

SEMCOG 'disappointed' in subdivision control act

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

It backfired. Local government groups say the new state Subdivision Control Act actually weakens local control of and hurts farmland preservation.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is calling on Gov. John Engler to veto Senate Bill 112, the first revision of the Subdivision Control Act in decades.

Joining SEMCOG are the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association, and Michigan Association of Counties.

"We're really disappointed," said SEMCOG executive director John Amberger.

SEMCOG's letter to Engler asking for a veto said SB 112 failed to meet two key principles:

"1. It does not provide for local government review of all land divisions for conformance with local zoning and related regulations.

"2. Increasing the number of land divisions from plating beyond what is allowed under current law will accelerate land fragmentation, thus reducing the viability of land for farming."

SEMCOG's letter reminded Engler that SB 112 does not achieve the reforms recommended by your task force on agriculture and development.

"As of this morning," Amberg-

er said Tuesday, "he has not signed it."

Local governments' target: tendency of farmers to split 10.1 acre parcels into four lots, then re-split them 10 years later, and then again 20 years later. Result since the 1960s: a massive loss of farmland to narrow "bowling alley" lots, loss of open space and loss of woodlands.

The House passed the bill Dec. 10 on a 79-24 vote with seven absent.

SB 112 represented four years of legislative work by Leon Stille, R-Spring Lake - two in the House and two in the Senate. Stille became chair of the Senate Local Government Committee in March of 1996, after

Sen. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, resigned.

An one group after another objected, Stille's original bill was pared from 120 pages to 20. Fighting him hardest was the Michigan Association of Realtors, which said it was satisfied by the final product.

As one such development has taken out of agriculture more acreage than all of Washtenaw and Livingston counties in the past 10 years.

Until Dec. 4, Stille's efforts had been cheered by SEMCOG. But then Stille, a former village president, hit a major snag in the House Local Government Committee, where chair Bob Brackonridge, R-St. Joseph,

amended the bill to the liking of real estate interests.

He considers a poll that day of the interest groups, however, showed a major shift in support:

• Michigan Association of Realtors - formerly opposed, now supporting.

• Michigan Township Association - strong supporter of the Senate version, now "opposed," said staffer Pat McEvoy. "Our association is concerned with H-3 (House substitute) to permit bowling alley lots," she said, adding MTA is unhappy with the way developers could use 10-year farm leases to chop up farms without subdividing.

• Michigan Municipal League - strong supporter of Senate ver-

sion, now "marginally supporting" H-3. Said spokesman Scott Behrder: "You can create 27 parcels without going through the plating process" under the House version. By the end of the session, MML shifted to opposition.

• Michigan Association of Counties - from support to "neutrality," said spokesman Leo Schwartz.

• Michigan Environmental Council - "supported in the past, now silent or neutral. We prefer the original version. We have several concerns," including the diluting of the 4-1 ratio of depth to width on lots, said spokesperson Julie Stoneman.

OCC hosts MLK events

Dr. Charles G. Adams, pastor of Detroit's Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, will lead a Martin Luther King celebration at the Royal Oak Campus of Oakland Community College. Meanwhile at the Auburn Hills campus, Channel 50 WKBD news anchor Amyre Makupson will be guest speaker at a Martin Luther King celebration there.

The Royal Oak program begins at 6 p.m. Monday, Jan. 17, in the Lila Jones-Johnson Auditorium on the campus, at 739 S. Washington. Admission is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Makupson's appearance will be at noon Monday, Jan. 13 in the G. Building of the campus, 2900 Featherstone Road. Admission here also is free and open to the public.

Dr. Adams topic will be "A tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King and his relevance in the 1990s." The minister is entering his 27th year as pastor of Hartford Memorial. In 1984 he

Martin Luther King Day events will be conducted at the Auburn Hills and Royal Oak campuses.

was elected president of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP. Twice cited by Ebony magazine as one of the 15 greatest Black preachers, he was named one of America's Top 100 Influential Black Americans in 1990-94.

He holds a doctorate in theology and has been awarded 10 honorary doctorates from such institutions as Morehouse College, Kalamazoo College and the University of Michigan. He has taught theological courses at Boston University, Andrew Newton School of Theology, Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City and Illiff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado.

After joining WKBD in 1977 as news and public affairs

manager, Makupson was assistant co-anchor of the Ten O'clock News and also is executive producer and host of "Straight Talk", a weekly issue-oriented talk show.

In 1995 she was named "Media Person of the Year" by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This year, the March of Dimes presented her with its "Humanitarian of the Year" distinction.

In addition, Makupson has been honored by The Detroit Urban League, the Disabled American Veterans, the City of Detroit, the City of Pontiac, Arthritis Foundation of Michigan, the Cystic fibrosis Foundation and the Museum of African and American History.

Following her remarks, the "Spirit of the Community" Award will be presented to Judge Leo Bowman of the 50th District Court in Pontiac. Music will be provided by the Pontiac Northern High School Choir.

Child alcohol prevention classes offered

"Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol," a series of four free classes, will take place at The Community House in Birmingham. The series is sponsored by The Waterford SAFE Center for Prevention Education for Oakland County Parents and Families, by AAA of Michigan and by The Community House.

Parents are the best "prevention" people in their children's lives. They can influence their children's decisions about alcohol and other important issues.

Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol (TWYKA) is a nationally recognized program for parents, which will give new information on what to say and how to say it. Parents will learn prac-

tical tips to prepare their children for real life situations.

The class meets four consecutive Tuesdays, beginning 7-9 p.m. Jan. 14 at The Community House. There is no charge but reservations must be made by calling the program department at (810) 646-6822.

The Community House is a non-profit organization which offers educational, social and cultural programs, child care,

employment assistance, meeting rooms, banquet and catering services, and more.

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