

Hotel tax

County eyes new revenues

Oakland County may soon be pushing for a 5 percent excise tax on hotel rooms.

A proposal to change state law to allow the county to assess the tax was referred back to the Board of Commissioners General Government Committee last week but is expected to return for board action in August.

The tax, which would have to be approved by county residents, was proposed by Commissioners Hubert Price, Jr. and Walter Moore, both Democrats from Pontiac.

The general government committee recommended the county seek the law change.

Price said a "conservative estimate" of annual revenue the tax would generate was \$1 1/2 million to \$2 million. He proposed the revenue be used to promote tourist and convention business in the county or for construction of county convention facilities.

While it's conceded the tax could not be approved in time before next summer's Republican convention business, if the Michigan legislature changes the law, the tax could go before voters prior to the January 1982 Super Bowl at the Pontiac Silverdome.

Super Bowl fans are expected to fill hotels in the metropolitan Detroit area.

PRICE SAID the action to refer the matter to committee was a "stalling tactic." He said "the media's close identification of the excise tax with the Silverdome" was part of the problem.

The Silverdome "would stand to benefit" from the tax, Price said, but added that the money could be used to better fund the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau, build a cultural center in the county or "enhance" Meadow Brook Hall or the Detroit Zoo.

One concern among some commissioners, reportedly shared by Southfield officials, was how hotel tax revenues would be allocated.

Southfield, which unsuccessfully tried to change the state law on the hotel tax several years ago, has

an estimated 2,000 hotel rooms, according to a city official.

Commissioner Lawrence Pernick, D-Southfield, who voted to refer the matter back to committee, said he was undecided on the tax.

"I'm not enthralled with the idea of new taxes on any industry," Pernick said. He questioned how the money would be distributed.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE Daniel Murphy supports the tax.

Murphy said the tourist and convention bureau "needs it." The Oakland bureau was recently merged with the Metropolitan Detroit bureau. Murphy said the county has no plans yet on how it would use the tax revenue.

The Republican county executive said the tax was similar to user fees for park and recreation facilities, "not a tax against the taxpayer."

The current state law, passed by the legislature in 1974, excludes Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties from levying the tax.

The law only allows counties with populations less than 600,000 and having a city of at least 40,000 to impose the tax.

The Price proposal would seek legislation to eliminate the 600,000 population wording in the law. If the law is changed the county would be free to adopt an ordinance to levy the tax, but because of the Headlee tax limitation law, the tax would have to be approved by voters.

The law allows hotel tax revenues to be used for promoting tourist and convention business or for constructing or improving convention and entertainment facilities.

Some commissioners questioned whether the tax would affect restaurants, but Price said the law only allows the tax on hotel or motel accommodations.

Robert Gorsline, R-Milford, general government committee chairman, said he would report the hotel tax plan out of committee in 60 days.

Ford photo exhibit

opens at UM campus

A photographic exhibition depicting former President Gerald Ford's political career and his relationship with the University of Michigan opened June 19 at the Bentley Historical Library on U-M's North Campus.

The display, also featuring documents pertaining to Ford's contribution of his papers to the U.S. government, was mounted in conjunction with a cornerstone-laying ceremony at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library adjacent to the Bentley Library, home of the Michigan Historical Collections.

The exhibition is free and open to the public 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays throughout the summer.

ABOUT 50 photographs selected by May Davis Hill, Bentley photographic curator, and Michael Evans, a graduate student in archival administration at U-M, are primarily candid shots of Ford in his political capacity. Hill and Evans were assisted by the staff of the National Archives.

The work of White House photographers David Kennerly, William Fitzpatrick, Olite Atkins, and U-M photographer Robert Kalmbach among others, are represented.

Kennerly, Hill points out, attracted considerable public attention for his efforts, both as a highly visible personality and professional. "He wanted to make sure his photographs lasted, which meant they are mostly done in black and white," she adds.

Some of the highlights of the photographic portion of the display include: Ford's presidential nomination in Kansas City's Kemper Arena; the former president's debates with Jimmy Carter at the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia; campaign shots; a joint session of Congress; a National Security Council meeting; Ford voting in his hometown; and his participation in U.S. Bicentennial festivities.

Ford also is shown with such international figures as Queen Elizabeth and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

Some of the photos that reflect Ford's non-political pursuits and his family life include one of his wife Betty receiving an honorary degree from U-M, pictures of Ford as a UM football player, and a family portrait at the Aspen, Colo., ski resort that was used to make a three-dimensional Christmas card.

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Five area Huron-Clinton Metroparks — Metro Beach near Mt. Clemens, Stony Creek near Rochester, Kensington near Milford, Lower Huron and Willow between Belleville and Flat Rock — have available bus service.

The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) and Detroit Department of Transportation (D-DOT) will conduct a special program from Saturday, June 23 to Oct. 31.

Bus service to the metroparks will be in operation weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. and week-ends from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Round-trip bus fares are \$1.10 per person when paid in advance, and \$1.25 (in cash) when paid the day of the trip.

Arrangements for the special metropark bus service may be made by contacting SEMTA at 362-1160.

The service is "demand-planned," which means passengers must call a central dispatch number to make a trip request and the reservation agent will schedule the trip. Reservations or cancellations must be made at least 48 hours in advance for week-day outings, and 72 hours in advance of week-end trips.

All reservations will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis. Groups will be combined with other groups or individuals as needed.

Persons should plan ahead to use this service, be able to use alternate days if original schedule is not available, and become familiar with pickup points along the route and the designated central meeting spot at the metropark for drop off and pick up.

OCC figures corrected

A story in Monday's Observer & Eclectic editions on a drug use study at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus gave an incorrect breakdown of the male-female student ratio at the school. The Farmington Hills two-year college has a 50-50 male-female student enrollment.

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