

# Two ballot issues

## Senate splits cleanup, parks bonds

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

A two-week logjam broke in less than an hour as the Michigan Senate voted overwhelmingly to put two bond issues before voters Nov. 8.

"Timing is everything in politics. The mood is right this year," said Sen. Vern Ehlers, R-Grand Rapids, the shepherd who guided the flock of six bills to passage Wednesday. "Five years!" beamed Sen. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, author of the bill to put an environmental cleanup proposal on the ballot. That was how long she had sponsored legislation for toxic waste cleanup and solid waste disposal. Gov. James J. Blanchard incorporated the idea in his 1988 state of the state message.

The bills go to the House where their future is uncertain. If the House passes different versions, Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-

Mount Pleasant, and House Speaker Gary Owen, D-Ypsilanti, will appoint a six-member conference committee to iron out differences.

HERE IS WHAT the Senate's version would put before voters:

- A \$700 million environmental protection bond issue.
- A companion bill would split the money: \$450 million for cleaning up toxic waste sites, \$175 million for solid waste (trash) disposal; \$50 million for water pollution controls; and 25 million as Michigan's portion in a Great Lakes protection fund. If other states fail to join the Great Lakes fund, the \$25 million would go into water pollution programs.

Senators voted 35-0 on the bond issue (SB 651). Among the three absentees were Jack Faxon, D-Farming-

ton Hills, and Richard Fessler, R-Union Lake.

- A \$100 million recreation bond

issue. A companion bill would allocate \$70 million for state parks facilities and \$30 million in matching grants to municipalities.

This bill, SB 865, was more controversial, passing 28-5. All Observer & Eccentric area senators supported it except Faxon and Fessler, who were absent.

A week earlier, Sens. William Faust, D-Westland, and George Hart, D-Deerborn, had joined a bloc to defeat the measure, with Faust charging the formula gave too little to Wayne County.

A THIRD, highly controversial bill also was passed — SB 48 placing a \$2 per ton tipping fee for solid waste landfills. It will generate \$20 million in new revenue, said Ehlers, its sponsor.

That tax passed 21-13. It was supported by area Republicans Doug Cruce of Troy, Robert Geake of Northville and Rudy Nichols of Waterford, but opposed by Democrats Faust and Hart. Faxon and Fessler were absent.

The Michigan Municipal League and many Oakland County officials opposed the fee as "an unfair and additional tax burden on these public health measures" in the MML's words.

But in a key amendment, senators broke the "tie-bar" that would have used the fee to pay off the environmental bond issue. The fee is now a separate question.

No new taxes will be needed to pay the \$70 million annual debt ser-

vice cost for the 20-year life of the bond issue, Ehlers said, because other bond issues are being paid off.

A college physicist before entering politics, Ehlers said he has two criteria for using bonds rather than current revenues: 1) they are for capital projects whose life is greater than the term of the bond issue; and the need is so pressing that it's cheaper to pay off bonds than suffer the damage of not doing the project.

EHLERS SAID the Wayne County objections to the recreation bond issue still aren't resolved.

As originally proposed by Gov. Blanchard and passed by the House, the environmental bond issue provided some economic development money. The Senate objected, inserting in its place the water pollution control provisions.

There was much committee and corridor debate over breaking Blanchard's \$800 million proposal into two separate ballot issues.

But majority leader Engler said there were "solid constitutional grounds" for doing so. He said ballot issues are supposed to be specific and not too broad.

Sen. Lana Pollack, D-Ann Arbor, voted reluctantly to put the environmental bond issue on the ballot. A congressional candidate, Pollack charged that "Republicans refused to stand up to the issue of holding polluters responsible for their actions." She said the public is bearing too much of the cost burden.



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## Orion Oaks plan goes to public

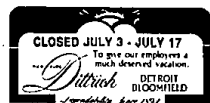
The Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission will hold a public hearing at 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 6, on the proposed development of Orion Oaks County Park in Orion Township.

Hearing site is the parks and recreation commission administration office at 2800 Watkins Lake Road, between Pontiac Lake and Scott Lake Roads, in Waterford Township, west of Pontiac.

The proposed master plan for the 927-acre parcel includes a universally designed programmed public use facility with some limited day-use. The park will provide overnight accommodations and serve as a multi-purpose facility for recreational and educational use by groups and organizations.

In 1980, Orion Oaks was acquired as Oakland's ninth county park. The property, including a 97-acre lake, was part of 2,400 acres owned by Chrysler Corp. and made available to the state of Michigan.

Public comments regarding the plan may be presented at the public hearing or addressed to Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission, 2800 Watkins Lake Road, Pontiac 48054



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