

ABATEMENT

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The project would include construction of 85,000 square feet of space, site improvements, new personal property and about 180 new jobs within 10 years of completion.

The competing site for the project is Springfield, Ky., where a new manufacturing plant has been built. Locating there instead of Farmington Hills would save the company \$30 million, say Akabono officials.

David Grupenhoff, director of finance for the company, said Akabono is 14 years old and its brake components comprise 25 percent of the market share. The company currently employs 163 people in Farmington Hills.

He said the company would save \$1.7 million in the six-year abatement for real and personal property taxes while bringing about \$30 million in new taxes to the city in just two years.

Councilman Jon Grant said, "We need to get our point across to the state" regarding the recent unsuccessful threat by Gov. John Engler's to take away hundreds of millions of dollars in state-shared revenues.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said she didn't want to continue having residents pay for corporate tax breaks if the city suffers at the state's hands.

To qualify for employee tax credits from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation through the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) program, businesses also have to apply for a local tax abatement.

In Farmington Hills, it is typically 50 percent savings for a six-year period on new taxes. Council members said the information provided in the abatement request didn't add up.

The Farmington Hills Economic Development Corporation recommended an eight-year tax abatement on personal property taxes only.

The company asked the council for a six-year abatement on real and personal property taxes, however, saving more on taxes.

Brieker said he wasn't sure which formula he was expected to approve and a state tax savings figure through MEGA had not yet been established.

"Normally, we already know what MEGA is going to do. We're the tail not the dog here," he said. "MEGA hasn't made up its mind so we can't do anything."

The MEGA board is expected to review the company's request at its Oct. 10 meeting.

Carleigh Flaharty of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce told the council that Akabono shouldn't be judged too quickly considering the council did give tax breaks to corporate giants Nissan and Bosch in recent years.

"We're here just to approve the (tax abatement) district tonight," she said. "... I'd hate to see a company held hostage while you have something against the state. Retention is key to sustaining the economy in your area."

The council at its Sept. 9 meeting approved establishment of the tax abatement district for Akabono's proposed expansion. The action only means the council can then strike a deal with the company to give it a tax break.

City attorney Tom Shultz said the establishment of a district does not mean the council has to approve an abatement request and the district could be rescinded by the council at a later date.

No date was set for the council to address the issue again.

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MAIN BREAK

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At about 11:30 a.m. The water's force was so powerful because it came from a 60-inch transmission pipe that transports water to northern Oakland County.

The crumbling Inkster concrete fell on an underground, 26-inch transmission line which holds a reserve supply of natural gas for MichCon, a subsidiary of DTE Energy.

Workers feared the concrete could break the line and cause a large leak. As a precaution, DTE Energy, police and fire ordered 12 Southfield and Farmington Hills homes evacuated until 6 a.m. Monday, but Southfield Fire Chief Robert Ozias said there little fear of danger to the neighborhood.

"The gas line was a big one, but there was no threat of an explosion," Ozias said. "If there was any damage to the line, gas would have shot into the air and we would have had to help keep people away."

The boil-water advisory impacted Southfield because the broken transmission line, which swallowed some soil and sediment before water flow was stopped, feeds city water to Southfield customers. The advisory was lifted at noon Monday after tests confirmed the water was clear.

"There was no contamination of the water," said Tom



Rose LaVole, of Southfield, removes water-damaged items from her basement. Fans and dehumidifiers dry out the still damp basement.

Vukonich, Southfield's director, "Some dirt got into the system, but we still had to issue

the warning as a precaution." Officials from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department are still looking for the cause of the main break.

Inkster traffic between 11 and 12 Mile will remain limited until work crews assess the damage, order equipment and make repairs. The 12 Mile leg of the intersection remains closed because water blasted so hard from the main, it poured along the eastbound lane of 12 Mile, toward the Rouge River and eroded a chunk of the road.

"These roads will be open to local traffic," Vukonich said. "Other than that, motorists need to find another way to get through there for a while. I don't know exactly how long, but I'm guess it'll take weeks."

As an alternative route, motorists are taking 11 Mile, Northwestern and Middlebelt to avoid this intersection.

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