

# COG Is Called 'Last Hope' Of Urban Sprawl

By TIM RICHARD

The new top man of the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (COG) calls himself "a conservative in my approach to metro government."

E. Robert Turner, in his maiden speech last week after one month on the job, talked like a 19th century Jeffersonian Democrat when he said last week that "the government closest to the people is best."

Turner called voluntary regional councils "the last hope for urban democracy. If we at the local level continue to fail to live up to our responsibilities, then another level of government—meaning the federal—will assume those responsibilities."

TURNER WAS hired a month ago to be executive director of COG, a voluntary association of six counties and hundreds of cities, townships, villages and school districts in southeastern Michigan.

A graduate of Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania, Turner had been city manager of Boulder, Colo., for six years and had completed three years as city manager of Burbank, Calif., when he was hired for the newly-formed regional agency in Michigan.

He made his first speech last week at a regional planning conference sponsored by COG.

COG's Observerland members include Farmington city, township and school district; Plymouth city, township and school district; Livonia school



E. ROBERT TURNER

district, and Wayne school district.

Non-members are the cities of Livonia, Garden City and Westland; Redford Township; and Clarensville and Garden City school districts.

USUALLY, said Turner, a man taking charge of a new agency like COG has nothing at all to work with.

"But I have no period of grace. On my desk are plans for transportation, garbage, shopping centers, land development, training of law enforcement officers, manufacturing industries, non-manufacturing industries..."

"They all say the same thing at one point: We recommend that the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments be charged with the implementation of this plan."

COG, though it held its first official meeting in January of this year, is the new parent agency of a 17-year-old organization, the Detroit Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission, which in turn has a three-year-old child, the Transportation and Land Use Study (TALUS).

COG RECENTLY polled member governments about their opinions on what items should get COG's priority.

There were 17 categories of problems. Fifteen of the 17 got at least one first-place vote. No problem got more than four votes, Turner said. Turner's conclusion: There is no single overriding problem—or lots of major problems, however, you want to look at it.

Until the last few years in American history, local government has performed "spectacularly," Turner said. But urban problems now are broader than any single unit; hence the need for a broader agency, within the framework of the grass-roots tradition, to tackle those problems or at least to coordinate many separate local efforts.

Turner also said he was "impressed with the intensity of interest" that Detroiters and suburbanites have in urban problems—an interest that is far deeper than just the aftermath of last July's riots.

The result, he said, is that "every COG activity will be examined for its black-and-white (racial) implications. This is tragic—but let's face it."

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ROYAL MAIDENS — Karen Louise Kutschke (at right), 28146 David, Farmington, was crowned "Miss Americanism" queen during ceremonies held April 28 by the Farmington VFW Post. A junior at North Farmington High School, the Farmington queen will appear at VFW national and state conventions and will ride in the local Memorial Day parade on May 30. Sue Ellen McArthur (at left), of Livonia, was named "Miss Liberty Bell."

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