

Bills to reassess mobile homes

Mobile homes in licensed mobile home parks would be taxed just like houses under three legislative bills that are getting increasing local government support.

Since 1959, mobile homes in parks have been taxed \$35 a year, although local officials say some are worth as much as \$60,000.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments last week joined the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan Townships Association in supporting three bills in the House of Representatives to tax mobile homes the same as site houses.

"THE CURRENT form of taxation of mobile homes within licensed mobile home parks is discriminatory and antiquated," said the SEMCOG resolution, offered by Romulus Mayor Beverly McAnally.

"Taxpayers in the community are paying higher taxes to offset cost of schools, police and fire protection and recreation services provided to residents of mobile home parks."

It passed without opposition. Mobile homes on private property — as distinct from those in mobile home parks — pay property taxes just like site houses.

MOBILE HOME owners do pay the state 4 percent sales tax when they buy their units. Their rent also covers the park owner's share of property tax and single business tax, along with special assessments for water and sewer.

And mobile park owners say they provide many municipal services at no cost to the city or township — internal street maintenance, lighting, sidewalks, trash collection and snow removal.

But local government officials say mobile home parks fail to pay for their share of schools and other costly services.

SEMCOG's executive committee endorsed the concept of House Bills 4943-45. They would repeal the current \$3 a month tax, provide for the taxation of mobile homes in parks as personal property and exempt used mobile homes from the 4 percent use tax.

'Expensive, inefficient' Official's critical of county government

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

As residents in the county north of Grand Rapids prepare to vote on adopting a county-executive form of government — like the one in Oakland County — Oakland board of commissioners chairman Roy Rewold has some advice: "Don't."

It's expensive, inefficient and opens the door to cronyism, according to newspaper accounts of Rewold's trip to Ottawa County which is north of Kent County on Lake Michigan.

Next week Ottawa County will hold a referendum on switching from an appointed administrator and going to an independently elected county executive who oversees all county government except that entrusted to other elected officials.

Oakland County traveled a similar governmental road in 1974, when it became the first of Michigan's 83 counties to adopt the county executive form of government. Since then, Wayne County has also adopted the

county executive form of government.

REWOLD, R-ROCHESTER, has been a commissioner for eight years under an executive and is currently chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

He went to Ottawa County — north of Kent County on Lake Michigan — on Feb. 15, at the invitation of a group calling itself the Citizens for a Responsible County Government.

According to newspaper stories about his trip, Rewold voiced his opinions in Holland and Grand Haven advising against Ottawa's opting for a county executive.

For one thing, having a county executive unnecessarily costs more than \$1 million, according to newspaper accounts of Rewold's speeches.

"I could take a million dollars right off the top of this system so fast it would make your head spin," Rewold was quoted as saying in the Ottawa (County) Advance, one of 10 newspapers circulating in the Grand

Rapids area. "And that's just the fact. If I ran my business like I've seen some of these things done by the county executive, I wouldn't be in business," the story quoted Rewold as saying.

ASKED ABOUT the stories and reports of his comments, Rewold Wednesday said they were basically accurate, with one exception.

They did not make clear that his comments were directed at the system, rather than the man occupying the executive's post — Daniel T. Murphy.

"My remarks were critical of the system, not of Dan Murphy," said Rewold.

Stories also quoted Rewold as saying commissioners sometimes have to "work around" the executive to get things done.

In a Feb. 18 story in The Grand Rapids Press, Rewold was quoted as saying, "We (Oakland commissioners) don't know what is going on until it happens."

The story also quoted Rewold as

saying that Oakland County's reputation as a prosperous, well-managed county is the result of good economic times, not a result of its form of government.

The story also quoted Rewold as saying there is a momentum for an election, possibly in 1991, on changing Oakland's form of government.

OTHER COMPLAINTS attributed to Rewold in the stories include:

- Because he is elected to a four-year term, while commissioners serve two-year terms, the executive can lobby or support his preferred commissioner candidates.
- Consultants and contractors who donate to the executive's campaign "can easily be included in county business."
- Although the executive's job requires training and experience, it inevitably becomes politicized because the person holding it must run for reelection.
- The board can do nothing about the staff and consultants the executive hires.

County park highlights nature programs

Maple syrup production, water conservation, and how animals

adapt to their surroundings will be discussed at three nature programs during March at the Independence Oaks Nature Center.

At "Maple Magic" on Saturday, March 3, a naturalist will demonstrate the Early American technique of tapping maple trees for syrup.

Participants will view the process from start to finish, sample the syrup, and make some "maple magic" to take home.

The program will be from 1-2:30 p.m. The fee is \$1 a person. Water is crucial for sustaining

life. Nature lovers can learn how to preserve this precious resource at "Earth Day Primer: Groundwater" on Saturday, March 17.

From 1-2:30 p.m., sources of water — oceans, lakes, streams, ponds and below the ground — and its uses and abuses will be discussed.

"Earth Day Primer: Groundwater" is the third and final program commemorating the 20th Anniversary of Earth Day. The program costs \$1 a person.

THE SUBJECT of animal adaptation will be explored during the "Eco-Explorers Investigate Animal Faces and Feet" mini-class on Saturday, March 31, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Children ages 6-8 will learn how animals' physical features adapted to their environment.

A variety of outdoor activities will take place, weather permitting. Participants should provide a sack lunch and dress for the weather. The cost is \$6 a person.

Pre-registration is required for all nature center programs.

Activities at the Independence Oaks Nature Center are made possible through millage funds supported by Oakland county residents.

Independence Oaks, an Oakland County Park, is on Sasabaw Road, 2½ miles north of I-75, near Clarkston.

For more information, call 625-6473.

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