

Courts asked to give kids more voice

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Dan Wilson, a divorced parent from Macomb County, insists Oakland needs a Citizens Advisory Committee to assure that parents and children have more voice in operations within the Friend of the Court.

Wilson said the state legislature recognized the need in 1996 when it passed a law requiring counties to establish a citizens advisory committee to advocate for children and to assure all sides are represented in custodial disputes.

The idea isn't new, according to board chair John P. McCulloch, R-Royal Oak. But while the legislature did pass a law calling for citizens advisory councils, it didn't address important considerations about what the councils would do — or how they would be financed.

'Unfunded mandate'

"It's another unfunded mandate," said McCulloch, who said the board on several occasions has asked the legislature for clarification and money to establish the advisory councils. He noted that 10 out of 83 Michigan counties have so far established citizen advisory councils.

But Wilson, who himself has had difficulty exercising visitation rights, said the need is so pressing that Oakland should be more active. He has already been successful getting Macomb County commissioners to support a council in that community, and Oakland — as well as other communities — should follow suit.

Parents for Children

He has already organized a group called Parents for Children to advocate for advisory councils. If Oakland in support of an advisory council, his group will lobby Lansing to provide some direction and funding, Wilson said.

Edward Sosnick, chief judge of the Oakland Circuit Court, agrees family issues are important, as indicated by the courts restructuring earlier this year establishing a Family Division. But Sosnick isn't clear on the structure or role any citizens advisory committee might have.

Like the county board, Sosnick would like some clarification from the legislature.

In the meantime, establishing an advisory board is a function and responsibility of the county board, the judge said.

Rep. Knollenberg: Say no to 'low flow'

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Consumers have a right to toilets that work. That's what U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg said Thursday during a surprise appearance at the regular meeting of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners where he talked about a topic of growing importance.

Knollenberg's appearance was a definite highlight in an otherwise short and routine board meeting. More important than the meeting itself, perhaps, was the budget informational meeting that followed. It was the first of three such meetings scheduled for the county's \$574.7 million budget is to be adopted on Sept. 30.

Knollenberg took the podium during the public comment portion of the agenda to tout legislation he has introduced to counter the 1992 Energy Policy and Conservation Act.

The legislation addresses shower heads and other plumbing fixtures, but the Bloomfield Hills Republican is particularly

concerned about that part of the bill requiring toilets that use no more than 1.6 gallons of water per flush.

The problem, Knollenberg said, is that toilets using 1.6 gallons frequently don't work.

Frustrated consumers are already finding ways to circumvent the 1992 law. Some go to Canada to buy larger capacity toilets — even though violating the 1992 law is punishable by a \$2,500 fine.

"People just want toilets (and other plumbing fixtures) that work," Knollenberg said.

Knollenberg's measure already has the backing of the plumbing industry. Furthermore, commissioner Shalley Taub, R-Bloomfield Hills, has introduced a resolution in support of Knollenberg's bill.

Although Taub's resolution is in committee, it faces little opposition.

Commissioner Donn Wolf, R-Farmington Hills said the legislation strikes a philosophical chord.

"I think we should keep government out of our bathrooms," he said.

OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the week leading up to Aug. 23.

BIRMINGHAM
Bunny hunt: Dawn Bradford of Birmingham was among more than 300 local women who tried out for the honor of being Playboy Magazine's "Playmate 2000". The winner, to be chosen during a nationwide search, will grace the magazine's January 2000 issue. Applicants were photographed — in swimsuits — at the Dearborn Hyatt Regency.

FARMINGTON HILLS
Good-bye, Joe: Farmington School Board member Joseph Svoke has resigned from the board, citing a potential conflict of interest. Svoke was recently hired by an electrical firm that holds contracts with the district.

LAKE ORION
Governor's on his way: Gov. John Engler will discuss the state's economic outlook in a Sept. 2 appearance before the Lake Orion Chamber of Commerce.
The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 a.m. at the Kings Court Castle in Canterbury Village. Cost is \$15 for members of any area chamber, \$20 for non-members. Reservations are available by calling (248) 693-6300. Engler is running for re-election against Democratic party nominee Geoffrey Fieger.

ORCHARD LAKE VILLAGE
Update: Orchard Lake Village isn't the same place it was 15-20 years ago, its land is almost all developed, its septic systems have been replaced by municipal water and sewer and its nature preserve is now a reality. That's why city officials are considering updating the community's master plan, last revised in 1982. "Our current master plan is woefully inadequate," planning commission chairman Vincent Valvona said.

ROCHESTER HILLS
Battle brewing: Rochester Hills officials said they'll try to block any proposal that would move the 52nd District Court's third division from the city. The lease expires in December for the current court house, on Barclay Circle, near Rochester Road. A county proposal would move the court to Auburn Hills.

SOUTHFIELD
Big development: Three projects, totaling \$200 million in new development are proposed for the city's Evergreen Road/Northwestern Highway/I-696 triangle. Projects include a 400-unit condominium development on Evergreen Road, a Staples office supply store on the site of a former Northwestern Highway motel and three mid-rise office buildings in the City Centre area across from the Southfield Civic Center.

ROAD WATCH

Road Improvements could cause delays on the following Oakland County Roads this week. Roads are open unless noted. Alternative routes are advised in all instances.

I-275 AT GRAND RIVER
Community: Farmington Hills
Details: The ramp from northbound I-275 to east Grand River will be closed through Nov. 15. A detour is posted.

I-496
From: Franklin to Inkster
Community: Southfield
Details: Shoulders will be closed along westbound I-496 through Sept. 20.

BALDWIN ROAD
From: I-75 to Delevan
Community: Auburn Hills and Lake Ann Arbor
Details: The road is being widened from two lanes to a six lane boulevard. The project is expected to be completed by Oct. 31.

BRIDGE LAKE
From: Rattles Lake Road to Davisburg Road
Community: Springfield Township
Details: A road paving project is being conducted through the end of August.

COMMERCE ROAD
From: From 1,000 feet west of South Commerce to Union Lake Road
Community: Commerce Township
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

DEQUINDRE ROAD
From: Big Beaver to Wattles Community: Troy
Details: Dequindre is being widened from two to five lanes. The project is expected to be completed by Oct. 31.

DIXIE HIGHWAY
From: Davisburg Road to the county line
Community: Springfield, Grosse Pointe Woods and Holly townships
Details: The road is being resurfaced.

FLEMING LAKE
From: Clarkston Road to Waters Road

Community: Independence Township
Details: The gravel road will be paved by Oct. 31.

FOURTEEN MILE
From: Welch to Haggerty
Community: Commerce Township
Details: The road will be closed through Oct. 6.

GRAND RIVER
At Farmington Road
Community: Farmington
Details: Grand River will be reduced to one lane in each direction through Sept. 15.

LAHAR ROAD
At Riverview Street
Community: Beverly Hills
Details: The road is being widened and a center turn lane will be added by Aug. 28.

LONG LAKE ROAD
From: Farmington to Grandy, east and west of Rochester Road
Community: Troy
Details: The road is being reconstructed and resurfaced. From: Lahar to Woodward Community: Bloomfield Hills
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

MAPLE ROAD
From: Pontiac Trail to Welch Road
Community: Commerce Township
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

NORTHWESTERN HIGHWAY
At Telegraph Road
Community: Southfield
Details: The right lane is closed. The ramp from northbound Northwestern to southbound Telegraph will be closed intermittently during non-rush hour periods. The ramp from northbound Telegraph to west I-696 and northbound Northwestern Highway will be closed until Oct. 30.

NINE MILE
From: Northbound Northwestern Highway and southbound Southfield Road
Community: Southfield
Details: One lane will be closed through Oct. 1.

OPDYKE ROAD
From: Square Lake Road to South Boulevard
Community: Bloomfield Township and Pontiac
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

ORCHARD LAKE ROAD
At Grand River
Community: Farmington
Details: There will be alternating lane closures through Aug. 13.
From: Long Lake Road to Commerce Road
Community: West Bloomfield and Orchard Lake Village
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

PONTIAC TRAIL
At: Green Lake Road
Community: West Bloomfield
Details: The road is being widened to include a center turn lane through Aug. 24.
From: Decker to Haggerty Community: Walled Lake and Commerce Townships
Details: The stretch of road is being resurfaced.

ROCHESTER ROAD
From: M-59 to Avon Road
Community: Rochester Hills
Details: One lane will be closed in each direction through Aug. 31.

TELEGRAPH ROAD
At: 14 Mile Road
Community: Bingham Farms and Franklin Village
Details: There will be lane closures for road work.

UNION LAKE ROAD
From: Wise to Cooley Lake Roads
Community: Commerce Township
Details: Commerce will be restructuring the road after recent sewer work. The road will remain open, but there will be lane shifts.

WALTON BOULEVARD
From: West of Sashabaw to Clintonville
Community: Waterford
Details: Walton is being widened from three to five lanes. It is limited to one lane each way during construction.

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