

Grass eater meets gas eater

Two forms of mowers cross paths on a suburban lawn. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

Local budgeting uniformity hit

The Michigan Legislature wants uniformity in local budget-making procedures and is taking steps to insure it.

Local officials, however, say pending legislation is unnecessary and would cost more than it's worth. Local officials spoke out Monday at a public hearing of the house's city government committee at Schoolcraft College.

The house and senate are considering bills that would standardize local budgetary procedures.

According to an analysis prepared by the city government committee, the bills do "not dictate the form or type of budget to be used—zero-based, program performance, line item or others acceptable to general accounting theories. Local units have complete flexibility here."

The bills would require, however,

that each local unit of government appoint a person to collect data, prepare the budget, set a time table and set procedures and policies for altering the budget.

LOCAL OFFICIALS, some of whom supported the concept of standardization, dismissed the legislature's bills as unwieldy and excessively costly. Others say the legislation is plain unnecessary.

"It would be a serious infringement on the rights of home rule cities such as Detroit," said Detroit's Deputy Budget Director Conley Abrams. "I'm sure," Abrams continued, "that many cities, counties, townships and school districts are already controlled by sound budgetary procedures."

State Rep. Michael Griffin (D-Jackson), chairman of city government

local units in making their budgets. "The bills are not designed as a mandate," he said.

The legislature's intentions may be merely to guide, said some local officials, but the bills will still wind up costing governmental units cold cash.

"Certainly it doesn't mandate that we hire new people," said Michael Tyler, director of finance and personnel for the city of Berkeley and an officer of the Municipal Finance Officers Association.

"But in order to meet the conditions of the bills," he predicted, "people are

going to have to be hired. There's no way around it.

"It might require overtime. It might require some new people. It might require changing computer programs. But it's gonna cost some money. There are no two ways around it," he said.

Of the four Observer & Eccentric area state representatives on the city government committee, only Rep. Robert Law (R-Livonia) attended the meeting. Reps. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington), Ruth McNamee (R-Birmingham) and Roy Smith (R-Ypsilanti) were absent.

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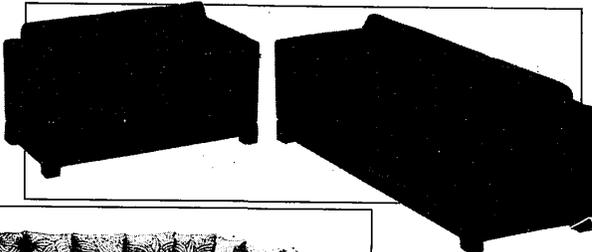
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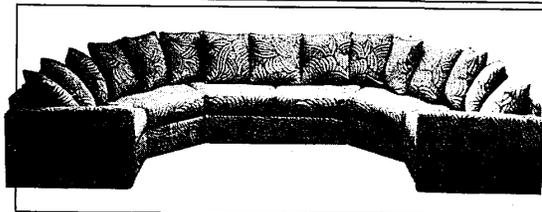
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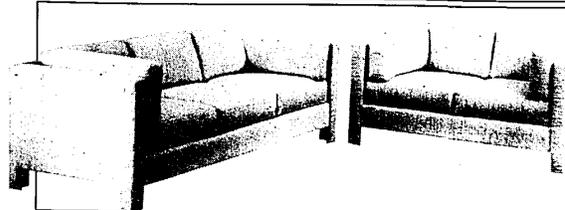
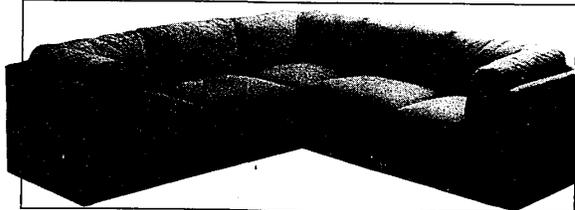
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