

OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the past week.

BIRMINGHAM

Pressure to take test: Recently introduced legislation in the state Senate may pressure parents to force their kids to take the controversial Michigan High School Proficiency Test. A new bill allows the state to take over a school district if over 80 percent of graduating students don't receive certain ratings on the test two years in a row. This school year, the parents of over 50 percent of the juniors at both Seaholm and Groves high schools signed waivers to excuse their kids from taking the test.

Pedestrian-friendly meters: Parking meters will be installed at 17 spaces on Chester Street, eliminating two currently existing travel lanes. The narrow walking distance for pedestrians crossing the street is expected to slow traffic and make that area more accessible. The new spaces will have two-hour time limits, at 50 cents per hour.

CLARKSTON

Another bond proposal: The Clarkston school board approved a \$57.65-million bond proposal to appear on the June 9 ballot, only six months after a \$52.5 million proposal failed. Voters will be asked to approve a new elementary school and dis-

trictwide renovations. The \$5.1-million increase from the last proposal comes from construction inflation and addition of traffic loops, entrance canopies and new entrances at almost every elementary school. Architects from Roy G. French Associates Inc. say construction could be completed by fall 1999.

FARMINGTON

Zoning problems: High Meadow Acres Homeowners Association residents are lobbying Farmington Hills City Council for less dense zoning on their properties, but two nearby landowners think it's a threat to their development plans. Al Searchill, one of two owners of the Glen Oaks Village property, is worried that if the rezoning falls through, a provision will require the rezoning of his own planned development near High Meadow Acres.

Overweight trucks: Farmington Hills police are considering implementing a motor-carrier enforcement effort to police overweight and overloaded trucks traveling through the city. Hills police Chief Bill Dwyer said the department could train two of its traffic officers to recognize trucks violating weight limits and would use new portable truck scales to weigh them. An estimated \$200,000 to \$400,000 from fines could go toward local road repairs.

LAKE ORION

Save Camp Franklin: Resident Mac Deuparo is making a last effort to buy all or part of Camp Franklin, a natural area on the northwest shore of Long Lake, from developer Robertson Bros. He has suggested a land swap for other township property, a partnership of the township and area businesses to buy the land for a community park or nature preserve, or qualifying for a grant. Deuparo said a previous effort to save the land failed because of lack of support by the township, but many Orion trustees now seem open to the idea. However, it may be too late, since commercial and residential parts of the development have already been or will soon be before the township board or planning commission for approval.

NOVI

Downtown plans develop: It's taken 10 years, but Novi officials are getting their first look at plans to develop a 10-building downtown in Novi. The plan to build a mostly brick structure with 496,000 square feet of offices and commercial space on 25 acres along Main Street was recently introduced as a preliminary site plan to Novi City Council. The buildings will include trendy shops, coffee shops and eateries.

OXFORD

Water restrictions: For

Oxford Township to receive Detroit water, it must agree to temporary water usage restrictions during emergencies. The township is currently in negotiations with Detroit to supply water to the Red Barn subdivision and areas along Drahn Road, since some water supplies in both areas were found to be contaminated. The restrictions would affect the sprinkling of lawns and landscaping.

ROCHESTER

No picket fence: In circuit court last week, Judge Jessica Cooper ruled that the Brownwell family cannot erect a white picket fence along their yard, located in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District of Rochester Hills. In October 1995, the Historic Districts Commission stated that split rail fences are more consistent in that district than picket ones. The Brownwells appealed the HDC's ruling to circuit court. The couple has also filed a civil lawsuit against the city, accusing the city of violating their constitutional rights.

Weekend college: Michigan Christian College will debut Weekend College, an accelerated degree program for adults, on July 26. Working adults will be able to complete a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a major in management, and only have to attend on weekends. A typical weekend student can complete a degree in 12 to 18

months.

SOUTHFIELD

Scheduling conflict: Graduation ceremonies for Southfield and Southfield-Lathrup high schools are set for June 9, the same date as this year's school board election. That was the only date available for ceremonies at Meadow Brook Pavilion, on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester Hills. Schools superintendent Marlene Davis said the mixup "won't happen again as long as I'm here."

Church relocates: Some Southfield residents are concerned over the possible increase in traffic near the new Word of Faith International Christian Center at Nine Mile and Evergreen. A public hearing was held on the subject Monday. Word of Faith plans to build a 5,000-seat sanctuary at the site, former location of the Duns Scotus friary. There also will be a school for kindergarten through eighth grade, a ministerial school, Sunday school and church offices.

TROY

New hotel/office building: Troy City Council is enthusiastic about the building of Candlewood Park, a project which includes a three-story, 116-room hotel for business travelers and 47,200-square-foot, single-story office building to be built on the northeast corner of Kirtz Boulevard and Troy Center Drive. Each room will feature a full kitchen, two phones with two phone lines, full voice mail, oversized desk, data port and other luxuries.

Maybe Magna: Magna International may or may not build its U.S. headquarters on a 32-acre site at Big Beaver, west of I-75 in Troy. The Canadian auto parts supplier received rezoning approval in August 1996, but has done no developing since. Company representatives say the project was delayed when the corporation merged with the Farmington Hills-based DNL Seating.

WEST BLOOMFIELD

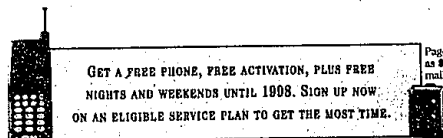
New youth program: A \$27,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice will be used to run a local planned recreation program for youths ages 10-16. The idea came after residents voiced concerns about youths congregating at various restaurants and the West Bloomfield Library. A public hearing may be held to explore the hiring of a program coordinator, and the program is hoped to be in place by fall.

Peeling for a fire station: Commerce Township struck its first deal on its way to building a new fire station. The township tentatively agreed to buy vacant Walled Lake school district property on Gittings Road, which it hopes to trade to the Department of Natural Resources for another parcel in its own southwest quadrant. The deal is not closed, but school property is expected to sell for about \$216,000. Walled Lake officials said it was too small and poorly located for continued use.

—Compiled by staff writer
Todd Wicks



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