

Hills officials attend Washington conference

Farmington Hills officials have requested help from U.S. Congressmen to urge the federal Environmental Protection Agency to release final permits so construction can begin on the Haggerty Road connector project.

Mayor Jon Grant and other council members met in March with U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, as well as U.S. Congressmen William Broomfield and Carl Pursell at a National League of Cities Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C.

City officials also said they would request federal discretionary grant money for the M-102/Grand River Interchange, just east of the connector's southern end.

They also asked for congressional help to keep the federal community block grant program at its current funding level. City officials also discussed the effects of pending environmental regulations that would impose new costs on cities, according to a city press release.

PRESS REPORTS Wednesday indicated that state and federal officials had given the Michigan Department of Transportation a permit to build the five-mile Haggerty Connector.

However, the state Department of Natural Resources must offer an acceptable plan to replace the 44 acres of wetlands that the boulevard would destroy. The road would run from I-696 just west of Farmington Hills to Pontiac Trail through Novi and Commerce Township.

"At the meeting we attended in Lansing recently, we understood that everything was ready to go except for the wetlands problem," Grant said. "It sounds like that's what it still holds it up."

Other priorities at the National League of Cities Conference call for increasing investment in human resources and infrastructure essential to a strong and competitive U.S. position in the world economy.

Thompson faces new challenger

By Susan DeMaggio
staff writer

Running on a platform of stronger rights for crime victims, Steve Kaplan, an assistant prosecutor in Macomb County, will challenge Richard Thompson for his job as Oakland County prosecutor.

Kaplan, a Democrat, is best known to the community as president of the Southfield Board of Education. If elected prosecutor, Kaplan said he would resign his board position. His term expires June 30, 1995.

He plans to announce his official candidacy this week.

Kaplan has been an assistant prosecutor in Macomb County for six years. He got some of his ideas for Oakland County from the way things are done in Macomb.

"I'd like to expand the victim-witness unit in Oakland County," Kaplan said. "Social workers assist in rape cases, but victims of all serious crimes need some guidance through the system."

He proposes paying salaries of those social workers by eliminating two of the 89 assistant prosecutor positions when two vacancies naturally occur.

Kaplan also proposes assigning a couple of assistant prosecutors to a new Consumer Fraud Unit.

"THESE PROSECUTORS would handle bus-

'I'd like to expand the victim-witness unit in Oakland County. Social workers assist in rape cases, but victims of all serious crimes need some guidance.'

— Steve Kaplan

ness and consumer fraud cases exclusively," he said. "Now, when someone loses \$1,000 to a painter, it's treated as a civil matter. Under my plan, the fraud victim would contact a prosecutor who would go after the defendant."

Kaplan is an advocate of alternative sentencing. He supports the use of boot camps and longer probationary time for first-time offenders.

"We need to do more to reach and rehabilitate the first-time offenders," he said. "Most come back as parole violators. I'd like to see them earn GEDs, gain employment, train for a skill. Often times, jail is an offender's graduate school in criminology."

When felony offenders come up for parole, Kaplan would like to see prosecutors alerted to their

requests for parole.

"This way prosecutors could review and see what rehabilitative steps have been taken and could challenge the release in circuit court or the Department of Corrections."

RUNNING AGAINST THOMPSON will be a tough race for Kaplan to win. Thompson has a reputation as a no-nonsense, tough-on-crime prosecutor. He's a Republican in Republican territory.

And unlike Thompson, Kaplan would not have gone after Dr. Jack Kervorkian on murder charges.

"The way I see it," he said, "there is no current law in the state prohibiting assisted suicides. Should the legislature enact one, of course it would be the prosecutor's role to prosecute."

A few circuit court judges have had a problem with Thompson's refusal to plea bargain. Kaplan would relax the ban a bit over misdemeanors.

"But every case must be considered individually, because every case is unique," he said. "I don't like plea bargaining on major crimes."

Kaplan, a lifelong Southfield resident, graduated from Southfield-Lathrup High School in 1971. He graduated cum laude from the Detroit College of Law in 1981 and became a Macomb County prosecutor in 1986.

Kaplan and his wife, Lisa, have a 2-year-old daughter.

County waits for response on trash incinerator issue

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland will likely decide the fate of its controversial Auburn Hills incinerator in mid or late May, according to the deputy director of the county's solid waste program.

By then communities like Troy, Farmington Hills, West Bloomfield, Southfield and others are expected to have informed county officials whether or not they want Oakland to continue its efforts to manage waste, Roger Smith told county commissioners Thursday.

The big question, Smith said at a meeting of the finance committee, is whether communities want: 1) a complete program with the incinerator, 2) the same program without the incinerator, and 3) no program at all, leaving solid waste to each community.

County officials sent letters, dated March 11, to the county's 61 communities, Smith said, asking for a response by May 15. So far, no community has responded, although some may have already discussed the matter.

The West Bloomfield Township Board, for example, last week reaffirmed its opposition to the incinerator. But it had not yet informed county officials.

"I think most communities are confused," commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham, said following the finance committee. "I've only heard from one community (Highland Township) and they wanted more in-

formation about the costs. But we don't have cost figures."

Commissioner Donald E. Bishop, R-Rochester Hills, said he is concerned about public concerns the incinerator was a big waste of money. "People think we are wasting dollar after dollar after dollar," he said.

There is considerable uncertainty, Smith said. But it won't be resolved until the communities have responded and the board decides how to proceed.

Once the decision is made, however, the county must move with dispatch, Smith said. Two contracts expire June 30, and must be renegotiated or canceled.

They are contracts for the \$30 million recycling center, also in Auburn Hills, and a landfill in Orion Township.

Each has already been extended once without penalty, he said. "If we are forced to extend them again, there may be penalties involved."

The county's proposed \$500 million solid waste program, the most expensive in Oakland history, has been in disarray since earlier this month when the Westinghouse Electric Corp. unilaterally refused to extend the \$190 million contract it had to build a 2,000-a-day waste to energy incinerator in Auburn Hills.

Smith said the county can get another company to build the incinerator. But not before Oakland communities advise officials how they want the county to proceed.

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Let's talk about the change in your area code.

7pm, Tuesday, April 7th, Civic Center Library Auditorium,
32777 Five Mile Road, Livonia

Due to population and business growth, a new area code will be assigned to some people who currently have the 313 area code. This change will go into effect sometime in 1994.

A Citizens Committee has been formed to recommend the best way to handle the area code split. This committee includes representatives from Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), and the city of Detroit.

Before making its recommendation, the Committee, along with Michigan Bell, will hold a number of public meetings this month. Come and express your opinion. We welcome your input.

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