

Proposed hospital faces many obstacles

By Judith Doner Berne
staff writer

Joint plans by Henry Ford and Sinai hospitals for a community hospital in West Bloomfield are just that — plans. Reality is that regional and state health agencies stand in the way of applications for an Oakland County hospital — a 153-bed facility known as Huron Valley Hospital, proposed for Commerce Township, and its second application for another 153 beds.

The reason — western Oakland County has too many hospital beds, according to state health agencies.

However, Huron Valley proponents didn't take no for an answer. They headed for court, which overruled hospital agencies and issued a certificate of need. The second application still is

In court, while waste disposal and insurance questions also must be resolved before that hospital breaks ground.

Sinai-Ford, likewise, filed a letter of intent for a 200-bed township hospital late last month with the Comprehensive Health and Planning Council for Southeast Michigan and the Michigan Health Department.

It would be managed by Sinai on Ford land on Maple, west of Farmington Road. It tentatively is named West Bloomfield Community Hospital.

THE STATE remains silent, but the head of the regional health planning council said he will recommend denying the hospital to his board.

"From the data we have, there is no such need," said Terence Carroll, execu-

utive director of the regional council — a federally designated, non-profit, waterdog agency charged with assuring equal access to quality health care at a reasonable cost to southeast Michigan residents.

A state health department spokesman said it would not be felt to comment during the review process.

"We'll just take a look (at it) as application) and make the best possible decision we can," said Keith Rapphann, state director of planning and construction.

A 25-member executive committee will decide the need for the proposed hospital and make a recommendation to the state health department. The state has final authority — until the Huron Valley case.

"The Huron Valley case is the only one that a court has overruled the

state on the need for a new hospital," Carroll said.

THE STATE considers the regional agency's recommendation, but doesn't always follow it, Rapphann said.

Carroll acknowledges market demand for a West Bloomfield hospital, but says that's not his top concern.

"We have to differentiate between 'need' and 'market demand' for medical care," he said.

"Sinai and Ford are casting sheep's eyes at what they believe is a good market," he said. "Many of the people in West Bloomfield are employed — and some people out there are ill. Why should Beaumont (Royal Oak's William Beaumont Hospital) get them?"

Carroll has two concerns:

- Oakland County already has 24 more beds than needed, (not including

Huron Valley) based on 1970 census figures projected through 1982.

• And Detroit — where both Ford and Sinai are located — has 200 more beds than the population warrants.

He agrees that updated population projections are needed, but said they are the responsibility of the state Department of Management and Budget.

SINAI officials said a full certificate of need will follow the December letter

of intent.

"We feel we can demonstrate a need. The West Bloomfield area hasn't been identified as an overbedded area and hasn't been included in a bed reduction plan," said a Sinai spokeswoman.

Detroit counts 80.4 percent of its beds filled, according to a 1981 American Hospital Association survey. Per-patient, per-day hospital costs are \$441, ranking fifth of the nation's 10 largest cities.

Metro asks for flat rate in Livonia

By Marie Chesney
staff writer

Even before the first cable shows have been aired in Livonia, MetroVision, the city's cable company, continues to juggle its fees.

First, it asked for — and got — a 6.5 percent raise in its fee for basic cable service in the city.

Then, in a Dec. 29 letter to the city's cable commission, MetroVision asked that it be allowed to charge the same rate — \$7.95 — for all pay services instead of charging fees ranging from \$5 to \$9.95. The commission has recommended the city approve the rate change. The council, however, has asked city attorney Harry Taftig to find out if a public hearing is needed before it acts on the recommendation.

MetroVision won the 6.5 percent increase without having to get the city's OK because the company used the hike to cost increases passed on by satellite subscriber services. Cable customers will now pay \$8.25 a month for the basic Tier II service, instead of the \$7.75 once quoted by MetroVision. The new

price amounts to a 50-cent per month increase.

"They can pass on cost increases as long as we verify documentation (of the increases)," said city attorney Harry Taftig. In December, the city's cable commission had asked Taftig to review the city's cable contract with MetroVision to see if the increase is legal under the city's franchise with the company. The increase is legal, Taftig confirmed.

MetroVision called its fee hike, coming before the first cable hook-ups in the city, unprecedented.

"In its history, MetroVision has never changed its subscriber rates prior to implementing service," wrote MetroVision President Henry Harris in a Dec. 8 letter to the commission. "However, these are not normal times in the CATV industry."

Tier II services include such satellite services as the entertainment and sports network (ESPN), the Weather Channel, Nickelodeon and Cable News Network.

METROVISION also called, unprece-

dated its having to come before the city to ask that the same rate — \$7.95 — be charged for all pay services.

"In all the systems we operate, all of our pay services are sold at the same retail rate," wrote Harris in his Dec. 29 letter. "For some reason, and nobody here can seem to remember why — in the Livonia bid we had differing rates for certain pay services."

Originally, MetroVision wanted to sell Cinemax at \$8; Home Box Office, Showtime and The Movie Channel for \$7.95; the Disney Channel for \$5.95; and the Metropolitan Detroit Sports Channel at \$9.95.

Harris said the decision for subscribers would be made simpler by

charging one across-the-board rate.

MetroVision, he added, could also offer cut-rate packages to subscribers so that they wouldn't be tempted to "switch around" from service to service. For example, Tier II service (\$8.25) plus three pay services (at \$7.95 each), could be packaged at \$29.95 instead of at \$32.10.

At council's Monday study session, cable commission chairman Lowell Peterson said charging the same rate would benefit the city's cable subscribers.

"This is more favorable to the public because more services would decrease (in cost) than increase," he said.

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