

W. Bloomfield Twp. Board approves M-275 plan

By MARY LOU CALLAWAY

West Bloomfield residents who oppose the extension of M-275 got a boost from two township trustees Monday.

But the West Bloomfield Township Board still voted 3-2 to support the latest highway plan.

Clerk Betty Sue Dupree and trustees Weldon Yeager and Raymond Holland OK'd a resolution urging the state transportation commission to build the highway.

Their support is for the latest modification to run from the intersection of I-96 and I-275 in Novi to I-75 near Dearborn, north of West Bloomfield.

In voting against the resolution, trustees Dennis Vatsis and Thomas Law say the first priority is to upgrade existing local roads.

Two board members, Township Supervisor John Doherty and Treasurer Marilyn Fessler, are on vacation.

Doherty is a strong advocate for extending M-275. Mrs. Fessler's views are unknown.

"I DON'T THINK the community wants rapid growth, (the) paving of tens of thousands (of acres) of concrete over farmland, argued Vatsis. "For 20 or 30 years we have encouraged urban sprawl. Our cities have decayed as a result," he said.

But Yeager says it (M-275) must be extended now before costs get higher. "If we're ever going to have any (traffic) relief and get an extension of Northwestern Highway. We have growth coming west."

Neva Carter, president of the West Bloomfield-Farmington Area League of Women Voters, opposed the extension, saying she also spoke for all Oakland County LWW presidents.

"We can not understand your thinking in believing that M-275 will alleviate West Bloomfield's congested areas," she said. "You're talking about environmentally sensitive land, the headwaters of the Huron, Clinton and Rouge rivers."

"Support of M-275 does not reflect the sentiment of the entire township," Ms. Carter said. Many in this time of energy crisis feel that no new miles of energy crisis feel that no new miles of

freeway should be built."

Law suggested upgrading local roads, making Maple Road a boulevard and extending Northwestern to Maple as alternatives to new construction.

But Holland said, "It's not just our problem; it's the county and state. M-275 doesn't directly affect the township but they aren't about to knock Northwestern through without it."

"The people are here and more are coming," he emphasized.

THE STATE cancelled plans for M-275 and Northwestern Highway extensions in 1977. But proponents never gave up. The latest modification is one of six proposals.

Only five or six people own the land

along M-275, Vatsis says. "There's been a little conning, in my opinion."

The township should be more concerned about local roads than "getting truck traffic to Flint," said resident Sheila Outley, a former president of Concerned Citizens for West Bloomfield.

Bernadine Edwards, a West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation commissioner, called Southfield a "cement canyon." She predicted the highway would force the same congestion on West Bloomfield.

Resident Lorna McEwen forecast that in 10 years, if the highway is built, people will move north from West Bloomfield, continuing a pattern of urban sprawl.

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Farmington Observer

USPS 187-840

Published every Monday and Thursday by the Observer & Electric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48150. Second-class postage paid at Livonia, Michigan 48151. Address all mail (subscriptions, change of address, Form 3579) to P.O. Box 2428, Livonia, Michigan 48151. Telephone 591-0500.

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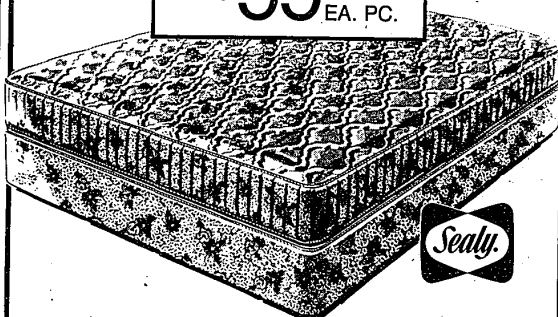
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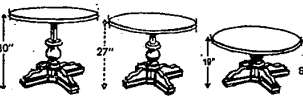
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