

# Sewer 'watchdog' committee is Great Suburban Hope

By TOM LONERGAN



COLEMAN YOUNG  
Feeding the blows

the city's sewage treatment plant to meet federal clean water rules.

Large sewer and water rate increases in recent years, according to Detroit, have been necessary to bring the sewage treatment plant into compliance with federal law.

**Detroit vs. Suburbs: A special committee would be a first-round win in the bout to wrest control of the regional water system from Mayor Young.**

The consent judgment was the result of a federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suit which cited the treatment plant as a major polluter of the Detroit River and Lake Erie.

The plant, which processes about 700 million gallons of sewage daily from Detroit and more than 70 suburban communities, missed a Dec. 31 deadline to improve sewage treatment. The city has asked that the consent judgment be amended to give it more time.

The committee preparing amendments includes Felkens, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, whom Felkens appointed last year as administrator of the treatment plant; Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Howard Tanner, and the regional EPA administrator from Chicago.

HAMPTON SAID Oakland County

has asked that a budget monitoring committee include representatives from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties. The committee is needed, he said, "to keep abreast of expenditures and consultant's fees, if no other reason."

"We haven't gotten into the specifics of what the committee is going to do," Hampton said.

Meanwhile, suburban mayors, township supervisors and village presidents are scheduled to meet Saturday morning in Oakland County to rally for a plan to regionalize the water and sewer system.

Led by Oakland County Drain Commissioner George Kuhn, suburban officials plan a petition drive to place the system's governing board under regional rather than Detroit political control. A referendum on a change in state law is planned.

Oakland County, through Kuhn, has been a consistent critic of DWSD's spending and the number of personnel needed to staff the treatment plant.

YOUNG'S NEWEST director of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, Charles Beckham, has ordered the department to follow a new ac-

counting system, according to Hampton. The attorney said Beckham is making "a valiant effort to reshape what's going on over there."

It's estimated that new sewage treatment rates, effective until June 30, 1981, will raise \$180.5 million in revenues for the sewer and water system.

Young's assistant sewage plant administrator, Joe Moore Jr., a consultant from Texas, told Felkens in November that it will cost \$98 million to meet water and air pollution control guidelines by Dec. 31, 1982.

Despite the city of Detroit's strong opposition, an Oakland County lawyer says federal Judge John Felkens is "not backing down" about a proposed special committee to monitor the city sewer and water system's spending.

William Hampton of Farmington Hills was among a group of lawyers who met last week with Felkens to give the chief federal judge suggestions on what a so-called "watchdog committee" would do.

Hampton has represented Oakland County in its challenge of new, higher sewage treatment rates.

"I THINK there will still be one (a watchdog committee)," Hampton said this week. "The judge indicated that he was not backing down. Detroit, of course, is very much opposed."

When Felkens would appoint such a committee, however, isn't known. The judge, who is on vacation, could not be reached for comment this week.

Hampton said the fate of the budget monitoring group may rest with a committee that will prepare amendments to the 1977 consent judgment. That judgment established a timetable for

## City to unveil sewage plans for 20 years

How much will it cost to dispose of sewage without polluting area waters during the next 20 years?

The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) is preparing a plan, which will be reviewed in two public meetings during February, that should

give area residents an idea of what the bill will be.

The meetings are at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6 in the Dearborn Civic Center, 15801 Michigan Ave. and 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7 in the Mercy College Conference Center, 8200 W. Outer

Drive, near the Southfield freeway, in Detroit.

DWSD estimates pollution control through the year 2000 could range from \$1.5 billion to \$2.5 billion and will be funded through a combination of federal, state and local money.

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