

OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the week leading up to May 7.

BIRMINGHAM

Art fest: The 17th annual Birmingham Fine Arts Festival continues 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today at Shalin Park, south of Maple in downtown Birmingham. More than 300 artists from the U.S. and Canada are expected to display their works in ceramics, glass, fiber and other media.

CLARKSTON

Greek to them: Clarkston's new elementary school will be designed in a Greek Revival style, resembling the historic homes along the town's main street. The new school is expected to be ready for the 1999-2000 school year.

FARMINGTON HILLS

Apple of their eye: Applebee's national restaurant chain is looking at expanding into the Hurwood Shopping Center at Grand River and Drake roads. The chain's nearest restaurant is at Twelve Oaks Shopping Center in Novi.

LAKE ORION

New heritage: Lake Orion merchants decided to accept chamber of commerce funding for a Friday night program in conjunction with Heritage Days, a community event set for Sept. 19-20 at Civic Center Park in nearby Orion Township. Merchants were upset with the chamber of commerce's decision to move Heritage Days away from the downtown area.

LATHRUP VILLAGE

No consensus: Residents are split over whether the city should buy an old home behind its Southfield Road city hall for use as a community center. The Lathrup Village Historical Society wants to preserve the 1939 Cape Cod, while the Lathrup Village Homeowners Association wants it torn down or moved to expand the adjacent Annie Lathrup Park.

LEONARD

Warm memories: It may be too warm to use them at the time, but members of the Leonard Summer Festival are selling Afghan blankets with historic local sites as a fund-raiser for the July 18 event. The Afghans depict such historic local sites as the Leonard Hotel and the community's 1896 drug store.

ROCHESTER HILLS

Had enough: Worn out from the council's long meetings and political posturing, councilwoman Linda Raschke has resigned with 18 months to go in her term. "It's time to pass the baton on to someone else," Raschke said. The vacancy must be filled within 30 days under the city charter.

SOUTHFIELD

Friends on ice: The Southfield Ice Company Show, a community tradition for 27 years, is benefiting this year from \$10,000 raised through Friends of the Ice Show, a private group formed to boost funding for the volunteer skating spectacular. This year's show is set for May 13-17 at the Southfield Civic Arena, 26000 Evergreen.

TROY

New citizens: The dream of U.S. citizenship came true for more than 100 people Monday as they were sworn in during ceremonies at Bharatiya Temple, Troy. Ceremonies were sponsored by the Detroit Coalition for Responsible Immigration Policy, a Bloomfield-Hills-based organization of Arab, Asian, Chaldean, Jewish, Hispanic and Polish communities.

WEST BLOOMFIELD

Land battle: A battle is brewing over a strip of state-owned land once planned for a Northwestern Highway/Haggerty Road extension. The state wants to sell the parcel but the Road Commission for Oakland County has a lawsuit in place to block any sale until the state somehow extends Northwestern to relieve traffic congestion West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills.

Boat launch bill stirs commission debate

With more than 450 navigable lakes and rivers within Oakland County, commissioners often find themselves trying to balance the interests of two frequently hostile groups.

That was the case at the regular meeting of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Thursday during a debate on public access sites for launching boats and water craft.

At issue was a resolution in support of legislation sponsored by State Rep. Penny Crisman, R-Rochester. That bill, House Bill 4383 would, among other things, require state officials to hold public hearings before establishing new public access sites.

The frequently hostile groups on this issue are home owners who live on lakes and boat owners who don't.

The board overwhelmingly approved the resolution, but not before commissioners outlined the concerns and complaints of both sides.

Commissioner Lawrence Obrecht, R-Lake Orion said home owners sometimes get upset with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for installing public launching sites, even on lakes that are surrounded by private property.

Obrecht is also concerned about maintaining public access sites once they are established. Too often, he said, the DNR doesn't provide for the upkeep of access sites, and those responsibilities fall to local officials.

Such launching sites are reasonable, according to state officials, because lakes are considered

public property, even though the surrounding land may be privately owned. Individuals may own the land, but the lake is public property and therefore available to everybody.

But that policy can have disastrous results, noted commissioner Donna Huntton, R-Clarkston. "People pay high taxes to live on a lake only to see the quality of the lake deteriorate because of too many boaters."

Commissioner Sue Ann Douglas, R-Rochester, estimated that as many as 95 percent of the boat owners don't live on lakes. But they're voters, Douglas said, and they have some rights to lake access.

Conflict between home owners and boaters has existed for more than a decade. But the problem appears to be getting worse as

more and more people own boats.

At Cass Lake, for example, residents frequently complain about boaters and people on personal watercraft disrupting the tranquility of the lake — the very reason they bought on the lake and pay high taxes.

Crisman's proposed legislation — which has been approved in the House of Representatives and referred to the Senate — would also provide for a task force to review and establish a procedure for installing public access sites.

The task force would be made up of 20 people representing various interest groups, said the lawmaker, including representatives of the boating industry, homeowners' associations and locally elected officials.

Bills would let drivers sign up as organ donors

Drivers renewing their licenses will be asked to include organ donation willingness under three bills moving through the Michigan Legislature.

Cost to the state: \$104,000 for pamphlets, return postage costs and setting up a registry.

The bills would:

- Simplify the driver's license information. The licensee could sign a statement that he or she was an organ and tissue donor under the Public Health Code (Senate Bill 458).

- Require the Secretary of State to give an applicant for a driver's license information on making an anatomical gift and forming a central registry.

- Require the same when a person applies for a state identification card.

All three bills go to the House, the first for passage, the other two for concurrence in Senate amendments.

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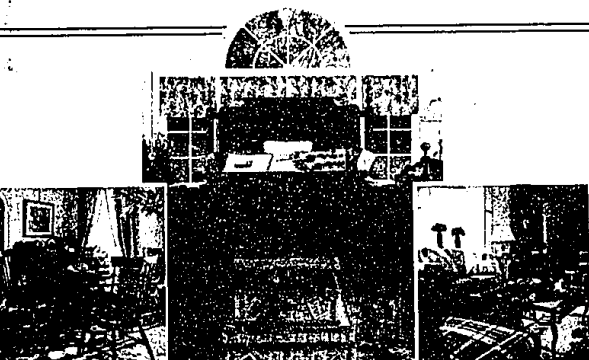
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