

Attorney warns

Condo bill hurts consumer control

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

Strong opposition reportedly is still felt toward proposed changes in state law that will affect the sale and development of condominiums and how association boards manage them.

The changes will remove the one strong protection area for the consumer, charged Birmingham attorney Robert M. Meisner. "This is a statute that I think is not in the best interest of consumers or developers."

"This is a terribly complex bill. It is making changes in a way that is upsetting policy and procedure of the past 20 years."

Attrition dropping, Bell lays off 350

Michigan Bell will lay off about 350 telephone operators next month, due to the state's prolonged economic slump and a declining number of customer calls requiring operator assistance.

"In the past few years, we've been able to avoid layoffs because the operator-services attrition rate was averaging almost 13 percent annually," said Robert L. Hurst, division manager for labor relations. "However, that natural attrition rate dropped to only 4 percent last year."

Hurst said the layoffs will affect about 230 of the company's 1,500 long-distance operators and about 120 of its 1,400 directory-assistance operators across the state.

He said 131 of those to be laid off work in the Detroit metropolitan area. The layoffs will be effective beginning Feb. 4.

"THE DECISION to lay off employees was a painful one," Hurst said, "but we find ourselves in the position of having more operators than we have work to do."

The number of calls requiring operator assistance — those handled by long-distance operators, as well as calls to directory assistance — has declined, he said.

"Last year alone, operator-handled

OCC campus has enrichment offerings for K-12 students

A series of enrichment short classes for children kindergarten to 12th grade and the academically gifted and talented will be offered at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College beginning in late January.

Registration is now in progress and will continue up to the first class meeting. For a complete listing of courses and/or registration information, call

Pharmacist fined \$150,000

An Oakland County pharmacist has been placed on five years' probation and ordered to pay more than \$150,000 on his conviction of two felony counts of Medicaid fraud.

John E. Ventresca was charged with billing the state for medications that weren't prescribed or dispensed. He

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The changes are incorporated in Senate Bill 530, which is before Gov. Blanchard, who has until Jan. 19 to sign or veto it.

MEISNER, WHO co-drafted the original state condominium statute in 1978, said the United Condominium Owners of Michigan has come out in "strong opposition" to the bill.

The attorney is conducting a non-credit course at Oakland University that will discuss effects of the law change.

Meisner said the bill would remove the state Department of Commerce's authority over the sale and development of condominiums.

call volumes were down 14 percent, and we expect a further decline this year," Hurst said.

"Until now, the company has been able to match the size of its work force to the work load through attrition and not hiring new operators," he explained.

"The sharp decline in our turnover rate also is a result of the state's continued economic slump," he added.

"People are holding on to their jobs longer because there are simply fewer employment options available."

MICHIGAN BELL has been downsizing its overall workforce since 1980 to "better match the size of the employee body to the amount of work we have to do," he said.

From a mid-1980 high of 32,500 employees, Michigan Bell's payroll has fallen by more than 5,000 to a year-end 1982 total of 27,050. The force reductions have been accomplished through natural attrition and through special voluntary retirement-incentive programs for both management and non-management employees, including operators.

The last time Michigan Bell laid off employees was in 1976, when 400 workers were laid off.

the campus at 471-7505 or 471-7567.

Topics of the courses range from cartooning to computers, from clowning to speed reading. Students can learn how to "extend your mathematical world" or "build your own radio."

Orchard Ridge is located on Orchard Lake Road south of I-696 in Farmington Hills.

was charged with violations while operating the Professional Building Pharmacy, 909 Woodward in Pontiac. Ingham Circuit Court Judge Ray Hotchkiss ordered Ventresca to reimburse the state \$140,099 for the fraudulent billings and \$12,591 for the state's investigative and attorney costs.

As a result, the individual buyer will have more legal responsibility, Meisner said. He said additional costs for professional services will be passed on to purchasers.

"The consumer has lost protection, and so has the developer," Meisner said. "He can't rely on the Department of Commerce to secure documents. It is going to cost more money because of greater risk handling condominium work. Condominiums are going to get a bad name."

MEISNER WILL discuss the proposed changes in a four-week, non-credit course offered by the Oakland University Division of Continuing Education beginning Jan. 26. The course will be conducted from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays at Birmingham Seaborn High School, Lincoln at Cranbrook.

In it, Meisner will cover consequences of the law change and background for efficient condominium operation. The course will be conducted from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays at Birmingham Seaborn High School, Lincoln at Cranbrook. Fee is \$75.

For registration and course information, call the Continuing Education office, 377-3120, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays.

Meisner said the course would be of special interest to community association members, management people, persons interested in buying condominiums and condominium developers.

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MEISNER charged that no public hearing was held on the bill, as was held five years ago for the original condominium statute. "We were promised public hearings around the state," he said. "We were also told a blue ribbon task force would be formed."

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