'round the towns news

The Birmingham Eccentric

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## An Editorial

# Urge Careful Scrutiny Of Southfield Charter

The most important single civic question they ever will be called upon to decide, confronts the voters of Southfield township, when they cast their ballots Dec. 12 on whether or not to adopt the charter formulated for them.

If they approve this charter then the entire unincorporated area, comprising approximately 31.5 square miles of thinly-populated territory, will become a city, forever divorced from its present township status.

It will be recalled that on June 7 the question of changing from township to city status was approved by the margin of 3,176 favorable and 2,111 opposing votes.

**EVERY FACT** and consideration attending this Dec. 12 election argues that the issue is most vital to every resident concerned—as vital as were the original discussions and arguments concerning the adoption of the U. S. Constitution.

For this charter, or any other that may be considered, will become the pattern for the future development and governing techniques of the Southfield area. Although it does provide for the usual amendments from time to time, the history of such amendments reveals that desired changes are not always possible—the basic cause being what is termed "politics".

**THE REASON** for this is that wherever an existing set of laws or ordinances exists, which benefits special groups or areas, these beneficiaries organize to oppose change—and it is well known that an organized minority is more effective at elections than a majority that is not organized.

All of which eloquently argues that a community's original charter should be as nearly perfect as possible!

As we understand the situation in Southfield township, there are two groups organized against this charter; the group living north of 12 Mile Rd. opposes the charter largely because they are against becoming part of a large, sparsely settled city. They believe they eventually will be taxed and governed by officials elected from dis-similar residential areas, and they don't want to be a helpless minority group.

**THE ORGANIZED** group south of the 12 Mile Rd., although not unanimously against the plan to become a city, opposes the Charter because of certain of its provisions.

There are four points in the proposed charter which nearly all opponents of it are agreed upon. First, the single ward system, wherein one or all of the seven-man council conceivably could be elected from one part of the proposed city, is meeting with unfavorable reaction from many voters.

**This plan, they point out, is in direct opposition to the American idea of representative government.**

In this respect this newspaper reminds voters that, because of the scattered population areas in Southfield township, it is quite likely that a highly-organized portion of a city can elect a majority of its officials from a single area. The only safe alternate to this is to resort to a system of wards, each to have its own council member.

**FOR YEARS** Detroit has tried to adopt an amendment that would prevent too many of its State Legislators from being elected in too few of its areas.

Where a community is not too large, and its citizens have acquired a solidarity of community objectives, the single ward plan is not too objectionable, as in Birmingham, for example.

But in the case of Southfield township, which covers far more square miles than is usual in city development, it should never be overlooked, we believe, that efforts will be made by certain well-populated areas to control the activities of their city government. From a physical standpoint, this can be reflected in the development of some areas in advance of other areas, regardless of actual needs for improvements.

**THIS IS NOT** to argue that such a course might be followed in Southfield alone; it simply is the average behavior pattern of human beings, wherever they live. Foreseeing such possibilities, a community's charter should be written to forestall such situations.

Another phase of the proposed charter opposed by many is that which elects council members to four-year terms. This objection, we agree, has merit. Personally, were we on the Charter Commission in Southfield, we would have argued for three-year terms; electing three one year, and two for each of two succeeding years, would provide "staggered terms" which means that always on the council there would be a carry-over of desired experience by the remaining council members.

**MUCH DISCUSSION** has developed about the power of the proposed city council to tax its people. A $10.00 tax rate limit is provided in the charter, this amount to be levied against each $1,000.00 of assessed valuation, for carrying on the regular city services. When additional taxes are needed the charter limits this addition to $10.00 per thousand of assessed valuation and requires that 60 per cent of the voters approve it at an election.

There really is nothing unusual about such provisions in a city charter!

But, like everything within the structure of self-government, an alert and informed citizenry is necessary to see that fairness and honesty are given play in the process. The only "joker" (if it can be called this, and every unit of government is susceptible to it) is the so-called "jiggling" of assessed values in order to obtain more tax revenues from people.

**FOR EXAMPLE,** if an assessing officer has been placing a 50 per cent of cash value on a business or residential property, say amounting to $5,000.00, with a tax rate of $10.00 per thousand, he would obtain $50.00 in taxes; but if he kept the tax rate at $10.00 and raised the valuation to $7,500.00 he would get an increase of $25.00, or a total of $75.00 in taxes.

It must be remembered, too, that such increases in valuation also may be, and often are, made by State or County equalization committees.

Indeed, there is no completely "jelled" policy or amount a taxpayer must pay into government; the situation changes from year to year, especially in rapidly developing areas of population.

**AGAIN, THEN,** we point out the absolute necessity of a charter being offered that meets every possible current and local problem that exists, or may in the foreseeable future, arise.

Much discussion also has taken place among Southfield township voters about the manner of acquiring a city clerk and treasurer.

In the case of the treasurer, he or she is the community's custodian of revenues; he or she is without policy-making privileges. A clerk, too, is without a council vote, although he or she does, in many cases, wield some "influence" in a council's legislative processes.

Perhaps both these offices properly could be filled by the council, from a list of names suggested by the city manager; or the manager could make the appointment, subject to confirmation by the council—or some combination of both procedures no doubt would accomplish an acceptable solution to this question.

**FOR, AFTER ALL,** if a city manager is hired by a majority vote of a council, and the citizens are intelligently alert to their community's needs and solutions, then the plan proposed in the current charter on this phase of the problem may be worth a favorable vote Dec. 12.

It is good for the future of Southfield township citizens that they are currently engaged in open discussions of the charter they will vote on. This is civically very healthy; it is the free, American way of setting up the pattern of self-government.

If the proposed charter is defeated, another can be fashioned, with whatever changes are deemed necessary. Indeed, Southfield voters may have three opportunities to vote on their new charter before they, by State law, would revert again to township status. Or, if no decision is made within two years from the date of their decision to become a city, they revert to a township form of government.

# *In My Opinion . . .*

## Favors Incorporation But Not S'fld Charter

TO THE EDITOR:

After reading Mrs. Palmer's dissertation in the Nov. 17 issue of The Eccentric, we (Dee Meyer represents the Oakland Village subdivision board of directors) should also like the opportunity of "setting the record straight."

We, who are opposing the present charter, are not opposing incorporation but incorporation under what we believe to be a bad charter.

Our interest is in seeing that Southfield gets the right start in this new chapter of its history. We want Southfield to begin this chapter with a good charter—but one that advocates of this charter, as written, are already saying: "Pass this charter regardless; it can always be amended."

**WE KNOW** any charter can be amended but we also know that it has taken Livonia five years to amend their charter. We want the best for Southfield—not something to settle for, then amend.

TAXATION

We believe that the tax rate of $10 and $10 ($35.10 under Michigan equalization rates) per thousand dollars of assessed valuation is abnormally excessive, especially in view of our present high school taxes.

**UNDER** this tax rate, a potential 60 per cent over our present taxes is possible. We do not want to even "open the crack in the door" to such a possible tax liability. We will support a charter that contains a tax limitation of $3 and $3 per 1,000 of assessed values.

CITY MANAGER

Currently, there are 1,325 council-manager government cities in the U.S. Ninety per cent of these cities have the city manager responsible for all phases of city administration. The present writing of the charter for Southfield falls into the other 10 per cent that have split responsibilities to the city council. We will support a charter that establishes Southfield as a business to be run by a capable, efficient city manager.

FOUR YEAR TERM

We believe that a four-year period is too long to ask honest, civic-minded individuals to devote to city affairs and too long to have the other type in office should such an individual be elected.

We know that if an individual does a good job in the best interests of Southfield and is willing to continue in office he will be reelected. We need not fear "lack of experience" for we will cite the examples of Mrs. (Fannie) Adams, township clerk, and Miss (Clara) Lane, township treasurer, who have served Southfield long and well and have been re-elected to office every two years.

**WE DO NOT** want to be saddled with a bad councilman for four years or to have to resort to recall or council action to remove him from office. We will support a charter that calls for the election of seven council members every two years.

The combination of the three points—i.e., excessive tax limitation, "weak" city manager form of government and four-year terms for councilmen—we believe merits our opposition to approval of this charter for Southfield by the voters on Dec. 12.

We will continue to support incorporation for Southfield but we are not in such a hurry for it that we will support a charter that can be amended. We want the best for Southfield and see no reason to settle for what we consider is less than the best.

Sincerely,
Henry M. DeMeyer
24107 Glenevrie

## Palmer Discusses Taxes

Editors' Note: Howard Palmer is a certified public accountant, associated with one of the largest accounting firms in the nation. He is not a candidate for office.)

**SINCE MY** opinions outlining misinterpretations of the proposed charter were published two weeks ago, I have received many phone calls from inquiring citizens, confused by pro and con discussions of the proposed Southfield charter. Here are the answers based on facts.

The cost to taxpayers, if the current Southfield city charter is voted in, seems to be the main point of contention by opponents. Data has been published showing that an $8,000 assessed home would have tax increases of $234 (up 62%). This is utterly fantastic. No one would be in favor of such a move . . . especially me.

**THE CHARTER** does NOT give such authority, nor would any council ever attempt same. Opposition to the charter should study the charter's tax provisions to avoid misinterpretation and dissemination of false data.

In fact, there is much opposition talk about the millage tax levy. Chapter IX states that the city can levy up to 1% of the assessed value — $10 for each $1,000 — FOR PURPOSES OF LIQUIDATING BONDED INDEBTEDNESS, plus 1% for operating purposes. This means just what is stated.

Opposition argues that equalization rates enter the picture here, but nothing in the charter. That is not the case. City governments do not use equalized values in determining its tax rate. Equalization of property values and adjustments of tax rates apply to state, county and schools.

**ANOTHER POINT,** the $10 per $1,000 permissive levy to liquidate bonded indebtedness, CANNOT BE LEVIED WITHOUT APPROVAL OF 60% OF THE VOTE . . . more than required under current township rule, in which only 51% of the vote can obligate you and me. Isn't this better control?

Taxes for operating expenses under the proposed charter are limited to $10 per $1,000 of assessed value. This includes fire protection, police, rubbish collection, road maintenance and the city's share in the Evergreen Intercepter Authority.

Look at this summary chart

(See TAXES, Page 5, Sec. 5)

# Postal Dept. Recommends Lathrup Branch

## Money Settlement With S'field Twp. Outlined by Farms

BINGHAM FARMS — Councilmen resolved Monday to make financial settlement with Southfield on the basis of percentages worked out by Village Treasurer James H. Barrett and Township Clerk Fannie Adams. Southfield will have to pass a similar resolution before the settlement is final.

Barrett said Monday that the Village's share of township receipts from State intangible and sales tax diversion funds would be 1.21 per cent of that received by Southfield.

Mrs. Adams said this would be figured from June 13, the date that incorporation vote results were filed in Lansing, which would give the village an 18-day share in the second quarter of 1955 for sales tax and intangible tax revenues.

**BINGHAM'S** share for the 18-day sales tax revenue amounts to $41.92 and $14.70 for intangible funds. In addition the village would receive $375.06 for their share of sales tax in the third quarter, ending Sept. 30.

**Intangible taxes,** paid once each year, will come directly to the village next year, and should amount to about $300, Barrett estimated.

These figures do not include gas and weight tax funds which are figured on the basis of road mileage, yet to be determined.

**BARRETT** and Adams also estimated that sales tax diversion money would total about $1,500 yearly.

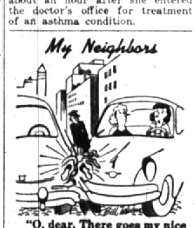
Should Southfield become a city Dec. 12, it would divide common properties with Bingham Farms, giving the village 1.576 per cent of all assets.

## Investigate Deaths Of 2 S'fld Women

SOUTHFIELD — The deaths of two Southfield women are being investigated by authorities. Mrs. Beverly Jackson, 22, of 29055 Southfield died Sunday night in Receiving hospital, Detroit, as the result of an illegal operation performed upon her last September by a Detroit woman, police believe.

The death of Mrs. D. W. Campbell, 38, of 17325 West 14 Mile road in a Royal Oak osteopathic surgeon's office will be investigated during a coroner's inquest set for Dec. 15, chief assistant Oakland County Prosecutor George F. Taylor said.

Mrs. Campbell died Nov. 11 about an hour after she entered the doctor's office for treatment of an asthma condition.




**"O, dear. There goes my nice quiet evening at home with John and the children!"**

**A SIDELINE** for designing consultant William J. Flajole of 20650 Breezewood, was this rebuilt sports car which incorporates features of the Jaguar and Nash and some of Flajole's own thoughts on auto designing.

## Local Design Expert Reveals Plans For 1st 4-Seat American Sports Car

By WILLIAM H. THOMAS

VALLEY WOODS — It may soon be possible for Americans to purchase a four-passenger sports car without going to the European market to do so, it was announced this week by one of the country's leading design specialists.

William J. Flajole, 20650 Breezewood, head of Wm. Flajole and Associates, revealed that his firm was working on such a model for one of the Big Three in the automotive industry—meaning General Motors, Ford or Chrysler. The model will carry four bucket seats and will stand 52 inches high, one inch higher than the English Jaguar.

The Detroit firm, which Flajole heads, is also working on an automatic safety belt in the form of a moveable dashboard which closes over the legs of the car's occupants as the door is closed.

**ON IMPACT** the dash, which rides about three inches above the legs, yields freely up to five inches, then resists with increasing pressure for another 10 inches as it is pushed into a spring.

These, along with many other special design features, are part of the daily task undertaken by Flajole's firm, which specializes in redesigning unmarketable or poorly designed products ranging from automobiles to ladies compacts.

Flajole, who has seen the safety trend coming for several years, has in the hopper a high seat that will rise even with the head and prevent neck-snapping or spraining by sudden impact—long a major cause of traffic deaths and serious injury.

**PROBABLY** one of Flajole's best-known products to his neighbors is a reworked Jaguar, which cost, in materials alone, about $8,000.

Adding man-hours at his Detroit office, Flajole estimated the car's worth at $40,000.

"The prototype always costs more because everything is hand-made," said Flajole. He is well-pleased with the results, not only from an engineering standpoint, but from a comparative viewpoint. "It costs General Motors about a quarter of a million dollars to build one of their sports show cars," he added.

The handmade auto has some features of the Nash, one of the many firms which has drawn on Flajole's designing abilities.

**BUILT FROM** a Jaguar with a 190 horsepower jag engine, the car was a "between jobs" delight for the Flajole crew, more as a hobby or what we might call here a "designer's holiday."

Scooped quarter panels serve functional purposes of giving necessary cooling air to tires and allow easy access to the tires in case of a flat.

Plastic top can be pushed back into the auto's trunk from inside or outside.

Flajole sees in the small sports-car the answer to the commuting businessman's traveling problem, because of, among other things, its speed, and ease of handling and parking. He terms the present day American family car a "chrome barge" which is unwieldy in traffic.

**ALREADY** the speedy sports car and a parallel model, are undergoing sweeping redesigning in the Flajole shop.

In talking with Flajole, his unassuming enthusiasm, capableness and knowledge of designing, show why he has met with such apparent continued success in a business that marks a man successful only as long as he turns out a successful product.

## CALENDAR

TODAY

Optimist club meeting at Fruitridge Inn, Southfield at 13 Mile road, 6:30 p.m.

Cub Scout Pack B-7 Christmas party at Pierce school gym 7:15 p.m.

SATURDAY

Southfield MOMs Bazaar at East Southfield school, 1-7 p.m.

Evening and Fellowship circles of Franklin Community church, Christmas Box, 10 a.m.—3 p.m. in church social room.

Lathrup Community Church Congregational Holiday Fair.

Southfield Area PTA Council "Cinderella" at Southfield high school gym. Performances at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.

MONDAY

Walnut Lake WNPC Christmas party at home of Mrs. George Bradley, Westmont road.

TUESDAY

Southfield Red Cross Bloodmobile at Lathrup Community Church Congregational from 1:45-7:45 p.m.

THURSDAY

Southfield Kiwanigieens December meeting at home of Mrs. Andy Broad, 24874 Edgemont.

Lathrup Women's club luncheon and fashion show at Oakland Hills Country club.

Southfield MOMs business meeting and Christmas party, at home of Mrs. Harry Hydorn, 21765 Seminole.

## *Associate JP Post Without Any Seekers*

SOUTHFIELD — Unless there are some write-in candidates at the Dec. 12 charter election, there will be one city office that will go begging.

Two men have filed for office of presiding justice, but associate justice post was without a single candidate, and according to Mrs. Fannie Adams, township clerk, it appears that without a write-in candidate the office will be left vacant.

Lowest vote-getter of the two men running for presiding justice, S. James Clarkson of 23525 Valley View, and Edward A. Elsarelli of 31700 Eastlady, will not automatically fill the lower office if Mrs. Adam's interpretation of state law is correct.

**THE** associate justice post could be filled, however, by a single write-in vote if only one write-in vote is cast, or by a majority of those cast. It would not be possible, however, for the winner of the presiding justice race to also hold the office of associate justice on the strength of a majority of write-in votes. He would have to decline one or the other, Mrs. Adams said.

## Disqualify 3 Council Candidates

SOUTHFIELD—Three would-be candidates for city commission will not be placed on the ballot because of an apparent misunderstanding by those who signed their petitions.

Despite a reregistration campaign carried on for several weeks by township officials and local newspapers, there were people who evidently felt that previous registration qualified them for the coming Dec. 12 charter vote.

Because of this misunderstanding and because petitioners did not guard against such a complication, the names of Donald Cadeau of 24555 Lahser, Horace F. McDougal of 24550 Larges and Ray C. McLeod of 20952 Van Buren will not appear on the ballot, according to Mrs. Fannie Adams, Township clerk.

**THE THREE** needed at least 200 qualified electors to sign the petition, but no more than 300. Thus disqualified by Mrs. Adams because they had not reregistered according to state law requirement, dropped the number of qualifying signers on the three men's petitions under the 200 mark.

Those who did qualify were Hugh C. Allerton Jr.; Roy F. Andes; Emanuel Christopher; Thomas M. Costello; William H. Dalrymple; Henry M. DeMeyer; Hiram A. Dorfman; Clarence A. Durbin; Samuel A. Garzia; Mrs. James (Elizabeth) Molnar; Stephen T. Onderko; Wesley J. Skowron; Donald L. Swanson; and Luther Wagner.

## Stage "Cinderella" At Southfield High

SOUTHFIELD—Royal Oak Civic Players under sponsorship of Southfield Area Council, will present "Cinderella" Dec. 3 in the Southfield high school auditorium, according to Mrs. John Pederson, publicity chairman.

Tickets for two performances, one at 10:30 a.m. and one at 1:30 p.m.—may be purchased at all elementary schools Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

"All Southfield children will want to see this new version of an old favorite," said Mrs. Pederson.

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## *Dondero Backs PO Decision*

U. S. Postal officials, after lengthy study, recommended that a post office be built in the Southfield—11 Mile area to serve Southfield township, it was revealed this week by Rep. George A. Dondero.

"It is proposed that the new postal facility be called the Lathrup Village Branch of the Detroit Post office, and that it be located in the Southfield and 11 Mile area," the report said.

Next step, according to Dondero, is a search for a suitable site, and to find a builder who will construct the building to Federal specifications and rent the building under the Lease-Purchase Act.

"I'M recommending this as the best possible method of serving the people of Southfield," said Dondero, who was chairman of the House Committee on Public Works and did much to do with the passage of the Lease Purchase Act.

"The Act made it possible for the government to build post offices where we couldn't before," said Dondero, who added that the Lathrup branch, like others built under the Act, would eventually be owned by the government. It is buying on the installment plan, according to the Royal Oak congressman.

"IT MIGHT be necessary to establish one, two or more contract branches (in Southfield)," said Dondero. This system allows postal supplies to be purchased at drug and grocery stores or other outlets.

Detroit officials said it would normally take the postal department seven or eight months to select a site and have a building ready for use, after authorization has been given.

The name could be changed, they said, because "service people don't go into zoning. Sometimes that which is recommended is not zoned for business."

LEONARD A. Walechowski, Lathrup city administrator, said sites open for post office now are Noble block running along Southfield from Coral Gables, one block south of 11 Mile, to and including the Epco block, and a block on each side of Southfield just south of 12 Mile, and two double blocks, designated "professional office" zone, between California and Redwood (Southfield) road.

Dondero said that while recommendation does not necessarily mean approval, it is not likely that the proposed recommendation would be turned down.

## S'fld Moms To Hold Bazaar Saturday

SOUTHFIELD — MOMS, Unit 63 invites the public to a bazaar Dec. 3 at East Southfield school, 26501 Pierce from 1 to 7 p.m. Proceeds will be used for USO work for the benefit of veterans and men in service.

Unit 63's business meeting and Christmas party will be held at the home of Mrs. Harry Hydorn, 21765 Seminole at 7:30 p.m., December 8.