

# Kuhn sues Young over sewage plant prices

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

While state senators, Coleman A. Young and George W. Kuhn were opposed on most issues.

Now Detroit's mayor and Oakland County's drain commissioner, respectively, they again are on opposite sides, this time in a lawsuit stemming from the controversial Vista Disposal case. On behalf of residents of three sewage disposal districts — Clinton-Oakland, Evergreen-Farmington, and Southeastern Oakland County — Kuhn Thursday filed suit in U.S. District

Court against the city of Detroit.

KUHN'S COMPLAINT alleges that the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) unlawfully inflated prices for transporting, treating and disposing of the district's sewage.

To be heard by Judge George E. Woods, it is based on the U.S. vs. Beckham, or Vista Disposal, case. In it, the U.S. district attorney proved a conspiracy to bribe a DWSD employee to obtain sludge and scum hauling and disposal contracts.

Other defendants in Kuhn's suit include Young, who administers the De-

troit Waste Water Treatment Plant; former DWSD director Charles Beckham; disposal companies Vista, Michigan, Wayne, Wolverine and Wolverine Disposal-Detroit; and several individuals associated with those firms.

"This is the single most important lawsuit I've been involved in in 23 years of public life," said Kuhn, who was also Berkley mayor and a state senator representing West Bloomfield. "It's not sexy or glamorous; it's sewer water. But our goal is to clean up the Great Lakes waterways at the lowest possible cost."

A spokesman for Young said the

mayor isn't commenting on the lawsuit until city attorneys have examined the complaint.

IN THE WORKS for about three months, the law suit was mentioned in February to Oakland County commissioners during their party caucuses. Kuhn wanted to meet privately with the board on the subject but did not because such a meeting must be open to the public.

So commissioners did not get full details until Thursday when they were asked to quickly approve a resolution authorizing the civil lawsuit.

Kuhn said there was concern that Young would find out about the action and file his own suit on behalf of southeastern Michigan residents. "We feel Oakland County is better prepared and more adequately can represent the rate payers," Kuhn said. He also asked commissioners to bypass committees for speedy approval because of a time limit for filing against a deceased defendant's estate. "Once this becomes public, we have to move with dispatch."

BUT TWO Pontiac commissioners — the only black members — voted

against the resolution, which was approved by 20 others present. Both Walter Moore and Hubert Price Jr. opposed it on the bases of the speed and naming of fellow Democrat, Young, as a defendant.

"Ordinarily, with a matter of this magnitude, there's time to make its way through committee," explained Price, who leads the Democratic caucus. "And as I understand it, the mayor of Detroit has not been indicted. I oppose linking the mayor in the absence of indictments."

"My opinion is that Coleman was exonerated," Moore added.

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