

Engler: Tigers should stay in Detroit

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Until now, Gov. John Engler has sided with economic developers. Last week the Republican conservative showed signs of concern about urban sprawl.

Engler told the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments he wants to preserve the old Tiger Stadium, promised to appoint a liaison to SEMCOG and indicated a concern about the cost of new development in open fields.

"I would prefer that the stadium stay in Detroit. I'd actually prefer

that Tiger Stadium be fixed, if it can be," he replied to Detroit council member Maryann Mahaffey. The SEMCOG General Assembly greeted the remark with warm applause.

"If there's redevelopment or development of a new site, I don't think there'll be state money involved in that."

IN HIS 1990 campaign, candidate Engler said Michigan's problem is not controlling growth but obtaining it.

But in a speech to SEMCOG, a seven-county agency seeking to cool ur-

ban sprawl in a time of little population growth, Engler shifted his ground a little.

"I would like to see an expansion of the enterprise zone concept . . . to bring growth and investment back," he said.

In an enterprise zone, taxes on new investment are reduced to near zero to lure businesses into blighted areas. The idea is preached by Jack Kemp, secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

TO SOUTHFIELD Mayor Don Fracassi's plea that he appoint a

staff link to SEMCOG, Engler said he would.

"I'd like to appoint myself. But we are looking at someone. We have to settle a couple of issues relative to our southeast Michigan office," said Engler, in office 11 weeks.

"We will have someone readily identifiable and, more importantly, more accessible for you to deal with," he told Fracassi.

Engler told SEMCOG delegates — all either elected or top appointed officials in local government — he would welcome their ideas on growth policy.

"One of the things you've focussed

on is the cost of delivery of services to undeveloped areas, particularly when the cost has been borne once, and there's an opportunity to re-utilize prior investment.

"Should we support the development of greenfields, or should that expense be borne not at all by state government or even local taxpayers?"

It frequently comes to a head when someone says, "Fine — your choice is not whether I go here or there but whether I go to Michigan or not in Michigan." That raises the stakes.

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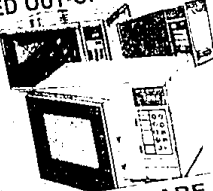
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