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State seeks 6-lane Telegraph

By ALICE COLLINS

Despite pressure from Oakland County officials, the state highway department is staying with its decision to widen Telegraph to six lanes, instead of eight, from Southfield north through Bloomfield Township, a department spokesman said in Lansing Friday.

Max Clyde, assistant deputy director of the State Department of Highways and Transportation, said Oakland County's case for constructing the highway to eight lanes has been heard, but has not convinced the state to change its plans.

Oakland County Road Commissioner John R. Gnau Jr., a strong proponent for eight lanes, said he didn't accept Clyde's announcement as final.

"In fact, the State Highway Commission meets Wednesday and that's the body that will make the final decision," Gnau said.

State highway commission secretary Jim Grassman said the Oakland County Road Commission had made a request to be on the agenda Wednesday "simply to discuss the matter again."

"Their request has been granted," Grassman continued. "But the state commission still stands with the highway department in favor of the six-lane plan now on the books.

"We don't expect any change," said Grassman.

GNAU SAID HE did hope for a compromise agreement. He said he has been meeting with Peter Fletcher, chairman of the State Highway Commission, to discuss a compromise.

Debate over the proposed width of the highway from Twelve and One-Half Mile Road in Southfield to Orchard Lake Road in Bloomfield Township has been continuing for several months.

The residential Village of Bingham Farms and many of its residents have actively opposed the eight lane plan on the books for many years, and were instrumental in getting the state highway department to redesign for the narrower width.

The state announced it would go with the six lanes in January because of recent population studies and "reservations about the immediate need for the full eight lanes."

Some homeowners in Franklin and Bloomfield Township concerned about environmental impact also oppose the wider road.

Favoring eight lanes are officials in Southfield, Bloomfield Township, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and the Oakland Road Commission.

THE SQUARE LAKE-to-Long Lake link of the roadway will go out for bids in August with construction slated to begin in the middle of September, Clyde said Friday.

The total reconstruction project is expected to cost $11.75 million, a reduction of $1.25 million from the projected $13 million for the eight lanes.

The Square Lake-Long Lake roads link is expected to cost $3.4 million, said Clyde.

The plans are designed so that two additional lanes can be added at a future date if traffic demands.

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Suspect nabbed in motel

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Americo (Rico) Florini, 38, stood alone at his felony arraignment Friday in 17th District Court on armed robbery charges stemming from Thursday night's narcotics and money theft at Cook's Pharmacy, 23050 W. Six Mile, Redford Township.

The suspect was arrested less than an hour after the robbery due to the efforts of Andy Kritzman, a sales clerk in the pharmacy, who followed Florini to the Blue Bird Motel in Southfield.

Florini chose to represent himself at the arraignment, claiming that he "probably read more law than most lawyers."

District Judge John Dillon, who has seen Florini represent himself in court on a previous armed robbery charge, tends to agree with the prisoner's claim.

Florini's examination in 17th District Court is scheduled for June 1 at 9:30 a.m.

After allegedly robbing the drug store of "a large amount of money" and several large jars of narcotics, Florini told employees to sit down and keep still.

Kritzman peeked out the window and saw the thief get into a yellow Mercury Marquis. As the man drove down the alley, Kritzman left the store, got into his own car and followed the man.

Kritzman says the thief was wearing a beer label hat, sunglasses and a fancy handkerchief worn over his face like a bandana.

Kritzman, 14700 Fox, Redford Township, is a senior at Redford Union High School. He was asked if he wasn't afraid that the thief would realize he was being followed and try to use the pistol on him.

"No, I was more worried about him getting away with all that," said Kritzman. "I just didn't think it was right."

Following "about a half block behind," Kritzman saw the man pull into the Blue Bird Motel, 21300 Telegraph, Southfield, (south of Nine Mile). Kritzman pulled his car into the McDonald's restaurant located across the street from the motel and had the manager contact Southfield police.

Police said they could see Florini counting a large amount of money through the window of the motel room, thus providing "a probable cause for arrest." No search warrant was used by police who said the money, the hat, the bandana, the sunglasses and the narcotics were found in the room which was rented to Florini that day.

Redford Det. Sgt. Edward Livingston, who is in charge of the case, has faced Florini twice before on armed robberies of drug stores. But there was no conviction in either case, according to Livingston, because the witnesses could not positively identify the masked suspect as Florini.

Florini served two years of an 18-40 year armed robbery sentence. He was released in 1974 on an appeal bond while he attempted to reverse the conviction. He eventually argued his case all the way to the Supreme Court which denied his appeal last February.

There was a $10,000 appeal bond on Florini, which he jumped by not returning to Jackson State Prison when his Supreme Court appeal was denied.

Redford police say there is an aggravated robbery warrant out for Florini in Ohio. Florini told the court his home was Alliance, Ohio, but police confiscated numerous motel keys from the suspect, and said Florini's home is Jackson State Prison or whatever motel he stops at.

His first arrest dates back to 1959. Over the years, Redford police say Florini has specialized in relieving drug stores of drugs and money while concealing his face with a mask.

Police said Florini does not use narcotics himself.

A special team in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, called PROBE, will assist Redford police in preparing a case against Florini. The PROBE unit is designed to combat habitual offenders without resorting to plea bargaining.

The police speak highly of Florini's legal skills.

"He's a very intelligent man," said Sgt. Livingston. "He doesn't miss a trick."

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Southfield woman excells in musical as 'Sweet Charity'

By BARBARA MICHALS

Neil Simon's light-hearted plot, Cy Coleman's bubbly music, and Sheryl Silver's knock-out performance in the title role of "Sweet Charity" are almost sufficient compensation for the Troy Players' otherwise disappointing production.

Charity Hope Valentine, a hostess in a seedy dance hall, is an eternal optimist (middle name "Hope") and an incurable romantic (surname "Valentine"). She not only wears her heart on her sleeve, she even has it tatooed on her arm. Warm and loving, Charity gives her heart away as freely as she gives her salary to needy causes, but men have inevitably used her badly.

Miss Silver is a dynamic, thoroughly likeable Charity. Her voice makes a strong impression as she belts out such Dorothy Fields' lyrics as "If My Friends Could See Me Now" and "I'm a Brass Band." While her energy never lags through the heavy demands of the role, Miss Silver still manages to convey Charity's tenderness and constant vulnerability.

Charity's dance hall pals Helene and Nickie are ably played by Margaret Eddy and Judy Privosky, respectively. Their fine voices and comic skills provide the show's best support for Miss Silver's considerable talents.

Like Charity, Helen and Nickie dream of finding a way out of their bleak "rent-a-body" existence, but, unlike Charity, they periodically revert to hard-core realism.

Determined to change her life, Charity goes off to the neighborhood "Y" and meets shy, gentle Oscar. Finally she has meet a man who treats her with respect, and happiness seems within easy reach.

As Oscar, Bruce Pharis is leaden rather than shy, and his voice is far too inadequate.

Robert Olesinski does an amusing job as conceited Italian film star Vittoro Vidal, and Rita Edwards is convincing as Vidal's haughty girlfriend.

Bill Bivins appears too mild-mannered to be the dictatorial dance hall manager, affectionately tagged "der Fuhrer" by his employees. However, Bivins shows more spirit in his musical number, "I Love to Cry at Weddings."

Despite the excellence of a few cast members, Troy's "Sweet Charity" suffers badly from slow pacing and a lot of general awkwardness.

Director Charles Ray and musical director Burton Zipser fail to enliven the chorus evern for a sure-fire number like "Hey, Big Spender." The main dance numbers, "Rich Man's Frug" and "Rhythm of Life," seem to move in awkward slow-motion.

Though cleverly engineered for multi-purpose use, the stage set appears drab and barren. The Baker Middle School stage lacks both a curtain and the right conditions for an effective black-out, thus making it poorly suited to multiple scene changes.

"Sweet Charity" continues at Baker Middle School Thursday, (May 20, Friday and Saturday.

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