

Suburbs ponder: Deal with Detroit or lawsuit?

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105A

City councils and township boards in 14 western suburbs are taking two weeks to ponder.

Should they abandon the "super sewer" idea and deal with the city of Detroit for sewerage treatment services? Or should they sue the state for blocking federal aid to the 60-mile long super sewer project?

Representatives of the western Wayne and Oakland county suburbs — from Van Buren to Commerce townships — got a look Tuesday at what it would cost to go through with the \$288 million super sewer, known formally as the Huron Valley Wastewater Control System, versus splitting it and sending the northern communities' sewage to Detroit.

Duane Egeland, director of the Wayne County Public Works Department, summed up the situation by saying that dealing with Detroit "would be

worse for the south, but not for the north."

Egeland, who has guided super sewer plans for more than a decade, said two weeks of study have shown that splitting super sewer in Van Buren would result in higher costs for the northern communities.

But the communities from Van Buren northward — including Canton and Plymouth townships — would find some advantage to dealing with Detroit. The capital cost would be 5-10 percent lower than the Huron Valley system, and operating costs — at least initially — would be cheaper in Detroit's plant.

Egeland met with representatives of the 14 suburbs, gathered as a Rate Review Committee, Tuesday morning.

"After considerable discussion about whether the state Department of Natu-

ral Resources and Detroit could follow through," he said, "they decided to go back to their councils. Committee members didn't feel they had authority to make the decision."

SOME SUBURBS are itching to file suit against DNR, which announced July 1 it would withhold 75 percent aid to the full super sewer project.

DNR cited claims by Detroit that it some of the northern suburbs were illegally obligated to send their sewage into the Detroit system by way of two Rouge valley interceptors.

DNR has also been under political heat from outside Michigan communities who want federal aid for their projects and don't want to see the Huron Valley project soaking up more than \$200 million in aid.

Some suburban officials want to seek a declaratory judgment in circuit court holding that they are not, in fact, obligated to deal with Detroit for sewerage services.

Egeland, who reports to Wayne County Executive William Lucas, said Lucas was holding off on a suit until the communities decide what they want to do. Lucas personally favors super sewer. "He'll do whatever the communities want to do," Egeland said.

COMMENTED Canton Supervisor James Poole:

"The real tragedy is that improve-

ments are needed, and if there is a long court battle, all monies will be forfeited, and everyone loses."

There now are discussions that Canton, Plymouth, Northville, Novi and Wixom remain with the Detroit system, Poole said.

"I don't think any community will be able to intelligently make a decision," Poole said. "I think there will be a lot more accomplished if a lawsuit is filed."

Added Plymouth Township Clerk Esther Hulting:

"I think the supervisor (Maurice Breen, who is on vacation) has been leaning in the direction of suing Detroit to determine if they have the capacity to handle the northern arm."

"The township would really like an honest answer on Detroit's capability to handle the sewage rather than evasive."

"We've got some turnaround," Egeland said of the DNR and Detroit positions.

"We looked at this (sending northern outflows to Detroit via the Rouge) before. But it had been dropped because, first, there was no capacity in Detroit and, second, DNR said it would be 125th on the priority list and not eligible for any federal grants."

Both Detroit and DNR knew it was eliminated and didn't say anything at the time (three years ago)," he said. Now, however, DNR says it will

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raise the northern project's federal aid priority from 125th to sixth.

Egeland QUOTED DNR officials as saying the northern project would be eligible for 75 percent federal funding if plans were completed by October of

1984. After that, the federal government is reducing its share to 50 percent.

To handle sewage flow from the northern communities, he said, Detroit would have to expand its interceptors. The Rouge Valley Interceptor, under the county DPM's jurisdiction, would have to be expanded.

Egeland quoted DNR and Detroit officials as saying they could avoid overloading the Rouge system and polluting the river by a combination of new construction and better management practices.

Detroit's cost of treating sewage from the northern communities would be \$850 per million gallons compared to \$950 for the treatment plant proposed for Brownstown Township by the Huron Valley project, Egeland said.

But he added the Huron Valley plant's costs would drop in five to 10 years as more development spread the costs around.

U-D opens registration

The University of Detroit will hold fall-term registration Wednesday, Aug. 31, to Friday, Sept. 2, in Calhoun Hall on the U-D McNichols Road campus in Detroit. Students who have not been admitted previously are advised to contact the U-D admissions office now.

Registration will be conducted alphabetically by last summer at scheduled times for day and evening students who have not been admitted previously are advised to contact the U-D admissions office now.

Classes will begin Tuesday, Sept. 6. Specific registration times are listed in the Fall Class Schedule. This and other information can be obtained by calling the university at 927-1245.

U-D offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate, day and evening degree programs in the liberal arts, business, engineering, architecture, the sciences, education, criminal justice and human services-nursing.

Students also can enroll in individual courses for personal and professional development. The fall class schedule covers a range of subjects from "Chinese Customs and Social Life" to "Environmental Technology."

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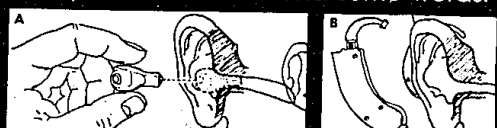
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