

An Editorial

Study Good and Bad Points of S'field's Proposed Charter

Area's Governmental Future In Voters Hands Monday

Citizens of a 30-square mile area of Southfield Township will, for the second time, vote on whether to accept or reject a proposed city charter when they ballot Monday, Dec. 3, 1956.

Defeated the first time it was presented, this coming election will consider another charter, presumably changed to suit an as yet undetermined number of its citizens.

If it is voted down, Southfield may have one more chance at another charter; if a third vote is negative, or if June 7 arrives before another vote is taken, the area will revert to original township status.

As this newspaper reads the currently proposed charter, we agree that it has some good points, as well as undesirable ones, plus some that are in the "maybe Yes or maybe No" classification.

TWO-YEAR terms for city commissioners, instead of four years, may be a justifiable rule, inasmuch as Southfield will, if the charter is approved, be starting "at scratch", and may want to try out its first legislative body.

However, failure to give them staggered terms will not allow, in our opinion, a continuation of knowledge of varying community conditions from one election to the next. Years of practical experience by other levels of government show that the staggered term idea is

more universally accepted. Proof of the logic of this is shown by the charter's creation of staggered terms of office for its Civil Service Commission.

In a brand new community, so sparsely populated as Southfield, the creation of more than one ward is, we believe, a good plan. The danger of allowing all councilmen to be elected in one campaign and the mayor is selected from among the councilmen or commissioners themselves—this is very true when a city manager type of government is utilized.

ELECTION of a mayor often works satisfactorily, especially when he is on more than a mere part-time basis. Big cities fare best in such cases. In smaller communities, more often than not the mayor is selected from among the councilmen or commissioners themselves—this is very true when a city manager type of government is utilized.

The proposed charter makes it impossible for the city council to spread a special assessment if more than 50 per cent of property owners to be assessed oppose it.

This is good for most such improvements, but there may be times when downright necessity calls for a certain tax spread, since most citizens naturally oppose arbitrarily imposed taxes. However, renewed efforts can be made to win citizen approval, if necessary.

THE IDEA of providing civil service protection for municipal employees is good, for, if correctly applied, it removes employees from "political manipulation."

Operation of a justice court, instead of using a full-time municipal judge, probably best fits Southfield's problems in this area for several years to come.

On the negative side, we agree with many who argue that a city charter should completely prevent any member of a

community's council from doing business with his city for monetary profit. Southfield's proposed charter does prevent a councilman from participating in a vote on the awarding of business, if such awarding relates to his business.

HOWEVER, this prevention can be a mere "meaningless safeguard" to the taxpayers; a dishonest official need not vote to assure that he gets business... he will seek to favorably influence his colleagues.

This is not to point the finger of suspicion at any potential future official—but safeguards are set up to look ahead for many years. Indeed, such a safeguard ought to exist to protect the good names of all councilmen, thus making it unnecessary for them to decide on the moral phases of awarding a contract to a fellow-councilman.

Civil Service exists in government to prevent the use of the "spoils system" to get a foothold. A Civil Service Commission should be free from all political control or manipulation. Once appointed to a term, a Commissioner should keep his job until legally removed by a court of jurisdiction.

THE PRESENT charter allows the council, at any time it chooses, to dismiss a commissioner. Although such dismissal presumably will be declared justifiable (and it may be), nevertheless the system will work best when absolutely free from council control. A provision can be inserted allowing the council itself to bring the matter to a court.

In our opinion, the most flagrant error in the entire proposed Southfield charter is the five mill limitation it places on tax revenues. Most everybody who knows the problems of financing a community the size and nature of Southfield township believes that a limit of five mills is a false lure to win affirmative votes.

COMPARISON has been made with Livonia, whose State equalized rate is about 5.75 mills per thousand dollars of assessed valuation. But Livonia gets, with very little municipal expense, a half million dollars annually from the race track there. Too, it also gets another half million in revenue from four large automobile plants within its corporate limits.

Southfield, today, only has Northland Center within its boundaries, and this would compare with only one of the four Livonia auto plants in tax revenues.

Southfield's first charter allowed ten mills as a maximum tax levy. This proved to be one of the chief reasons for defeat of that charter. But to reduce it to five mills is, in our firm belief, a tremendously false lure to catch tax-minded voters.

SHOULD Southfield vote to become a city, it at once would lose Oakland County financial support of its vast road system. This would require that the new city immediately spend large amounts for road equipment, plus personnel, to condition its roads.

While city status does provide greater flexibility in dealing with both internal and external civic problems, it cannot accomplish a single improvement without money.

Aside from the differences of opinion that naturally arise with regard to the charter's way of operating city government itself, here comes to the fore this most challenging of current questions to Southfield voters on Dec. 3, namely: their willingness as taxpayers, to face necessity of a higher tax rate than the present charter's five mill maximum.

Yes, indeed, Monday, Dec. 3, is a day of great decision in Southfield Township!

Voter Apathy May Decide S'field's Charter Election Monday

Writer Sees Charter's Defeat by Slim Margin

By WILLIAM H. THOMAS

Voter turnout Monday, Dec. 3, may very well decide whether the proposed charter for the City of Southfield passes or goes the same way as did the charter which residents rejected last December by better than two to one.

If the charter is defeated, one thing is almost certain. There will be no third charter if incorporation opponents petition for a new charter commission, for voters to consider, simply because time is swiftly running out on those who want to turn Southfield township's 30-square-mile area into a home-rule city by June 7, 1957.

If by that date no charter has been accepted Southfield reverts to complete township status and probably will be chopped up into two or more incorporated areas.

THERE WILL be no third vote because, if successful, those who oppose city status for Southfield will petition for a new charter commission.

This means a 10-day delay after the election while the petition is filed. The Oakland county board of supervisors must wait at least 30 days after receiving the petition before they can act upon it, meaning they cannot set a date for the election of a new commission before Jan. 25, 1957, at the earliest.

It would take—at the very minimum—45 days for commission candidates to file nominating petitions and for the city to have time for registration of new voters; thus placing any election well into April.

HERE—IF THE new commissioners were to spend only a week or so to adopt the same charter without extensive changes—it would take time to have the governor's approval of the new document—perhaps by the latter part of April. It would take at least another 45 days between the time the charter was finalized and the document could be voted upon—meaning sometime in June at the earliest.

Shortcuts could be found to speed up the process only slightly. Rejection of State aid would prevent too much short-cutting, and any unexpected or unnecessary delay would positively rule out any chance for a vote on the third charter. So, it can be assumed that this is it—perhaps the final chance to incorporate the whole of what is left of Southfield.

HOW WILL THE various areas and factions vote on this charter? Some, even in the north end, will vote for the charter in an effort to bring better protection from any freeway the State highway department might want to run through this area. A city admittedly can better cope with the State on the placing of such roads—perhaps requesting a shift here or a move there in construction.

But this factor has lost its punch within the last month with the announcement by Charles M. Ziegler, State highway commissioner, that the proposed interstate freeway would not go through the northern Southfield area.

IN SOME AREAS of Southfield residents are desperately in need of special assessment improvements. Should Southfield incorporate these people—who were without the right to special assessments from Southfield's incorporation vote June 7, 1955, August of this year—will probably vote against the charter.

They know that, should the charter be accepted Dec. 3, it would mean they would have to begin all over with their special assessment requests, petitioning, public hearings, approval of bonding—meaning a further delay in receiving these improvements.

Incorporation opponents, centered mainly in the northern area, have lost two of their most vocal leaders and with a less boisterous campaign against the charter may have lost some votes, even in their own rather solid anti-incorporation backyard.

TOO, IT IS DIFFICULT for leaders to sustain a "crusade" after some of the objectives are reached and the less hardy anti-incorporationists may have fallen along the way.

(Continued on Page 2, Sec. 5)

Sidelights

By WILLIAM H. THOMAS

I HAVE predicted that Southfield's charter will be defeated when voters go to the polls Monday, but to be perfectly honest the election is a toss-up which could go either way depending upon how well the voters get out to the polling stations.

So whether you feel that all of Southfield should be incorporated or whether you believe that it would be better to break the north end off from the rest of the area, get out and vote. Your one ballot might decide the future of Southfield.

AMONG THE AREA residents with a first hand interest and sympathy in the Hungarian revolt is Emrich Kish, butcher at the Walnut Lake Food Market.

According to word just received by his parents in Pontiac, Kish's uncle was among the lucky ones who escaped across the border. The uncle is now in the United States, some of Germany.

Kish's parents hope to be able to bring him to this country. Kish himself came to the United States in 1948 as a displaced person.

FRANKLIN VILLAGER Clerk Faye Hawk was busy up to the last minute Monday night rewriting the Oct. 15 council minutes. Her first copy was locked in Grant Realty office along with her purse, glasses and keys.

This is the fourth time in the past five years Mrs. Hawk has locked herself out, she reveals, and although she expected to have to break a window glass to get into the office (which she has done on previous occasions) Mrs. Hawk was fortunate to find someone with a master key the next day. She concludes, jokingly, that breaking a window glass to get into the building is much cheaper than cutting a hole through the office floor.

WHEN SPARKLE, the Robert Knighton family's springer spaniel presented them with 13 puppies this fall, she rather floored everyone, but with a little assistance from the boys, the Knights have managed to reduce their total pet to almost zero.

There's only Sparkle, three pups, a cat and a canary left now. There is, however, a great increase in the Lathrup springer spaniel population.

My Neighbors



"Whew! What a day!"

Safety, Scenery Top Hills B of E Agenda

An adult guard for the Maple road crossing at Wing Lake school headed the list of safety and landscaping measures approved last week by the Bloomfield Hills board of education.

At a meeting of the Bloomfield Hills PTO council, reported the council has discussed a light for the busy Maple-Wing Lake road intersection to be operated during school hours. There would be an installation cost of \$1,000 and an annual \$100 upkeep in addition to a guard to operate the light, Thorne said.

Supt. Eugene L. Johnson suggested that at small additional cost, a school custodian could escort pupils across Maple road before and after school. This was approved.

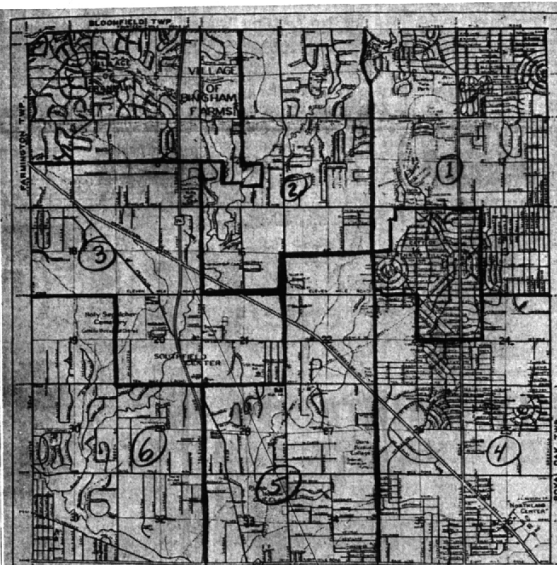
THE BOARD also studied landscape sketches designed to increase safety at Wing Lake school by moving back the fence and brushy four feet at the Wing Lake-Maple road corner. Plans also included construction of a small parking area for teachers' cars.

Mrs. Thorne said pupils have to walk in Wing Lake road to get to the school entrance from Maple road. She suggested a walk be crushed, Johnson countered with an offer to install a gate in the road on Maple so children can enter the grounds directly.

COMPLETION landscaping plans for Eastover and Wing Lake schools also were approved by the board. The board requested bids for a brick walk to screen the loading dock at Eastover.

It also voted to get competitive bids for playground equipment for Vaughan, Eastover and Wing Lake schools.

"A community college for this general area is a wonderful idea," declared board member Karl E. Scott when Johnson presented a



IN ORDER that Southfield voters might know what wards they reside in the Ward map drawn up by Southfield's charter commission is reproduced above. Though boundaries of wards and precincts differ, voters will still cast their ballots at the precinct stations where they voted during the presidential election.

W. Beverly Solidly Opposes Charter

WEST BEVERLY—West Beverly Hills association has established that residents of that area—bounded by 14 Mile, Southfield, Beverly road and Evergreen road—are over 89 per cent opposed to becoming the City of Southfield. "Officers of the association, therefore have an overwhelming mandate from 2,000 residents—with approximately 1,250 registered municipal voters to express ourselves and enthusiastically vote to defeat the proposed charter," said Chester F. Guilmette, association president.

"We are divided on the ultimate objectives of whether to become a village, stay a township, or join with the city of Birmingham. However, there is absolutely no question on the attitude of the populace on the position to be taken on the city of Southfield proposed charter," Guilmette concluded.

Lincoln Club

SOUTHFIELD—Among recently elected officers of the Oakland county Lincoln Republican club are Mrs. Herman Lubbs of Lathrup, third president and Mrs. Harry Henderson of Franklin, secretary.

First Charter Compared With Second

SOUTHFIELD—Monday residents here will be called upon to make a big decision as far as the future of Southfield is concerned—to adopt or not to adopt the Southfield city charter, that is the question.

This is the second time Southfield has voted on a proposed charter since the citizens there decided to incorporate in June, 1955. Unless a charter is adopted by June, 1957, Southfield will revert to township status.

It is unlikely that a third charter can be prepared by that time should Southfield citizens decide they do not want to accept the document being offered them Monday.

HOW DOES this charter compare to the one that was turned down last Dec. 12.

Let's look at the major reasons voters rejected that charter and see what changes have been made.

- 1) APPOINTMENT of clerk and treasurer. Citizens feared that political enemies of the present clerk and treasurer might remove them from office unless these two officials were elected.
- 2) These officials, as well as the mayor and two constables are to be elected by the people.
- 3) Four-year terms for councilmembers. Residents wanted two-year terms for councilmen to insure better control of

council by voters. Under the second charter two-year terms are required.

3) OBJECTIONS were raised to the 10-mill tax limitation by residents who wanted a tax rate more closely in line with the township rate which amounts to about one mill plus state equalization.

Under the proposed charter the tax limitation is five mills. 4) Election of city officials from one ward met with disfavor of many residents last year under the old charter because they feared that their particular area might be forgotten if council representatives were all selected from other areas of Southfield.

THE CHARTER up for voters' approval or disapproval Monday calls for six wards in the city with a seventh councilman elected at large. It also provides for an elected mayor who has veto power over council actions, which requires five council votes to override.

Another factor which contributed to the first charter's defeat was the desire by many people, especially in the north end, to remain "as is"—who felt that city government would mean higher taxes because of the need or demand for more and improved services that a city-type government connotes.

In the north end this faction still is in opposition to the charter, but whether to the same degree as before or not will not be determined until the votes are counted Monday evening.

Charter Is Ready

WOODCREEK FARMS—The charter for the Village of Woodcreek Farms has been written and is ready for the Governor's signature. It will be voted upon at a special spring election, probably in April.

Wendell Brown has been the legal advisor and Harry Lang the recording secretary for the charter committee composed of: P. G. Schlotterbeck, Herman Dobson, Vernon Fisher, Fred Mical and Alger Clark.

ELSEWHERE IN THE ECCENTRIC

No County Building in B'ham Section 1, Page 1  
 Day of the Football Game Section 4, Page 1  
 Church Sections 2, 3, 4  
 Society Section 4, Page 6  
 BLOOMFIELD VLG. COLUMN Section 3, Page 5  
 NORTH ADAMS COLUMN Section 3, Page 2  
 SCHOOL NEWS Section 6, Pages 6, 7, 8