

In Farmington

Coalition seeks 'rights' guarantees for funds

By JACKIE KLEIN

The City of Farmington and other communities will be bound by tight-end civil rights strings attached to their second year applications for federal grants.

So said Joseph Guggenheim, coordinator of the Coalition for Block Grant Compliance, at an area-wide, four-day training session in Southfield last Thursday.

The coalition was formed by civil rights, religious and civic groups to monitor applications for grants under the 1974 U.S. Housing and Community Development Act. Southfield applied for a \$1 million, three-year grant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) last winter.

The coalition will stress requirements for spending funds to give maximum feasible priority to activities benefiting low and moderate income families and the elimination of slums and blight," said Guggenheim who is

executive director of The Michigan Committee on Law and Housing.

"Another requirement is that each community must develop and submit to HUD a housing assistance plan to meet the needs of low-income persons residing or expecting to reside there as the result of employment opportunities.

EACH COMMUNITY must be in compliance with civil rights laws and overcome prior discrimination to be eligible for federal funding, Guggenheim said.

The grant, which must be applied for each year, will provide \$140,000 for Southfield the first year, \$154,000 the second year and \$539,000 the third year if reapproved. The coalition has knocked the city's program for "failing to meet low-income housing needs for persons residing or expected to reside in the community."

Southfield was one of 26 communities charged with racism by the Detroit NAACP. HUD placed a tempo-

rary freeze on approval of community development applications from the 26 suburbs but Southfield, among others, was finally approved.

Last week's training session was attended by representatives of Southfield, Farmington-West, Bloomfield and Detroit leagues of women voters who are members of the coalition.

Joyce Mittenhal, co-chairman of the Detroit League of Women Voters' housing action committee, said the coalition has made two major accomplishments.

"THE CLEAR trend of communities applying for grants was to express the need for elderly housing but not for low-income family housing," she said. "Southfield is among these communities."

"We believed this was in violation of the law and a formal complaint was filed with HUD by the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing. The Detroit area coalition was selected to provide legal services. We've been written up nationally for our outstanding effort."

The pattern, Guggenheim said, is that employment is moving to growing suburban communities. Suburbs benefit from the increased tax base, he said, but fail to provide housing for employees who may want to live in the community. HUD funds, other than block grants, can be spent to fill this need, he said.

"The first year funding program was 'iffy,' Guggenheim contended, and communities were in violation of low-income requirements. But HUD will clamp down and we'll bring pressure to bear to insure compliance."

GUGGENHEIM STRESSED that communities must have housing plans to be eligible for funding. The plan must indicate location of proposed low income housing to avoid excess concentration of one minority group.

"HUD had no interest in enforcing this plan the first year but communities, including Southfield, promised to estimate low income housing needs currently and in the future for second year funding," he said.

Communities will be required to submit a lengthy, first year performance report with their reapplication for funds, Guggenheim said. The coalition will provide technical assistance to help municipalities plan meaningful

programs necessary to comply with the law, he said.

HUD is expected to appropriate money and extend invitations to Southfield and other communities to enter into a lease agreement with tenants and landlords to provide a percentage of low cost units in apartment buildings.

Another requirement, Ms. Mitten-

hal said, is citizen participation in formulating community development programs as well as public hearings to explain how federal money is being spent.

The coalition will also review what steps the city has taken towards affirmative action in equal opportunity employment and awarding of con-

tracts to recruit and upgrade blacks.

Over the three-year period, Southfield plans to allocate \$300,000 for long-term, low-interest loans for a neighborhood rehabilitation program for low-income families. About \$20,000 is proposed to partially finance a walkway to connect the McDowell Senior Citizen Tower to the Tel-Ex Shopping Plaza.



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