

Liquor at Meadow Brook?

License seen as boost in attempt to privatize

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

There may be a liquor license in the future of the Meadow Brook Music Festival as the popular-but-nearly-insolvent program at Oakland University turns to private operators to end its financial problems.

At a meeting of the OU Board of Trustees Wednesday, interim president John H. De Carlo said the festival may obtain a liquor license to further ongoing negotiations with operators.

These negotiations are proceeding nicely, De Carlo told trustees. So nicely the board may need a special meeting within three weeks. Presumably the special meeting would hasten negotiations, so operators could take over the festival this season.

The festival is a cherished tradition at OU, featuring a wide range of popular artists since 1970. But even cherished traditions must pay their way. So as the festival accumulated a deficit of nearly \$1 million, OU decided to consider drastic action.

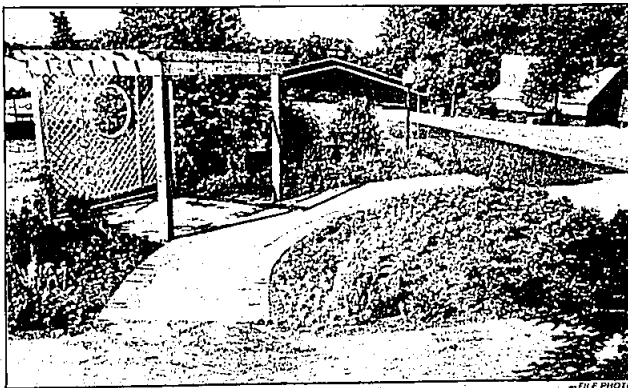
THE UNIVERSITY has been talking with Arena Associates Inc., operators of the Palace of Auburn Hills, and Olympia Arenas Inc., which runs the Fox Theatre.

The goal, according to De Carlo, is to turn the festival over to an operator that will maintain its high standards and quality, while at the same time guaranteeing OU a base profit and a percentage of the gate.

The liquor license would obviously be an inducement for any operator, because liquor sales are a strong source of revenue.

In other respects, the 90-minute meeting was devoted to financial concerns, including a year-end report from De Carlo, who took over as interim president last June, replacing Joseph E. Champagne who resigned to go into private business.

Shortly into his tenure, De Carlo said he realized the university faced a multi-million dollar deficit unless stringent budget measures were enacted. "Fortunately we've been able to do that," he said.



Meadow Brook last spring turned the east side of the festival grounds into a series of small gardens, such as surrounds this pergola. To

the right is the pitched roof of Baldwin Pavilion where the musical action takes place.

IN OTHER ACTION, trustees:

• Tabled a proposal to discontinue the swim club that enables about 119 family members to enjoy the swimming pool, built in 1936 as part of the Dodge estate.

• Robert J. McGarry, vice president for finance, said major capital improvements mandated by the Michigan Department of Health would cost \$143,000, bringing into question viability of the club.

Loren Shepard, a resident of Rochester Hills and a member of the swim club, asked trustees to delay action on discontinuing the club so members could consider alternatives.

• Accepted — and lauded — a report from trustee Larry Chumovich saying the committees searching for a new president "are right on schedule."

• "We received applications from

115 outstanding candidates," said Chumovich, a Southfield resident. "And we've narrowed it to eight exceptionally-qualified semifinalists."

He said that by the end of January the number of candidates will be reduced, with the remaining prospects brought on campus for interviews and meetings with faculty, administrators and students.

• Accepted a report from William Hampton, attorney for Auburn Hills, about nearly-completed negotiations that would turn 22.5 acres of OU property over to the city for the

widening of Squirrel Road.

Auburn Hills will pay OU \$4.9 million, Hampton said. A separate endowment would also be established to fund three scholarships specifically for city graduates from local high schools.

Plans call for widening and converting Squirrel — currently a narrow, unpaved road — into a boulevard with two lanes each way from University on the north to nearby Featherstone on the South, Hampton said.

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OCC board meets Thursday

The Oakland Community College Board of Trustees meets at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the board room of the George A. Bee Administration Center, 2480 Opdyke, Bloomfield Hills.

Agenda items include a joint academic programming agreement, a fund-raising project for the Southfield campus and renovation of the administration center.

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EMEAC files suit vs. DNR changes

An Oakland County-based environmental group has taken court action against Gov. John Engler's plans to reorganize the Department of Natural Resources, primarily because they abolish commissions created by the Legislature and accessible to the public.

The East Michigan Environmental Action Council, and other Michigan environmental groups, Friday filed a complaint to enjoin Engler from transferring by Executive Order most governmental decision making functions in the fields of environmental protection and natural resource management from commissions to the director of a newly created Department of Natural Resources.

The complaint, filed in Ingham County Circuit Court, states that two executive orders, if allowed to stand, will:

• Abolish the old Department of Natural Resources and create a new Department of Natural Resources.

• Abolish a large number of commissions, boards, committees, or agencies within the old DNR, including the Air Pollution Control Commission.

• Transfer nearly all of the statutory powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the Commission of Natural Resources to the director of the new DNR.

"THE GOVERNOR'S executive orders represents the most serious threat to Michigan's environment in the past 20 years," said

EMEAC's executive director Elizabeth Harris.

EMEAC claims that Engler's intent is to enable the director of the new DNR, in consultation with the governor — but not in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and not with any meaningful participation of the people — to make major decisions affecting Michigan's natural environment.

"We would have preferred to work with the governor to improve the system while retaining the open process that has been established over the last 20 years," said EMEAC Executive Director Elizabeth Harris.

"But the governor's move has left us with no choice but to sue," she said. "If the EO's are allowed to stand they will eliminate the protection that has been provided by commissions operating under the Open Meetings Act against undue influence by those with wealth or political power."

"Decisions to permit discharges to air and water, to drain and fill wetlands, to allow commercial activities on state lands will be made without public knowledge, and the only recourse will be a legal challenge paid for by private citizens after a decision has been made."

THE COMPLAINT charges that they are unconstitutional and unlawful because they usurp and intrude upon a group of fundamental rights of the people of the state of Michigan to an open, accessible, and accountable government.

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