

WB Township responds to developer's suit

By Jeff Counts
staff writer

Lawyers for West Bloomfield Township have filed a response to lawsuits aimed at opening a prime piece of undeveloped land to intense development.

Seniors award started

The Concerned Citizens Awards program, a statewide effort to recognize Michigan's mature adults for outstanding community and neighborhood service, has been introduced by Citizens Insurance Co. of America, Howell.

The "Concerned Citizens" awards will recognize mature adults who have demonstrated exceptional service to benefit their communities. Outstanding seniors who have contributed service to benefit their neighborhood or an individual neighbor will be considered for the "Concerned Neighbor" awards.

"We're excited about this awards program because it provides an opportunity to recognize the ongoing heroes of our communities and neighborhoods," said Roy Westman, president of Citizens Insurance. "We're involving the independent insurance agents that represent us, senior citizens organizations and the general public in honoring the outstanding mature adults in our state."

A "Concerned Citizen" award and a "Concerned Neighbor" award will be presented in each of five regions in Michigan. The regional winners will be considered for the "Concerned Citizen of the Year" award and "Concerned Neighbor of the Year" award for the entire state. The awards program will be conducted annually by Citizens.

Each of the regional and state winners will receive a commemorative award specifically customized for this program. Each of the state winners will also receive a one-week, trip-for-two to Hawaii (or the equivalent) from Citizens Insurance Co.

CANDIDATES FOR these awards must be residents of Michigan who are at least 60 years of age or a member of any senior citizens or retirement organization. Their community or neighborhood service must have occurred during the 12-month period immediately preceding the nomination deadline date.

People throughout the state can nominate mature adults for these awards. Nomination forms can be obtained from Citizens agents and participating senior citizens organizations throughout Michigan.

Nominations must be received by 5 p.m. on Dec. 1 at the main office of Citizens, in Howell. Judging will be conducted by a special committee composed of Citizens agents, senior citizens and civic leaders.

"The Concerned Citizens Awards program is a worthwhile effort that will recognize mature adults for their contributions to the local community or neighborhood," said Farmington Hills resident Ernie Harwell, advertising spokesperson for Citizens. Harwell is better known as the radio announcer for the Detroit Tigers.

To stimulate statewide involvement in the Concerned Citizens Awards program, Citizens has distributed special promotional packages to its network of 500 agencies and 600 senior citizens organizations in Michigan. The package includes a newsletter, promotional flyers and a stand-up display with postage-paid nomination cards attached for convenient mailing.

Politicos advised to avoid poles

If you're working on a political campaign this fall, Detroit Edison urges you to stay away from the poles — the utility poles, that is.

Supporters of political candidates or issues should display their signs only in approved locations — but never on electric utility poles.

Hanging campaign signs — or any object — on utility poles could be dangerous, according to Detroit Edison.

Campaign workers who hang signs on utility poles may come in direct contact with an electrical wire or touch a wire with a ladder they are using. Serious injury or death could result.

Placing signs on utility poles also can endanger the safety of Detroit Edison linemen. Nails or other devices used to hang the signs could injure linemen or interfere with their work.

Detroit Edison suggests that campaign workers follow their local ordinances when looking for places to post their signs.

The township denied all of developer Robert Sosnick's charges in its response filed in circuit court. The response contends that Sosnick has not pursued remedies at the township level before filing suit.

"We don't expect the case to go to court for nearly a year," said Supervisor Dorothy McIntosh, who has vowed to fight two suits filed by Sosnick.

She said township lawyers will need to line up expert witnesses and do other legal work before the case can go to trial.

At stake in the legal battle is the zoning of the remaining undeveloped portions of section 34, which lie in the path of any possible extension of Northwestern Highway. The section, which has been called the "golden triangle" because of its potential value to developers, is bounded by

Orchard Lake, Maple, Farmington and 14 Mile roads.

Sosnick, who was involved in developing The Palace, has been trying to develop multiple units in the section. He had once planned to develop a hotel and offices at the site.

SOSNICK'S SUITS, filed in Oakland County Circuit Court in July, sought damages to excess of \$10,000 from the township, claiming the township deprived him of all the land's value and had taken it without compensation.

There are single-family homes in about half of the section, and the township wants the remainder developed for single-family residences. There is commercial development along Orchard Lake Road, and offi-

cial have said that corridor will continue to see that type of development.

Sosnick's suit comes during a year in which anti-development sentiment is strong. The township board has imposed a moratorium on building multiple dwellings while it is putting in place more restrictive zoning ordinances governing multiple dwellings.

The Sosnick suit made mention of the political situation in the township, saying that it "succumbed to citizen pressure and had totally abdicated its planning responsibilities to mob rule."

THE SUIT SAYS that Organizations United to Save Our Township "launched a systematic plan to

harass and intimidate township officials whom it views as pro-development," as part of its strategy to stop development in the township. The suit notes that OUST started a recall drive against four township officials, charging them with allowing too much development.

On the recall, the township response notes that OUST started a recall campaign, but rejected Sosnick's contention that "such citizen pressure tactics have caused a virtual breakdown of township government and its planning function."

The Sosnick suit further charged:

- The township acted to limit or stop further development of multiple family housing.

- That the township's master plan calls for a mixture of housing,

which includes multiple family housing and not just single-family housing.

- The land owners have been trying since the early 1980s to have the zoning for section 34 changed so planned unit developments could take place, but that the township board has refused.

THE TOWNSHIP RESPONSE notes that it is changing its zoning ordinances governing multiple dwellings, but that its failure to change those ordinances doesn't constitute a refusal to rezone the property.

The response also contends that Sosnick didn't file a petition to rezone the property until Sept. 16, 1987.

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