardson said he talked with Robert Deaman, director of Public Safety for the city, and Deaman said that all areas have the same number of officers per capita, there should not be any problems. Richardson added that 80 per cent of the fires in the city are put out by patrol cars and the fire truck never leaves the station.

QUESTION: Wouldn't additional fire equipment and housing be necessary for the township area?

ANSWER: Yes, Richardson answered, but this would have to be capitalized over a period of years. Richardson said the charter could be written in such a way so city residents would not have to pay for capital expenditures in the township and township residents would not have to pay on the city's bonded indebtedness.

QUESTION: What services will the city gain by consolidation?

ANSWER: There wouldn't be any short-term gains, Richardson said. "If you want to look to the future and keep taxes low, vote 'yes.' If you want the luxury of a small city and are willing to pay the high taxes that will come in the future, vote 'no.'"

Creation of a DPW and other problems will be outlined in the charter, he added. "That is why I say you can't really vote on consolidation until a charter is written."

Allen commented that Dinan's study did not include the cost of capitalization which could add up to one or two mills. Richardson answered that Dinan estimated the cost of capitalization at .8 mills.

Allen said that the SEV per capita told only half the story. He said it was necessary to multiply the SEV per capita by the tax rate to find out how much more money the city has to spend. Southfield and Livonia have \$43 per person to spend, Allen said, while the consolidated city would have only \$39 per person to spend. "You can expect to get fewer services than the people of Livonia," Allen said.

QUESTION (directed to Allen): Are we going to put up another wall along Farmington Rd. like the Salvatore barrier? I live in city but circulate in the 36-square mile area. In-

stead of confining our recreation to 2.5 square miles, if there anything wrong with developing recreation for the entire area? Is it possible there are benefits to consolidation too and not just problems?

ANSWER: Cooperation essentially is a good thing, said Allen. "You go to a church and it may be different from the one I go to. But this doesn't mean that we are not to get along with each other because we go to different churches."

QUESTION (directed to Allen): You talk about our small city. If the city annexes the southern part of the township as the petition requests, what will happen to our small city?

ANSWER: Petitions being filed does not mean you have annexation, said Allen. The people does not mean you have annexation, said Allen. "The people won't be interested in this movement. It is far fair for the city to strip the industrial base from the township. Proponents of consolidation are behind the moves made by both sides. But sane and sensible people in the community won't accept annexation. We don't want to be a 17-square mile city."

Richardson commented on the disadvantage of annexation for both city and township. He said by the time both city and township get a master plan, their

territories are disrupted by an annexation move and the master plans must be changed. "The logical thing to do is to form the whole area into a city which will be protected."

QUESTION: What percentage of our total tax bills support the schools and what percentage go for city services, based on a \$10,000 assessed valuation?

ANSWER: Lichtman said in the township, 90 per cent of the taxes go for schools because the township cannot set its own tax rate for township services. In the city, the nine mill rate means the homeowner would pay \$90 for City taxes for a home assessed at \$10,000. For the same home, he would pay \$380 for school taxes based on the

district's levy of 38 mills. The total 1968 tax rate for the city including school and county was 55.6 mills. For the township in 1968, the total tax levy was 50.31 mills.

QUESTION: What did it cost the City of Farmington to annex Woodcroft and Chatham Hills subdivisions?

ANSWER: Allen said at the time it was decided the cost of the annexation would not exceed the revenues returned to the city. It started on an equal basis, he added, but the benefits have increased since and now the tax return takes care of the added services which are provided. He added that the roads, water and sewer lines installed in the subdivisions

were financed by special assessment against the benefiting property owners.

QUESTION: What advantages do we get as residents of the city, forgetting the '80s and '90s? What about the next 10 or 15 years?

ANSWER: "We won't have our spirit of unity," Richardson said, "when the area polarizes into two cities. We'll relate to the entire community."

"If you are willing to pay the high premium to stay small and the higher taxes are worth

it to you, than vote no."

QUESTION: Residents in the south end of the township have no voice in running the township. Won't this happen to us?

ANSWER: "You are dealing with a different socio-economic class in the city than in the lower income places of the township," said Richardson.

We'll be among the leaders. I don't fear being relegated to a second class status when the township outnumbers us now. The type of people we are will help us dictate what will happen in the new city."

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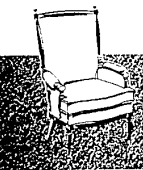
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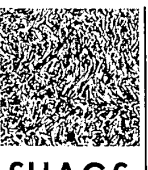
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