

Land use committee starts work

BY KURT AUBAN
STAFF WRITER

Area residents will get their chance next week to speak up about urban sprawl and the rapid loss of open space to development.

The Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, formed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, will be holding a public hearing at the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Auditorium Monday. It will be one of six hearings the council will hold statewide in April.

Granholm formed the council as one of her first acts as governor, because of her concern about urban sprawl. She is hoping the council can find a way to balance the need for economic growth with the necessity of curbing the loss of open space.

"Among the results I look for from this council is finding a way for us to preserve our natural treasures while promoting economic growth in our state. We must strike a balance, and the cooperation and consensus of the stakeholders around this table will be keys to our success," Granholm said last month.

The council is composed of 26 members, who represent a plethora of different factions. There are both Democrat and Republican state lawmakers, as well as environmentalists such as Lanna Pollock of the Michigan Environmental Council, and development proponents, like Gil White of the Michigan Association of Realtors.

The council is co-chaired by former governor William Milliken and former attorney general Frank Kelley.

"We have a very diverse group. You name it, we have it. There are people on this council from all spectrums of society. We have some people you wouldn't think would sit at the same table with each other," said State Rep. Ruth Johnson, R-Holly Township, who is a member of the council.

Johnson represents many of the most rural Oakland County townships, including Addison, Brandon, Orion and Oxford, where land use issues are hot topics. Those areas are starting to see the growth that has been a big part of other Oakland County communities for several decades.

"Oakland County wasn't originally scheduled to have any hearings, but I requested that be changed, because I think we have almost every type of land issue you can have," said Johnson, who will attend the hearing Monday.

Johnson said the council will deal with a number of issues, including urban revitalization, the preservation of open space and land-based industries like farming, economic policies related to infrastructure, and regional coordination of planning. In the end, the goal is to come up with new land use laws.

The public hearings are a way for residents and local public officials to add something to the debate. Johnson said council members are looking for "both concerns and ideas."

Johnson said it is critical for the state's residents to play a part in the process and have a hand in shaping the future of land use issues. She hopes people will take advantage of the opportunity by appearing at one of the hearings.

"I can't think of anything more important than a public meeting before you make recommendations and laws. I think the public meetings are the cornerstone of what we are trying to do," she said. The Oakland County Board of Commissioners Auditorium is located at 1200 N. Telegraph Road in Pontiac. There will be two separate hearings times, from 3-5 p.m. and again from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

FRENCH

FROM PAGE A1

French students were involved. Student Beverly Smith offered a presentation about the Maybach, a Chrysler limousine, to her mother, Barbara.

Barbara understood a little of the language her daughter spoke. "I'm from Canada, so I should know some," she said with a laugh. Smith and fellow students Kelly Voigt and Kamayani Gupta prepared their presentation complete with a rose logo, a brochure and a printed customer survey with an English translation.

Anne Dilorio, Jackie Duchene and Sarah Ring put together a diorama-type display to show how the Jeep Wrangler can be driven anywhere in the great outdoors. They created a poster to promote the SUV's most appealing qualities and worked with French Back-to-Back exchange

students to come with the right words.

"While they were here, we had just gotten the project," Dilorio said. "We were still brainstorming useful phrases and important things people look for. It was really a test of our communication skills. They knew as much English as we know French."

The event was designed to bridge the gap between learning French from a textbook and speaking it conversationally.

Students made the transition with a fun-filled, entertaining event.

The Bob Sellers Pontiac-GMC dealership in Farmington Hills provided a 2003 Pontiac Vibe for display outside of school.

"We brought the car to make it more realistic as an auto show," said dealership president Sam Slaughter.

He was accompanied by Keith Wilson, the general manager, and Joe Garber, who

works in sales. SIKora, who is a customer, came to them asking for some help and direction.

Slaughter said, "We don't turn down too many requests to come to school."

The dealership even opened its doors to 24 students, who declared the field trip the best they'd ever taken, SIKora said.

Michael Omotosa, a They research analyst and native of England, offered the students feedback critique and spoke to classes about the value of speaking more than one language.

He also talked about the broad spectrum of careers in the auto industry.

"I'm friends with Mary Beth SIKora and she asked me if I would assist," said Omotosa. "This is the first time I've seen something like this."

During one exercise, Omotosa had a list of English words and students gave him the French translation.

He handed out a variety of awards consisting of CDs,



At left, 8th grader Anne Dilorio presents information about the Jeep Wrangler in French. She worked with Jackie Duchene and Sarah Ring to develop their presentation.

stickers, pens and pencils for correct answers.

Besides French, Omotosa knows German and Italian. Having foreign language skills sets job seekers apart from

those who don't, he said.

"Languages are important for global training. It's important throughout your life."

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