

Public gets chance to talk about roads

The Board of County Road Commissioners holds its annual budget meeting with its customers — taxpayers and local governments — at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 22, in the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Auditorium, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

"Each year we seek input from our customers when we build the road commission budget, but this year it is even more critical that taxpayers take the time to talk with us about their roadway needs," said Lawrence E. Littman, chairman of the board of the road commission.

"This year, after months of declining revenue and an economic downturn, the road commission needs the help of its customers to aid in prioritizing county road system needs.

"We simply can not meet 1992's demands with funding generated by a formula that has not changed since 1984.

"Our customers — the taxing drivers of Oakland County as well as the representatives of local

units of government — must join with us in addressing the problems of their road system.

"Between more mobility breakdowns and declining revenues, we can not meet all needs of all people.

"We all are in this conversation about improving our quality of life together. We must freely share information, or we will not be able to achieve accord."

Earlier this year, the road commission stripped \$2 million from its budget in an effort to keep pace with sagging revenues.

As employees retired or resigned, their jobs were left vacant.

The road commission, in an effort to continue to maintain winter maintenance, bought snow removal equipment on an extended payment plan.

"The time has come," said John L. Grubbs, managing director of the road commission, "for all of us to clarify for one another what our expectations for the future are.

The commissioners auditorium is next to the county courthouse.

New report says racial bias helped create urban sprawl

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Local public officials will get their first look Friday at a regional report blaming "urban sprawl" on racial bias, fragmented local government, federal policies and heavy property taxes.

How to lead in your office

The Oakland University Continuum Center is offering a half-day workshop of "Assertiveness in the Office" from 9 a.m. to noon Tuesday, Aug. 20, at Beautiful Saviour Church, 5831 North Adams Road, Bloomfield Hills.

Participants will learn to communicate with distinct clarity, prioritize concerns and information, and set limits on requests made. The focus will be on developing reasonable lines of openness between bosses and subordinates.

The fee is \$49. MasterCard/Visa accepted. Registrations will be taken through Aug. 19. Call 370-3033.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' executive committee will see the result of a year-long study when it meets at 2 p.m. in the historic Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills.

The staff-written report stops short of making any recommendations — such as regional government. But growing numbers of poll-tossers now view regionalism favorably as a result of a half-dozen meetings over the last year.

THE CULPBIT is "urban sprawl" — the eating up 40 percent more land, including farms and woods, to serve a 6 percent population growth over the next 20 years.

The flip side of that coin is abandonment of older cities, with their underused streets and utilities, and isolation of poorer populations.

The SEMCOG study will be outlined by Marilyn Gosling, an Oakland County commissioner from Bloomfield Hills; E.A. Jackson Mor-

ris, supervisor of Pittsfield Township in Washtenaw County; and Ed Hustoles, planning chief of the seven-county agency.

The study says wasteful land use will continue the next 20 years — and everyone's quality of life will deteriorate — unless current policies are changed.

CAUSES OF urban sprawl, the SEMCOG report concludes, are many:

- Racial bias — worst of any region in the U.S. It will block the assimilation of an increasingly diverse population.
- Overbuilt water and sewer lines. They created a need for more development to pay off bond issues.
- The perception of environmental degradation in older areas.
- Low-density housing. "The large lot/large house combination yields higher property taxes" but eats up land faster than the population grows.

• Growth of service and research industries. They prefer "green field sites on the fringe" of the region.

• Public subsidies in suburbia of mortgages, water and sewer lines, and roads, aggravated by tax abatement.

• "Fiscalized" land use decisions. "Land is zoned only for its fiscal potential (profits and property taxes) rather than for its best use."

• Over-reliance on property taxes by local government. Local units make zoning decisions primarily to generate property tax revenue.

• Fragmented local government. More than 200 units make home rule decisions "that are individually in the best interests of local communities even while they often constitute, in the aggregate, a pattern of disjointed development."

• Regional problems. The last 40 years have seen "a steady growth of problems that have ignored political boundary lines."

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