

Consider Rouge Pollution Time Extension

By NORMAN DOUGLAS

Neighboring communities as well as the City of Birmingham are awaiting decision on an extension of time they have requested of the Water Resources Commission in submitting final plans for the abatement of the Rouge river pollution.

The commission took the request under advisement at a meeting of these communities before the commission Friday morning, Oct. 30, at Haven Hill.

Representatives of Birmingham, Southfield township, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Hills township and Bloomfield Hills were present to explain to commission members why the August 1 deadline date for submission of sewage disposal plans had not been met.

While commission members hinted that the communities named in the order to abate pollution a year ago were actually in default of the time schedule on disposal plans and could be taken to court, they agreed to study the situation explained by the municipalities and

surprise over the fact that in a year's time the communities had not been able to decide whether the program would be handled jointly or by each community as a separate unit.

Roth continued that the communities sought to provide better sewage disposal through the construction of an interceptor sewer running south from the Springdale Park area through Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield township, and Southfield township into the Detroit sewage disposal system.

DETROIT OFFICIALS have been contacted on the preliminary plans and revealed that Detroit's disposal facilities were able to serve a maximum population of 4,000,000 people, more than enough to carry the proposed interceptor under maximum usage.

The big stumbling block, Roth concluded, was the method of raising the money to finance construction of the interceptor which is estimated to cost \$2,500,000, and the legal entanglements of creating such a sewage disposal authority.

Roth also added that Birmingham's situation seemed solved for at least the next year with the recent release of the city's east side sewage from the disposal plant, easing the over-loaded treatment process at the plant.

Roth stated that Birmingham should be able to treat the city's west side sewage and continue to treat the Bloomfield drain sewage for a year without further pollution of the Rouge river.

Egbert of Birmingham drew praise from commission members as the only representative of a city cited by commission order to take concrete steps to cut down on pollution in the past year.

Egbert reiterated Birmingham's joining the Southeastern Oakland County Sewage Disposal District in July of this year to divert the east side sewage to the SOC Sewage disposal district and plans underway to improve sewage treatment at the city's plant.

Egbert explained that the plant now was serving an estimated population of 12,000 for a plant designed to treat sewage from a population of 15,000.

"Detergents flowing into the plant are damaging the operation of the plant," Egbert stated, "and we may have to expend between \$20,000 and \$25,000 to improve aeration equipment to lessen the damage of these detergents."

"THE CITY can now serve the illegal Bloomfield drains and the Acacia Park drain if population in this area is not allowed to increase materially," Egbert continued. "But this will bring our plant up to capacity and we don't feel we can accept any further responsibility until a solution to the sewage disposal problem is in sight."

Egbert contended that the illegal Bloomfield drain still is a question mark in Birmingham's plans. The Birmingham city manager expressed fear over home building activities on the Mercer farm property, stating that further development in this area would be a disaster to the city.

Supervisor David Anderson of Bloomfield township reported that the small parcel of land now being developed on the Mercer farm was subdivided years ago and water and sewer facilities had been constructed in the area at that time.

The financial situation was repeated by Egbert who told commissioners that it would probably take a combination of both general obligation bonds and assessment bonds to raise the \$2½ million.

THIS CANNOT be accomplished overnight, Egbert stated. On the authority basis, it has taken the Southeastern Oakland County Garbage and Rubbish authority and the water authority over five years to go into operation.

It was at this point in the hearing that State Health Commissioner Albert E. Heustis suggested that the municipalities be remanded to court on their failure to make their plans known to the commission.

"This discussion seems to re-echo last year's talks," Heustis commented. "Everyone seems to know the problem but in one year's time only Birmingham has acted to solve the situation," he concluded.

When questioned on Birmingham's plans to continue treatment of Bloomfield drain sewage, Egbert said the city does not anticipate signing any long range treatment programs with outside communities.

"We do not want to build any substantial additions to our plant if the interceptor would make the plant useless within the next four years," Egbert said.

"OUR PLANT operations now run about \$41,000 a year and we may find our costs would be lower if we were to join in the interceptor and idle the plant," said the city manager.

Tentative interceptor plans outlined by Roth have been approved in principle by commissioners but they have hesitated to go along with some details of the plan.

One important point of difference in the thinking of the engineers and the commission concerned the

maximum capacity of the interceptor system.

State agencies have stated that the system be built to handle the maximum storm in any given year. Consulting engineers feel that this is nearly impossible because of a 324 gallons per person per day maximum imposed on any system outside of the City of Detroit by Detroit officials.

Commissioners also complained that the plans were not concise and final.

TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS and Elmer Kephart, city manager of Bloomfield Hills, all maintained that the financial setup was the big catch.

Supervisor William Roesser of Southfield township summed up the thinking of the other communities when he explained that townships have limited tax bases and added that it would be impossible for any township to finance such a program separately.

Kephart eased commissioners' feelings on additional building in Bloomfield Hills when he stated that the city had not added to the pollution problem since it was cited by the commission a year ago.

"No building permits are issued in the city for homes or businesses that do not provide their own sewage disposal," he said.

Meanwhile the municipalities have hired both legal and financial advisors to come up with a joint plan that will be approved by the state.

Authorities of the various communities are now concerned with the action to be taken by the Water Resources Commission.

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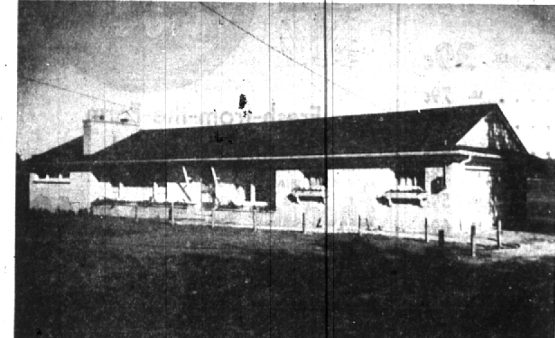
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