

editorial opinion

Smoke alarm ordinance blasted

Government meddling or protection of private rights? That's the question before the Farmington City Council as they weigh the pros and cons of a mandatory smoke alarm ordinance for residences within the city.

It's also a question the council successfully managed to dodge Monday night, as they tabled action on the proposed ordinance, which was introduced two weeks ago. Faced with some public opposition, the council backed off the ordinance originally proposed by the Public Safety Department.

If council members want to know if a mandated smoke alarm ordinance is government meddling, they get a firm "Yes" from here. But a lot of ordinances can be attributed to government meddling—building codes, fire codes, electrical codes, littering.

Government meddling doesn't have to be a dirty word. Those ordinances are on the books to protect everyone, and the proposed smoke alarm ordinance works in much the same way.

It's interesting that very little opposition has been mustered against the ordinance for multiple dwellings. It's understood that proximity mandates protection from the carelessness of others.

BUT some homeowners appear to believe they can burn themselves to the ground if they so desire.

Unfortunately, when a dwelling burns, it involves others. The Valley View Condominium fire proved that fact. Three firefighters were treated for smoke inhalation, along with some of the residents. And who's to protect the safety of children, who seldom have a say in whether or not their parents smoke in bed or use faulty extension cords?

Reducing hazards is a fire prevention job for all of us. A mandated smoke alarm ordinance will be expensive for homeowners. But if it's proven that smoke alarms give fire victims a few extra minutes of notice—sometimes lifesaving minutes—then the expense is worthwhile.

We'd like to see City of Farmington officials take a firm stand and get the ordinance on the books. In fact, it wouldn't be a bad idea if Farmington Hills officials adopted a similar ordinance.

Since it will take a while before the majority of homeowners comply with the ordinance, perhaps by the year 2000, we'll be able to stratify the results. We'd guess that fewer deaths from fires and possibly greater property savings might be charted on a graph by then.

RIGHT NOW, we have to rely on common sense and the recommendations of public safety and fire officials. It's up to the council members to add judgment and a little vision to the decisions, keeping the best interests of all residents in mind.

That's your job, council members, so let's see some action.

LYNN ORR

A strange pattern

The pattern of how Oakland County's board of commissioners administers salaries is strange, to say the least, although not unprecedented.

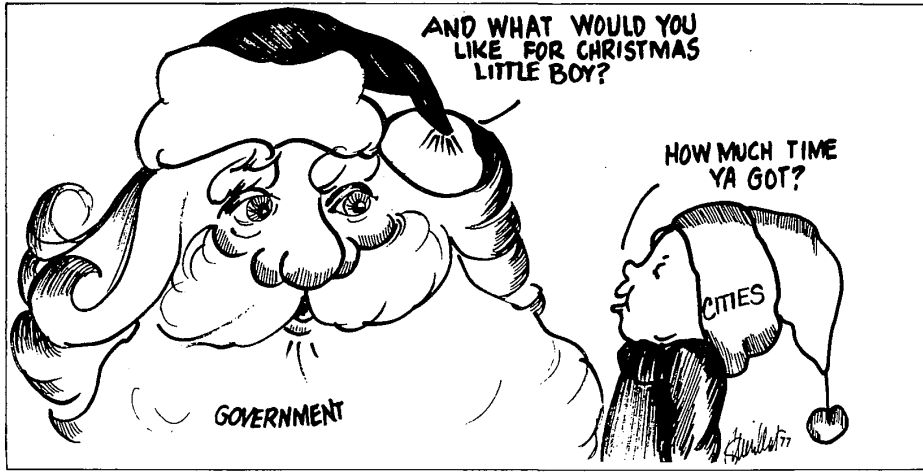
County Executive Daniel T. Murphy draws the biggest salary—\$52,448 next year. Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson is down for \$40,902. Both are elected.

The eight next highest paid administrators are those who have been dubbed "Murphy's" "super department heads." Two executive officers, Bill Spinelli and Pat Novak, are in for \$39,300. The directors of management and public services are down for \$38,352 apiece. Four other directors—of personnel, the DPW, central services and human services—will draw \$37,098. All are appointed by Murphy.

Then we get down to the sheriff, the treasurer, the clerk-register and the drain commissioner. They will draw \$33,286 each. They are constitutional officers—that is, their jobs are mentioned in the state constitution, they must be elected by the people, and their jobs can't be abolished.

Yet all are paid less than eight appointive persons.

What do you make of it? Is the board of commissioners playing favorites with Dan Murphy, Brooks Patterson and their staffs? Or is Michigan remiss in giving constitutional status to the sheriff, treasurer, clerk-register and drain commissioner—persons whom the policy-making board clearly considers relatively unimportant?



Some governments promote economy

Economic development is a cherished goal. If a community can attract new business, it means more jobs, more tax base and more taxpayers. More jobs mean less spent on unemployment benefits and welfare.

Rarely do new businesses come to a community by accident or luck. The State of Michigan, like the states surrounding it, has economic development staff members constantly romancing large manufacturers to situate in the state.

Laws have been passed allowing communities to set up economic development corporations to finance new plants with government-backed bonds. Other laws have been passed to give tax incentives to encourage choosing this state over a competing one.

The mayor of Detroit has recently proposed setting up an Economic Development Corporation for the City of Detroit and funding it to the tune of a million dollars a year, including a salary for the director of more than \$100,000 a year to help build up its tax base.

THERE ARE PHILOSOPHICAL disputes about whether government should spend public money for these purposes, but the practicality of increasing tax bases and jobs and lessening social welfare costs have certainly proven beneficial to the communities that do it.

Now, if you can use governmental funds to promote an industry that creates jobs and brings revenue into the area far in excess of its costs—like the tourist and convention business—you are certainly ahead of the game.



By HEVRA M. HOGAN, JR.

The State of Michigan, City of Detroit and Wayne County invest close to a half-million dollars a year to help the Metropolitan Detroit Tourist and Convention Bureau bring in convention people to spend money that would never come into the area without the effort.

The State of Michigan, City of Detroit and Wayne County invest close to a half-million dollars a year to help the Metropolitan Detroit Tourist and Convention Bureau bring in convention people to spend money that would never come into the area without the effort.

OAKLAND COUNTY has a tourist and convention bureau that brings millions of dollars into the area.

It recently asked the Oakland County Board of Commissioners to boost its annual grant to \$85,000 from the \$40,000 the county had been contributing so that it would have funds to promote the bringing of the Super Bowl football classic to the Pontiac Silverdome in 1981.

Last year when Super Bowl was held in Pasadena, experts figured the economy of Los Angeles was improved by the sum of more than \$125 million during the five days preceding the game. This came in the middle of January when the economy is not red-hot anyway.

It is predicted that if Super Bowl were held in this area, it would bring in \$60 million to \$80 million in a five-day period.

THE FINANCE committee of the county board approved the expenditure, but it was scuttled by the full board when a group of commissioners led by representatives from Royal Oak and Southfield successfully pushed an amendment which cut out the extra money.

The irony is that Southfield, in particular, probably would have profited from the appropriation more than any other city in Oakland County, because it has the most developed tourist facilities. Detroit is getting a new face, and its economy is turning around because it is aggressively doing something about it.

Possibly the Oakland County Board of Commissioners is not sophisticated enough to recognize that pump-priming or investment in projects that could have a great effect on the economic development in the county is beneficial.

If that is true, the people who elected them should tell them that we all prosper when the area prospers.

Editor's note: Mr. Hogan is chairman of the Oakland County Tourist and Convention Bureau.

How 'tree stumps' bailed out big cities

Time was when Detroit politicians used to sneer at anything outstate as being "tree stumps"—outstate being defined as anything north of Ten Mile and west of Middlebell.

Outstate was defined as rural and agrarian, and not interested in "people." Detroit politicians imagined they saw mammoth gravel pits full of hostility outstate. It was the enemy.

Nowadays, some of Detroit's best political buddies are outstate politicians. It seems they have a common interest—putting the squeeze on everyone else.

IT HAPPENED that the Michigan House of Representatives, after rejecting it once, voted approval of a \$12 million a year aid package of which the City of Detroit will get \$8 million.

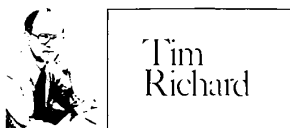
The vote was 58-47. If you're quick at math you'll figure the 58 was just two votes more than the bare minimum needed for passage.

It wasn't just those nasty, property-loving Republicans who opposed it. Democrats like Tom Brown of Westland, Bill Keith of Garden City, Joe Forbes of Oak Park and Sal Rocca of Sterling Heights lined up with such Republicans as Jack Kirksey and Bob Law of Livonia, Sandy Brotherton of Farmington, Ruth McNamee and Jim Detebaugh of Birmingham and Rick Fessler of Union Lake.

Indeed, 10 of Observer & Eccentric area's 12 state representatives opposed the package, with John Bennett of Redford absent and Roy Smith favoring it.

ROY SMITH? He's that fellow who used to be the Republican Ypsilanti Township supervisor before going to Lansing. His district, with all the gerrymandering that went on, now takes in much of the Plymouth community.

It seems the troops in Lansing took care of the eastern part of Roy's bailiwick. Ypsilanti is something of a state-impacted area, what with Eastern Michigan University, the forensics unit of the mental health department, the women's prison, a state police post and what-all out there.



"It's a game of compromise," said Smith. "You do something for me if I can do something for you." He should know.

Rep. Martin Butk, a Republican dairy farmer who hails from Rockford, said Detroit Reps. George Montgomery and Bill Ryan had been good to farm and rural interests and he didn't see anything good about "a one-way street all the time," so he voted for the aid bill.

There we have it. Vote-swapping, pure and simple.

NOW, NO ONE can accuse all suburban legislators of being anti-city.

The delegation includes Brotherton, former mayor of Farmington; Mrs. McNamee, former mayor of Birmingham; Forbes, former mayor of Oak Park; and Brown, former mayor of Westland. Forbes' vote against the bill was particularly significant because he's one of the three or four big guns in the house Democratic leadership.

It's common to think of Detroit as being 276 years old, 1701 being the date that Cadillac started a fort. Actually, Detroit's English-speaking civilian population which lifted it above trading post status didn't arrive until after the Erie Canal opened. Detroit, by that standard, isn't much older than Farmington and Birmingham. And Oak Park ranks as a maturing suburb.

No, it's not a matter of some legislators being pro-city or anti-city. Anybody who tells you that is joking you.

So Detroit walks off with \$8 million more; 15 outstate cities come up with \$4 million more; a Great Lakes boat launch goes in here; an upper peninsula deer herd gets its feed bill picked up by the state there.

And the rest of us get the honor of picking up the tab.

Combats red tape syndrome

Cooper act benefits all

State Senator Daniel Cooper is one of that rare breed of political animal who does not get on well with the press and couldn't care less about it.

Perhaps he has not worn well the hard knocks that are indigenous to life in the public eye.

In any case, Cooper has done something well in the state senate and he deserves credit for it, as well as all the other legislators who voted for the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).

The APA changes the rules by which state departments and agencies can make rules and regulations. In effect, the new law which goes into force on Jan. 1 should reduce the rules, red tape and regulations of state government bureaucracy.

Under the new law, any new administrative rules proposed by state agencies do not go into effect unless specifically approved by the eight-member Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules.

The way it is now, state agencies submit proposed rules to the committee, and if the body fails to act on them within 60 days, the proposed rules automatically take effect.

The road to implementing the APA has been a

rocky one. Earlier this year, for the first time in 26 years, the state legislature overrode a gubernatorial veto, underlining its endorsement of Cooper's legislation.

Governor Milliken then requested the State Supreme Court's opinion of the constitutionality of the act. In a 4-3 decision, the court declined to rule on the act, stating the court's advisory opinion should be reserved for "solemn occasions."

The significance of all of this is that it is a distinct victory for common sense in government.

We do not decry the "interference of government," for there are times when government intervention can facilitate a local project or social program.

However, we do impugn the senselessness of government of, by and for the sake of government, which pessimistically seems to be the wave of the future and optimistically is not much different than the way things have always been.

Dan Cooper did his homework, and he and a majority of other state legislators have staked a claim on a small island of nobility, in the middle of what seems to be a sea of bureaucratic ignobility.

A Division of
Suburban Communications Corporation

Farmington Observer

Steve Barnaby
Editor

22170 West Nine Mile
Southfield, MI 48075
(313) 352-5400

Philip H. Power
Chairman of the Board

Richard D. Aginjan
President
Chief Executive Officer

John Reddy, General Mgr.

Arthur Longer, Advertising Director Fred J. Wright, Circulation Mgr.