

# Watchdog board discusses Rouge logjam

By SHERRY KAHAN

Two resolutions to produce action on the logjam of a Middle Rouge River tributary in Dearborn Heights were passed by the Rouge Watershed Council, meeting recently in Livonia.

The council is an advisory governmental unit, made up of representatives of communities which are touched by the Rouge River. To the meeting came a distressed Eugene Weddle, superintendent of the water sewer division of Dearborn Heights. His was a tale of frustration in regard to the blockage formed when four large trees fell into the river, causing all kinds of debris to be collected behind them.

Officials of Dearborn Heights are especially troubled by the problem because its sewer pipes lie about eight feet from the logjam. If the jam should cause a break in these pipes, raw sewage would be on its way downstream toward such cities as Dearborn, Melvindale, River Rouge and Allen Park.

Not sure of who has jurisdiction over problems on this natural waterway, Dearborn Heights has been reluctant to shoulder the expense of hauling the troublesome trees and debris out.

It has not had much luck in finding a county department to volunteer to do the work.

Because of a possible threat to health and safety to area residents, the watershed council voted to join with

the cities of Detroit, Dearborn and Dearborn Heights to appeal to Gov. William Milliken to declare the situation an emergency and involve the U.S. Corps of Engineers in removing the logjam.

THE COUNCIL ALSO voted unanimously to request a legal opinion from the attorney general as to which governmental body is responsible for maintaining a waterway such as this.

There has been more than an eight-week delay in breaking up the jam because of the jurisdiction problem. Mayor Frank Swaps of Dearborn Heights is eager that work begin while the track leading into the area is frozen hard enough to bear the weight of heavy machinery such as large bulldozers and cranes.

Weddle, who discovered the dam, told council members his city does not own that kind of equipment. He said that estimates of repair costs run from

\$70,000 to \$300,000. IN OTHER ACTION taken by the watershed council, Nancy Donaldson of Franklin was named the new council chairman; Ed Siemert, city engineer of Livonia, was voted vice chairman, and Carol Staininger of Southfield was named treasurer.

The executive secretary of the council is Molly Cowan of Redford Township, appointed last year.

The council also deliberated on the two sewer plans that have been introduced to handle wastewater problems of Oakland and western Wayne counties. Both plans call for a treatment plant at the point where the Huron River flows into Lake Erie.

The so-called Super Sewer advocated by the Wayne County Department of Public Works, would close all treatment plants in the area except for the one at the mouth of the Huron. It would include a 50-mile interceptor of en-

closed pipes and the 49-million gallon per day treatment plant. Its official name is Alternative A-1.

Alternative D is the plan advocated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Under it, northern areas would be served by a treatment plant in Walled Lake, while center areas would join the Rouge Interceptor. Those south of Canton Township would be served by the plant at the Huron mouth.

SIEMERT EXPRESSED concern that the EPA-backed Alternative D "would pose a threat to the water in the Rouge River." He pointed out that if the Walled Lake treatment plant were to malfunction during a period of dry weather and low flow, 100 percent of the effluent that normally is treated would be raw sewage.

By the time the effluent reached Livonia by way of the Middle Rouge, about 46 percent of the flow would be raw sewage.

"My feeling is that the council should take a stand to protect the quality of our water," he said. "I object to what this plan could do to the Middle Rouge."

Delegate Lynne Goldsmith of Canton Township observed that while it would be valid for the council to express its concern about the plan, it would not be valid for it to support one plan over another.

"According to our by-laws we are an advisory group," she said. "I see a need to raise the question, but not to support a particular plan."

Siemert then agreed with her interpretation, but noted that from a practical standpoint, the council ought to get its "oar in early."

"We should appoint a committee to study it," he suggested. "It is very complicated and there is a lot of politics involved. We don't want to get involved in politics," Siemert said.

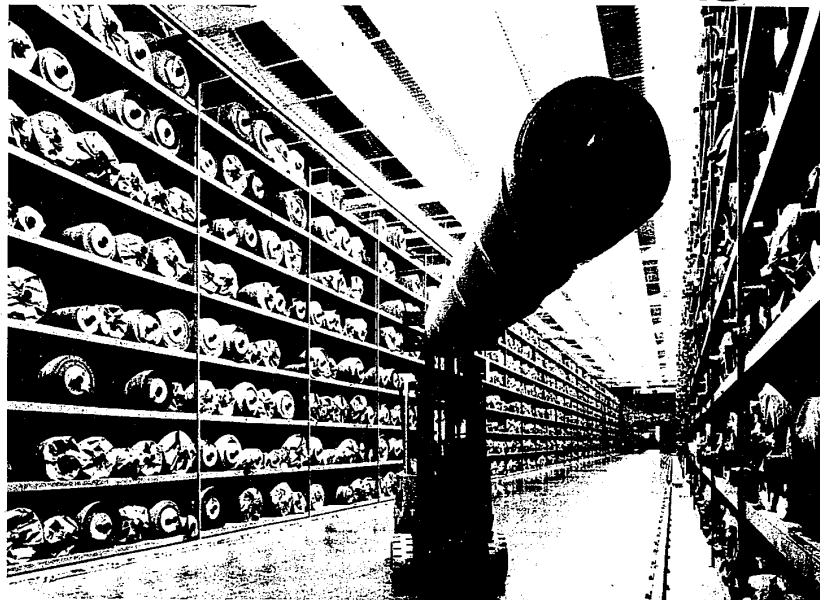
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