

SEMCOG's urban sprawl plan riles county

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By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The message: Halt and cease efforts toward regional government, at least temporarily.

The sender: Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The recipient: Southeast Michigan Council of Gov-

ernment.

Oakland county commissioners tried to send the above message last week, at their year-end session, traditionally the longest of the year as officials wrap up unfinished business — including adoption of the new budget.

But this item is more than unfashioned business. It's a simmering issue threatening to further undermine relations between Oakland

County and SEMCOG which encompasses seven counties.

Commissioners are so concerned about SEMCOG's most recent attempt to coordinate area growth — and curb urban sprawl — they considered, but did not adopt, a motion to withhold the county's dues. That, of course, could lead to expulsion and an open and festering break.

"I WOULD INTRODUCE a resolution to withhold financial support

(for SEMCOG)," said commissioner Roy Rewold, R-Oakland Township, "but I don't know if it would get enough support. . . I don't know if we're ready for that."

Rewold, outgoing county board chairman, made his comments in the Republican caucus before Thursday's meeting. His motion was not brought up for a vote, but many of his colleagues held similar views.

"I don't think we should shoot all our bullets at one time," said commissioner John Pappageorge, R-Troy, GOP caucus chairman. "Instead, let's adopt this resolution and see what happens."

The item causing concern is called the Regional Development Initiative (RDI), a general document suggesting local governments in metro Detroit cooperate to control urban sprawl.

SEMCOG hasn't acted on RDI, but its executive committee was scheduled to consider the proposal Friday. While some Oakland commissioners, including Marilyn E. Gosling,

R-Bloomfield Hills, and Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield, are willing to look at RDI, some others believe SEMCOG is moving too quickly, as if RDI is already policy rather than something under review.

"We want SEMCOG to stop RDI," said commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills. "At least until we (and our communities) fully understand it."

RDI HAS SOME good concepts, Wolf said, such as the possibility of establishing enterprise zones and establishing impact fees. "But the good points are overshadowed by the bad," he said. "We don't want anything infringing on home rule (which might infringe on local zoning authority, for example) or that might lead to tax base sharing."

Commissioner David L. Moffitt, R-Farmington Hills, expressed his concerns this way: "We need to control urban sprawl. But we can't undermine local authority in the process."

Gosling, who was chairwoman of

the SEMCOG committee that drafted RDI, said she is "embarrassed" at the reaction of her colleagues. "I don't think they have read it, I don't think they understand it."

She characterized RDI as the framework for beginning the process of controlling urban sprawl. To accept RDI at this point is not binding, she said. Nor does it necessarily commit the county.

The resolution, adopted by a 15-10 vote by Oakland commissioners is relatively unobtrusive. It directs the board's General Government Committee to do an in-depth review of RDI.

Republican commissioners Gosling and Don Jensen voted against the resolution with eight Democrats.

The resolution further recommends, "all further action and/or implementation of the RDI, or any part of the RDI, . . . be fully and completely halted and ceased until there has been a full analysis and review by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners."

County officials get pay increases

County Executive Daniel T. Murphy and other top officials were among the Oakland County officials who will get salary hikes in 1992.

As part of the budget adopted by commissioners last Thursday at their year-end meeting, Murphy,

prosecutor Richard Thompson, county clerk Lynn D. Allen, treasurer C. Hugh Dohany, drain commissioner George W. Kuhn and Sheriff John F. Nichols will get salary increases amounting to 4.5 percent.

County commissioners did not get

a raise this year. They're still making \$20,984 per year.

Also getting a 4.5 percent pay hike are about 3,000 county employees who are not part of unions or bargaining committees.

The executive's salary increases from \$101,870 to \$106,245; the prosecutor's from \$87,880 to \$91,835; the clerk's from \$58,889 to \$61,568; the treasurer's from \$70,784 to \$73,969; the drain commissioner's from \$76,881 to \$80,341; and the sheriff's from \$76,881 to \$80,341.

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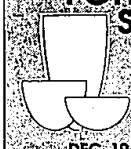
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