

Exit polling change prompts confusion

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

The Michigan Secretary of State and CBS News hammered out an agreement late Nov. 3 allowing exit pollsters within 20 feet of entrances to buildings that house polling places.

Until then, Michigan had enforced a 100-foot limit on exit polling.

But word of the relaxed limit didn't filter down to all of the state's 1,580 local clerks by Nov. 4, Election Day.

So Farmington City Clerk Josephine Bushey found herself

advising an ABC News election reporter from Farmington Hills that she had to do polling no closer than 100 feet from Precinct 2 -- 10 Mile Community School, 32789 10 Mile.

"We didn't begin to notify county clerks until election morning," said George Herstek, a Secretary of State Elections Division elections specialist.

Because she didn't know about the new, 3 agreement, Bushey did the right thing in enforcing the 100-foot limit, Herstek said.

In late October, Bushey agreed to let the ABC News election reporter do Election Day exit polling at Pre-

cinet 2, but informed her of the 100-foot limit.

When Precinct 2 chairwoman Gloria Wagner found that the election reporter had set up a table near the exit door at Ten Mile Community School on Election Day, she called Bushey and asked what to do. "I told her to exit the exit pollster," Bushey said.

THE ELECTION reporter told Wagner and later Bushey of the change but couldn't produce written documentation because she only learned about it the evening before. The reporter agreed to move out-

side, 100 feet away.

"I called county elections director Howard Altman and he said he hadn't heard about the change. He said I did the right thing. He stood behind me," Bushey said.

Altman said he didn't learn about the change until mid-morning Election Day -- after he called the Secretary of State following several inquiries from local clerks. "We simply didn't have time to call all 50 city and township clerks or even get back to all of those who had called that morning," he said. "The phones were constantly ringing around here with Election Day business."

Until this election, the state Elections Division interpreted state law to include exit polling. State law prohibits campaigning, soliciting donations, circulating petitions and selling tickets within 100 feet of an

entrance to a building that houses a polling place. Exit polling is not specifically mentioned.

"But based on several federal court decisions in other states -- and to avoid a federal suit here with the national news media -- there was some question whether our law could be successfully interpreted to include exit polling," Herstek said. "So an agreement was made with the national news media allowing exit polling within 20 feet of an entrance to a building where a polling place is located."

The state Attorney General's office concurred that state law couldn't be used to enforce the 100-foot limit.

Altman rapped the way the change was announced. "It seems there's always something to screw up the elections we work so hard to prepare for."

EXIT POLLSTERS generally try to position themselves as close as practical without getting in the way of the voting process. Exit polling differs from campaigning in that exit pollsters don't electorally design, they don't speak to voters until they leave the polling place, and then only to ask them to fill out a short questionnaire.

"The procedure is, of course, voluntary for the voter -- anyone not interested in participating will not be spoken to further," said John Brennan Jr., ABC News Polling Unit elections coordinator.

"Answers from any one individual will never be looked at alone. They are merged with thousands of others from across the state and the nation as part of a representative sample of everyone voting today."

Challenged

Conference policy under fire

By Joanne Maliszowski
staff writer

At least one Farmington Hills resident is taking exception to the number of city council members who plan to attend a national conference sponsored by the National League of Cities.

"I think we are sending too many people to the national conferences, which are the expensive ones," council watcher Aldo Vagnozzi said Monday.

Vagnozzi's comments preceded the council's approval of expected expenses for three members -- Donn Wolf, Ben Marks and Joan Dudley -- who will attend the 63rd annual Congress of Cities in San Antonio, Texas, later this month.

The city will pay approximately \$3,000 in expenses related to the conference -- travel, lodgings, conference registration and meals -- for the three.

Vagnozzi offered no criticism of Dudley, who is not a regular conference-goer. But he chided Marks and

Wolf for their regular attendance -- at city expense of intergovernmental conferences.

Wolf told Vagnozzi that if he reviewed city records, he would notice that the councilman does not regularly attend conferences as a city representative. As a Detroit Edison employee, Wolf often attends governmental conferences as a utility representative. Marks was absent Monday.

VAGNOZZI TOLD the council that if attendance is considered important, attending council members should be expected to report back to the full council on their return.

"I don't see any visible reports coming from these conferences," Vagnozzi said, asking for both oral and written reports.

Wolf told Vagnozzi that oral reports have been made to the council following various conferences. Wolf, for example, filed a written report on the establishment of fund-raising foundations following a conference

earlier this year. But Wolf's report was made after Dudley requested one from the councilman she often criticizes for heavy conference attendance.

Though Mayor Joe Alkateeb supports oral reports from council members, he was opposed to written reports.

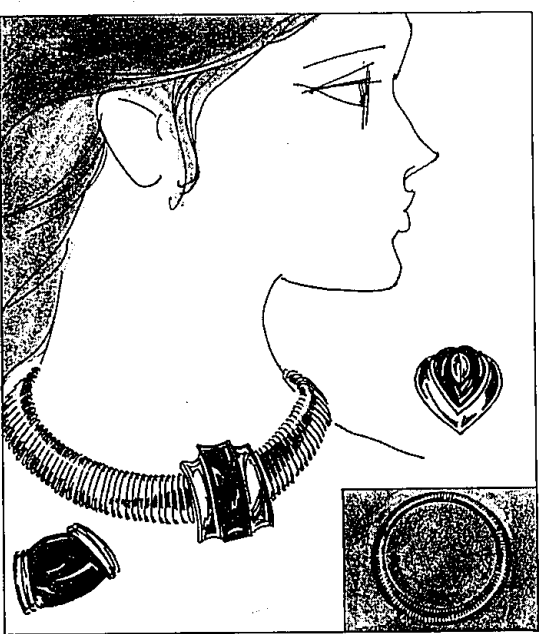
"I think the point is well-taken with regard to a little discussion," Councilman Terry Sever said.

Council expenses, particularly related to conferences and seminars, have been a controversial council issue.

In a policy established in 1984 -- at Dudley's request -- council members are required to seek council approval before spending public money on conferences, seminars, luncheons or other functions. The previous policy allowed council members to turn in expense sheets to the city manager's office for reimbursement.

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