Panel recommends state help conserve Cranbrook, Village

A state Senate panel recommended spending $970,000 to conserve two privately owned cultural institutions — Greenfield Village and Cranbrook.

Chairman Jack Faxon, D-Farmington, said the Select Committee for the Advancement of the Arts and Humanities made its recommendation this week after on-site tours.

Other committee members are Senate Majority Leader John Engler of Mount Pleasant, Sens. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, Patrick McCollough, D-Dearborn, and William Sederberg, R-East Lansing.

ITS RECOMMENDATIONS:

• For Cranbrook, in Bloomfield Hills — $424,100 for restoration of its miniature water system; and $70,425 for preserving some bronze sculpture and statuary — total of $494,525.

• For Greenfield Village, in Dearborn — $275,000 for restoration of Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory and $500,000 to start a sesquicentennial project in the Henry Ford Museum.

Faxon called them "the two most significant privately owned cultural institutions in Michigan."

CRANBROOK, founded in 1922 by publisher George Booth, is a "280-acre architectural and artistic gem . . . in serious need of repair and restoration," Faxon said. Total estimated restoration cost is $15 million, "well beyond their financial capacity."

Greenfield Village, founded by Henry Ford in 1929, is in the process of renovating five premier buildings for $1.28 million. The Kresge Institute has made a $400,000 "challenge" grant for the Menlo Park lab, where Edison developed the electric light bulb and other inventions.

The Village's sesquicentennial project, observing Michigan's 150th anniversary of statehood, will be a time-line exhibit showing how the automobile has changed American society. Faxon called it "the first major change to the Henry Ford Museum since 1929."

It will cost $6 million — half in time and materials from the museum, half from cash donations.

Executive openings on increase in state, search firm says

Executives at the middle and upper levels could see a growth in job opportunities this year, according to a new survey.

An average of eight positions per company will be filled in 1986. Most of the growth will come in service firms.

Thirteen openings were projected by executives of service firms, while four openings were forecast by manufacturing firms.

THERE COULD be a shortage of available talent in Michigan, according to Richard Elwell, president of Elwell & Associates, an executive search firm in Ann Arbor.

"Increased hiring will increase the competition for talent and the organization that succeeds in recruiting the best talent will emerge as the leader in its industry," Elwell said.

The survey was commissioned by Elwell and conducted by Nordhaus Research Inc. of Southfield. Surveyed were presidents, CEOs and other high-level executives of Michigan corporations with sales of $10 million or more.

"The continuing expansion of existing companies and start-ups of high-tech firms in Michigan is creating the need to recruit talent from outside of the state. Companies can no longer steal people from each other within the state and still experience net growth," Elwell said.

HOW DO Michigan firms fill executive positions?

Among manufacturing firms, the "corporate grapevine" was the most common means of finding candidates and filling top slots (68 percent). Executive recruiters were retained, too (61 percent), the executives reported.

Those methods were followed by "advertising" (26 percent) and "personnel agencies" (15 percent).

Do Michigan companies have difficulty filling jobs and attracting executives to Michigan?

On this question, the survey was evenly split. Half of the respondents reported no difficulty, while the other half reported some difficulty in locating candidates for jobs who are both available and qualified. The problem is more acute in specialized industries.

nature

Woodchucks often seen in fields next to freeways

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

Mowed areas along freeways and open fields in the country are good places to spot Michigan's largest squirrel, the woodchuck.

To many of us, this animal is known as a groundhog. To the scientific community, it's Marmota monax.

No matter what you call it, this mammal, big enough to be seen readily in open fields from a moving car, measures about 18 inches in length and weighs about 10 pounds. From a distance, it looks like a brown mound of soil. But watch awhile, and you will see it begin to move.

WOODCHUCKS are built low to the ground and are designed for digging burrows in the ground, which they use for resting and raising their young. On Feb. 2, everyone looks to see if Punxsutawney Phil in Pennsylvania will see his shadow when he emerges from his hibernation burrow.

How do we know it's Phil and not Phyllis?

Animals seen in grassy fields early in spring are males that have awakened from their winter rest and are beginning to feed again. Females will emerge later and begin to feed on grasses and plants that are starting to turn green.

They will have to regain as much as 50 percent of the weight they lost during the winter.

MOST MAMMALS are nocturnal. Woodchucks are one of the few mammals active during the day. That is why I was able to see four woodchucks along I-275 from the airport south to Monroe the other day.

Most of the time, woodchucks feed on low grasses, but occasionally they will stand upright on their rear haunches. This behavior allows them to scan the area for potential predators.

Although the woodchuck's large size reduces the number of potential predators, fox, coyote, dogs, an occasional red-tailed hawk and man still take their toll each year.

Because they dig holes and eat some cash crops, some men consider them pests. In the Upper Peninsula, they are afforded no protection from hunting. Their close proximity to freeways also makes them vulnerable to traffic.

Next time you drive around town or along a freeway, see if you can spot a woodchuck grazing along the edge of a field.

Most of the time, woodchucks feed on low grasses, but occasionally they will stand upright on their rear haunches. This allows them to look for predators.

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20-75% OFF
MAY 1-10, 1986
It's simple 20-75% off on ALL our stuffed animals and fine selection of wooden toys.
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E — Ecstatic
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Give Mom a beautiful bouquet of flowers for Mother's Day...All you have to do...
• Accumulate $6 worth of receipts from the shops of Hunters Square/Tally Hall and bring them to the mall management office for verification.
• Each receipt must be dated between May 1 and May 10, 1986 to be eligible.
• Each person presenting $6 worth of receipts will secure a certificate for a bouquet of flowers.
• Flowers will be available for pickup on Fri., May 9 and Sat., May 10 at Hunters Square/Tally Hall to ensure a fresh bouquet for Mom on her special day.
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The Malaga Stack chair is designed to provide years of comfort and durability. Constructed of molded synthetic resin. It will not fade, discolor, rust and is non-heat absorbent. Stackable for easy storage.
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Let Mom take it easy - get her something she doesn't have to take care of!
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There's no size, color, brand or even scent to concern you. You can buy one in a short cut second, literally and, if time is short, you can deliver it personally, even on Sunday. Not bad, is it for a big ring.
The nice thing about a gift certificate is that it can be tailored to fit any budget, big or small, without a squeeze!
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A-Z we've got it and it's ALL on Sale, It's that simple!
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In the Continental Building across from Birmingham Theatre

Insurance costs crippling state, Murphy claims

Daniel T. Murphy, Republican gubernatorial hopeful, said soaring liability insurance costs are hitting taxpayers as well as governments and medical practitioners.

Accusing Democratic incumbent James Blanchard of failing to seek a legislative compromise, Murphy, the Oakland County executive, this week announced his own 10-point liability reform program in a State Capitol news conference.

"As a board member of a major hospital, I can tell you first hand that there has been no effort by the present governor to bring all minds together to develop a plan that is workable for the various industries," said Murphy, making his first bid for state office.

He said high liability and insurance costs were "crippling" Michigan as a place to do business.

HIS PROGRAM picked up many points in the Republican-controlled state Senate tort reform program:

• "Modify the joint and several liability" rule so that a defendant is responsible only for its percentage of the negligence — "not like today where large governmental units or hospitals are also named in lawsuits just because plaintiffs believe they can collect from those institutions."

• End "double dipping" — the practice of injured person collecting both from the insurance company and from a civil suit.

• Require pre-lawsuit arbitration through panels of doctors, hospitals, lawyers and lay people.

• Limit non-economic ("pain and suffering") damages. Murphy didn't mention a figure, but the Senate bill specifies a cap of $250,000.

• Restrict fees to attorneys in cases of unusually high awards to plaintiffs, and discourage "frivolous" lawsuits.

• Place a 10-year (instead of 20-year) statute of limitations on medical malpractice suits involving childbirth.

• Tighten restrictions on incompetent physicians and dentists, both by state government and by health care organizations.

IN OAKLAND County alone, Murphy said, 23 percent of practicing physicians say high insurance rates are forcing them to quit.

"Just the other day, I spoke to a pregnant woman who was asked by her obstetrician to pay him $1,200 up front to cover a portion of his liability insurance premium. Her doctor will refund 80 percent of the money after he delivers her baby," said Murphy, calling the case a symptom of a greater liability problem.

In a recent year, he said, lawsuits and settlements soaked up 30 percent of the Michigan Department of Transportation's roads and bridges construction budget, adding: "That money — that $15 million — could have been used to repair our roads."

Group seeks limit on lawyer fees in contingency cases

A group seeking a state constitution limit on attorneys fees said it has established a statewide system of petition circulators.

Alfred B. Swanson, speaking for the Grand Rapids-based Citizens Liability Action Committee, said CLAC seeks a Nov. 4 ballot proposal to limit contingency fee arrangements in personal injury and wrongful death suits.

Their constitutional amendment would limit such fees to 33 1/3 percent of the first $200,000 of any award, plus 5 percent of any additional amount. The balance of the award, less expenses, would go to the plaintiff.

CLAC WAS formed March 7. Its petitions are being circulated by manufacturers, bar owners, restaurateurs, insurance agents, car dealers, day schools, builders, contractors, beauty shops, charitable agencies and health care professionals.

CLAC members say they face difficulties in securing 304,601 valid voter signatures on petitions by July 7. C. William Sefton, committee press secretary, said, "It means we must generate at least 400,000 signatures to be sure of passing muster."

Information and petition materials are available on request to Committee Headquarters, Suite G-20, Atrium Building, 3251 Clayton, S.E., Grand Rapids 49546.

IT BLAMES the contingency fee as a major factor in the "court-clogging numbers of liability suits" and the staggering escalation of insurance costs in Michigan."

In 1984, there were four times as many such suits filed in Wayne County as were filed in Los Angeles County, where contingency fees are restricted by the State of California.

The Michigan Legislature has turned down at least one measure to limit contingency fees in its attempts to stem the liability crisis.

Insurers federation blasts Blanchard's insurance tax plan

The Michigan Insurance Federation today accused Gov. James Blanchard of trying to breathe new life into a $45 million tax increase on insurance premiums.

Tom Hoag, president of the Michigan Insurance Federation, and Joe Olsen, vice president of the MIF, made the allegation at a Lansing news conference.

The governor should spend more time developing strategies for bringing business into our state, instead of raising taxes that send a negative signal to anyone attempting to locate in Michigan," Olsen said.

HOUSE BILL 4702, the premium tax, is a tax on insurance company premiums of all domestic (Michigan-based) insurance companies. According to Hoagie Olsen, the tax would be passed on to policyholders in the form of higher premiums.

The revenue would be used to pay for Blanchard's proposed increases in property tax rebates. The administration argues that the increase would bring Michigan into line with other states.

"With 46 state insurance companies pay more than their fair share of state taxes when compared to other Michigan businesses, it is unfair to burden them, and our policyholders, with this tax increase," Hoag said.

They also quoted two public-opinion surveys which MIF commissioned showing that Michigan residents strongly oppose the proposed tax increase. One survey was conducted in September of 1985 and the other in March 1986.

"OF THOSE surveyed in September, 52 percent of the respondents opposed the proposal, while only 30 percent favored the premium tax. The more recent study showed opposition to the proposal growing with 62 percent opposing and only 24 percent favoring the tax," Olsen said.

The Michigan Insurance Federation represents most property-casualty insurance companies.

"We have only 54 domestic companies in Michigan, while our neighboring states have at least double that number, and Illinois leads the way with almost 200 domestic property-casualty insurance companies."

Training for SAT, ACT exams offered at Oakland University

Persons planning to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing (ACT) exam may prepare for them at workshops sponsored by Oakland University. The exams are required by some colleges for admission.

A three-session SAT workshop will be conducted from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 17 and 24, and from 9 a.m.-noon on May 31.

A three-session ACT workshop will be held from 9 to 3 on May 17 and 24, and from 9 a.m.-noon on June 7.