

How We Moved Toward Regional Govt.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of 12 "Regionalist Papers" sponsored by Metropolitan Fund, a non-profit education and research foundation serving southeast Michigan.

By CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL

The Southeast Michigan metropolitan region encompassing the central city of Detroit and the surrounding counties has had a long and richly varied experience with regional organizations.

Special purpose authorities and agencies, intergovernmental contracts, regional planning and coordinating bodies and a council of governments have all been utilized as mechanisms for regional problem solving in the southeast Michigan metropolitan region.

THE EARLIEST approach to meeting regional needs in southeast Michigan was through the creation of

development of special purpose agencies.

The oldest regional service agency in Southeast Michigan is the Detroit Metropolitan Water Supply System, a city of Detroit agency, which supplies water service to 85 communities in southeast Michigan and sewage treatment services to 67 communities by means of intergovernmental service contracts.

The metropolitan water supply system had its origins in the City of Detroit water department, which in 1873 was authorized to extend service beyond the city limits. The board consists of seven members appointed by the mayor of Detroit but only four of the board members are required to reside in the city of Detroit.

The creation of a special purpose agency to provide regional park and recreation services was authorized by the State Legislature in 1939 and in 1940 the voters of Wayne,

Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Livingston counties approved the creation of the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority (HCMA) as an independent agency with the power to levy a one-quarter mill property tax.

The HCMA board consists of seven members, two of whom are appointed by the governor and one member named by the board of commissioners of each of the five constituent counties. During its 32 years of operation, the authority has acquired 12,500 acres of park and recreation facilities and provides a significant portion of regional park and recreation services.

A MORE RECENT special purpose agency is the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) which was directly established by the State Legislature in 1967 without voter referendum. SEMTA is an independent agency governed by a nine member board, three of whom are appointed by the governor and six of whom (beginning in 1971) are appointed by the council of governments.

SEMTA was created for the purpose of planning, acquiring, constructing and operating public transportation facilities and has been financed to date by federal and state grants and contributions from local governments.

SEMTA has been actively involved in public transportation planning, has assisted in the purchase of

buses for existing bus systems and has acquired and is operating one small bus system.

During the period from the late 1940's through the middle 1960's, two new regional-level bodies were formed to deal with emerging problems in southeast Michigan. Unlike the special agencies designed to provide direct services, these bodies were organized to perform regional planning activities and to develop inter-county cooperation programs dealing with regional problems.

THE DETROIT Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission was formally established in 1947 by resolution of the Michigan State Planning Commission. The members of the regional planning commission were appointed by the governor.

The operations of the commission were financed primarily by contributions from the counties although federal, state and other public agencies and private organizations contributed funds for special plans and projects.

Among the many projects undertaken by the commission were the development of basic planning information, the preparation of a comprehensive land use plan, a regional highway plan, a comprehensive recreation plan, a major study of refuse disposal, and a number of special technical studies.

The commission served as basic resource for public and

private agencies by developing basic regional physical, social and economic data. The commission played a vital role in stimulating and assisting local planning efforts and served as the regional review agency for a number of federal programs.

IN THE EARLY 1950's there was increasing recognition of the need for intergovernmental coordination to come with the problems resulting from the rapid growth and geographic dispersion of population within the Southeast Michigan area.

In 1954, the chairman of the Wayne County Board of Supervisors (now Board of Commissioners) convened a series of meetings with the chairmen of boards of supervisors of the counties in the region. Out of these discussions developed the Supervisors Inter-County Committee (SICC) representing the boards of supervisors of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw and Monroe counties and, a year later, St. Clair county.

The new body had no formal legal status and no direct power of its own-it's purpose was to discuss common problems, develop solutions and implement these solutions by action of the boards of supervisors of each of the six counties. In 1957, the SICC was given official status by the adoption of state legislation. The SICC played a major role in initiating area-wide studies of water, sewerage, drainage and solid waste disposal and participated actively in highway and airport planning. SICC compiled an inventory of public works needs for the region, initiated an executive development program and was involved in the organization of a new agency to deal with metropolitan problems that is now called the Metropolitan Fund.

In 1964 the Metropolitan Fund initiated a series of basic research studies by the Citizens Research Council of Michigan on governmental organization in Southeast Michigan. A policy committee was appointed by the Metropolitan Fund which made a series of recommendations including the establishment of a voluntary metropolitan council of governments representing all the governments in the area.

In 1965 the chairman of Metropolitan Fund appointed a committee of 100 public officials from throughout the region to develop a specific proposal for organizing a voluntary council of governments representing all 400 local units of government in the area.

The Committee of 100 issued its report in 1966. In 1967, delegates from local units throughout the region met and formally organized the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) as of January 1, 1968.

SEMCOG was unable to obtain satisfactory state enabling legislation for regional councils of government, so it organized under the regional planning act. With the organization of SEMCOG, the Supervisors Inter-County Committee was disbanded and the Detroit Metropolitan Area Regional Planning Commission became the planning division of SEMCOG.

About 100 of the 400 eligible units of government in the region joined SEMCOG, including five of the six counties, by executing an intergovernmental agreement and paying the membership fee.

THE PLAN FOR financing HRP Picnic Set Sunday

Human Rights Party members and their families will eat, play and talk politics at a Kensington Park picnic Sunday beginning at 10 a.m. The exact time and location is available at the park information station.

Informal discussion of a platform will begin at 2 p.m. Members are asked to donate \$1 to the state mailing fund. Individuals should bring their own food and beverages. A state meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 6, at 1 p.m. in HRP headquarters at 304 Thayer, Ann Arbor.



W. W. (EDDIE) EDGAR, dean of the Observer Newspapers Inc. editorial staff and best known in Plymouth for his column, "The Stroller," won new honors from the Plymouth Kiwanis Club. Edwin Schrader, longtime member of the club, presented Eddie a distinguished service award certificate for outstanding journalistic community service. The ceremonies took place in the weekly meeting in the Mayflower Hotel (Photo by Nick Merrick)

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