

League, city at odds over water survey

**By Tim Richard
staff writer**

A group of mostly suburban women have incurred the city of Detroit's wrath for suggesting there may be "problems" with future water quality.

Charles J. Williams, director of the city department which sells water to 118 outlying communities, said a metro area League of Women Voters (LWV) study "barely mentions" corrective actions Detroit is taking to rehabilitate the aging system.

"It is an insult to suggest that the director is not spending enough time overseeing the DWSD," Williams wrote, referring to himself in the third person.

Morse of the Southfield-Lathrup-Oak Park league and Adele Pheatman of the West Bloomfield-Farmington Hills league.

Panel members were Florence Adamson and Ann Rainforth of Livonia; Katherine Cushman of Dearborn; Corbith Conrad and Nancy Johnson of Birmingham-Bloomfield; Elizabeth Kuhlman of Grosse Pointe; Marilyn Wilson of Downriver; Wayne County; and Lorna Painter of Detroit.

The argument started with the report's preface, which said, "The day before the committee's tour of the Water Works Park water treatment plant, a 200-pound roof tile had fallen in the filtration building."

Williams said they "made no mention of corrective action taken by the department."

HERE ARE THE LWV's findings and Williams' rebuttals:

- In 1987 there were 384 oil and chemical spills in the Great Lakes and 492 in 1988. Detroit and federal emergency contingency plans need to be expanded and strengthened. No comment from Williams.
- Much capital investment has been delayed. The state estimates it will take \$300 million to correct existing deficiencies.
- Williams blamed suburban customer lawsuits over rates for "a

great deal of delay" which prevented sale of bonds.

- The city budgeted \$40 million in 1979-80 to rebuild the Water Works Park plant, and costs are now estimated at more than \$100 million, "but as yet the rebuilding has not begun."
- Williams: "Contracts are now in place."
- Some 50 filters at Springwells need rebuilding, and some filters at Water Works Park and the Southwest plants are inoperable.
- Williams: The Southwest plant filters are out of service for maintenance. Work is under way for rehabilitating the Springwells and Water Works Park filters.
- The Lake Huron intake, which brings in 15 percent of the system's water, needs to be expanded. No comment from Williams.
- Water storage reservoirs have major cracks and pitting.
- Williams: "Inspections will be completed by December 1989."
- Inefficient pumps need to be replaced because they prevent the system from getting available water to where it is needed.
- Williams: An "inefficient" pump uses too much electricity. "It has nothing to do with any inefficiency in supplying water throughout the system."
- "Maintenance needs to be per-

formed on a more routine and timely basis. The lack of preventive maintenance and timely repairs has resulted in expensive capital improvement projects." No comment from Williams.

- More supervisors, more backup employees, more training are needed; professional salaries need improvement. No comment from Williams.

liams.

- "The Detroit Waste Water Treatment Plant is the greatest source of pollution to the Detroit River... a dry weather flow of approximately 600 million gallons a day."
- Williams: The plant "is in compliance with its discharge permit and has been since the permit was issued in 1983." The correct flow is 630 million gallons.

The LWV made no direct criticism of the seven-member, mayor-appointed board which oversees the water and sewerage system. But it did note that 10 of the board's scheduled 1988 meetings "were canceled due to the lack of a quorum." Williams had no comment.

Detroit challenges DNR order to clean up rivers

(AP) — U.S. District Judge John Feikens has taken under advisement a petition from the City of Detroit challenging a state order to sharply reduce the discharges of raw sewage and toxic pollutants into the Detroit and Rouge rivers.

City officials said last week that they're fighting the order because it provides little environmental benefit at a cost of \$2.6 billion.

On Tuesday, Judge Feikens took under advisement the city's petition to block the state's order, which was approved unanimously by the Michigan Water Resources Commission.

Detroit Water and Sewerage De-

partment officials said the cost of the improvements necessary to comply with the order would send sewer rates soaring by about 1,800 percent.

This would affect residents of Oakland and Wayne counties whose communities contract for Detroit water.

Detroit residents could see their bills rise from an average of \$129 a year to more than \$2,147.

That was contested by the state Department of Natural Resources and environmental groups.

Saulius Simoliunas, president of the city union representing sewage engineers and chemists, said the

city's figures were "a fairy tale, nonsense and total garbage dreamed up to scare people."

Paul Zuger, chief of the DNR's surface water quality division and executive secretary of the commission, said the permit issued Thursday would give Detroit flexibility in meeting pollution goals.

Zuger said the cost of eliminating the pollutants could be as low as \$30 a year for the average residential customer, an increase of about 40 percent.

Staff writer Pat Murphy contributed to this report.

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