

Why Boards of Review?

In the next several weeks, the boards of review in area municipalities will meet to review assessments on local property.

The assessment procedure is a complicated matter, yet is something that every property owner should know and understand. Basically, this is how it works:

Each municipality has an assessor who places a value on all property in the community as of Dec. 31 of the previous year. It is his duty to look over each home and business to determine its "fair cash value."

After doing so, he enters a percentage of the real value on the assessment roll. This, then, becomes the assessed value of the property. The practice of determining assessments at a fraction of actual rather than true value has come about through tradition.

The assessor uses the same formula—the same percentage—in every case. In Birmingham, the assessor takes 36 per cent of actual value, while in Bloomfield Township the assessor uses 28 per cent.

Thus, the assessed value figure on your tax bill should be 36 per cent of the true value of your home if you live in Birmingham and 28 per cent of true value if you live in the township.

HERE IS where the board of review enters the picture.

Suppose that after checking your assessed value you believe your property is overvalued. You then can appear before your local board of review with facts and figures to show that the assessment is improper.

Of course, when you do this you take the chance that the board may decide the assessor was too good to you; but history shows that this sort of thing rarely happens.

If you disagree with the board of review's decision, your only recourse is to file suit in circuit court.

IN THE assessment of property, the local governing body appoints the assessor but has little to do with assessment practices thereafter.

Under Michigan law assessors must use certain defined standards in determining value, but the quality of the assessment is a subjective thing and depends on the ability of the assessing officer. Fortunately, in this area we have assessors of recognized ability.

WE HAVE explained assessed value here. Another term which citizens sometimes confuse with it is equalized value.

Here is where the latter term comes into use:

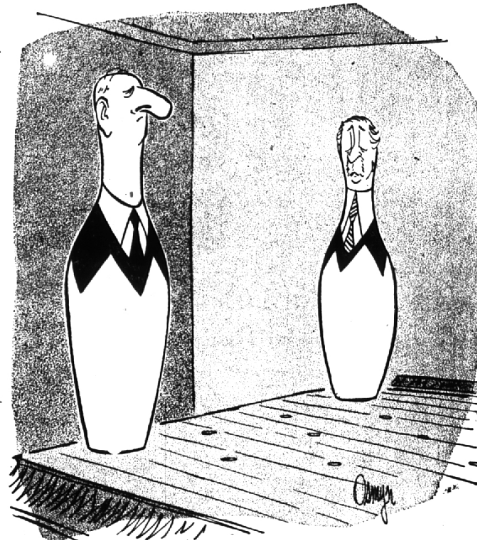
To make sure that people who own a \$20,000 home in Birmingham pay the same amount of basic taxes as a person who owns a \$20,000 home in some other community, state law provides for a state equalization board which tries to equate the various assessments.

For example, a house in Birmingham would have a different assessed value than an identical one in Bloomfield Township because of the different percentage (36 and 28, as explained above).

So, the state equalization board equalizes everyone at 50 per cent with an equalization formula. What this means is that everyone in the state pays tax on 50 per cent of the true cash value of his property.

PEOPLE WHO are interested in assessment procedures, and more especially their own assessments, would be wise to attend the meeting of their own board of review.

It's a 7-10 Split



By HANK HOGAN

Eccentricities

APPORTIONMENT AND NEW-CON
The other day I was corrected when I used the term "on-con." Apparently now that the constitutional convention is over, the catch phrase is "New-Con," which sounds slightly like one of those low priced spreads they advertise on television.

But whatever term you use, New-Con is upon us. The people of the state have to approve it or disapprove it in four weeks.

The biggest area of controversy seems to be the section on apportionment. The largest mobilized group against the new document attack it because the state legislature is not apportioned according to strict population.

THE INTERESTING part of this argument is that no one disputes that the new document does a better job in population apportionment than the present constitution, but the opponents of New-Con say it doesn't go far enough.

This is the old cutting-off-of-one's-nose-to-avoid-one's-face position. Oppose a plan that is better than we have and keep the worst plan because the new one isn't good enough.

By way of illustration let's look at apportionment in the two documents.

UNDER THE PRESENT constitution the state senate districts are frozen as a result of a 1952 constitutional amendment. The districts will never change regardless of population shifts.

Under the new constitution the state senate would be reapportioned every 10 years based on a formula of 80 per cent population and 20 per cent land area. This takes into consideration population shifts as well as giving the out-state areas voice in their government.

UNDER THE PRESENT constitution the House of Representatives is reapportioned every 10 years and every county is entitled to one representative for each 1 per cent of the state's population within its borders.

It also provides that if a county has less than 1 per cent but more than a half of 1 per cent, it will also get a representative. This is called "moieties."

The only difference between the new and old document is that the half of one per cent for a moiety representative has been raised to 7/10th of 1 per cent.

THE REAL CONTROVERSY seems to be not apportionment but that the new document requires that every legislator must run from a single member district. This doesn't mean much in Oakland County because all of our legislators come from single districts.

However, in Wayne County it has been the practice to make large districts and run two or three representatives from these districts. From a purely political point of view, it has allowed the Democrats to lump pockets of Republicans into strong Democrat districts and minimize their vote.

UNDER THE NEW document more Republicans would be elected from Wayne County, but less from the out-state area because of raising the population figure.

Except for this purely political problem in Wayne County of single districts, it seems that criticism of "New-Con" because of apportionment is unfounded.

When Does Child Become Adult?

The age-old problem of when a boy reaches manhood raises several legal problems.

Children have traditionally been treated differently under our laws, because lawmakers felt that those without their full judgment faculties should not be held to account to the same degree as mature adults.

However, the law is not quite sure when a child isn't a child.

A person reaches his majority at age 21. But this only allows him to vote, drink and legally smoke.

THE CRIMINAL laws set the age of adulthood at 17. If a person violates a law and has reached the age of 17, they are taken before the nearest judge and prosecuted.

If they have not reached the age of 17, they are spared a criminal court and taken to a part of probate court called, appropriately, juvenile court.

Juvenile court while not criminal in nature has the power to take the necessary steps to protect society from repetition of a child's criminal acts.

But it adds to this power the understanding that is needed so that boyish pranks do not wreck an adolescent's future.

WHAT ABOUT the situation where a child under 17 is in fact as mature as an

adult and has committed an offense against society of such proportion, such as murder, and the juvenile court after investigation does not feel its program would help the child or society?

Under such a situation if the child is over 15, the court can waive jurisdiction and the child would be treated as an adult.

This area can become a real problem. We have created juvenile courts because we feel that people under 17 should be treated differently. But we also allow the 15 to 17-year-old to be criminally prosecuted as an adult under certain circumstances and destroy this previous protection.

AND WE FIND more and more that the juvenile courts are waiving jurisdiction if it is a crime of violence.

If we consider what is best for the child we would avoid waiver of jurisdiction in most cases. If the juvenile court keeps jurisdiction the child can be given the guidance he needs (including psychiatric) and eventually be returned to society without the hardening of adult prison institutions.

If a child is prosecuted as an adult and is convicted, he not only has to pay for his crime but also face an adjustment of returning to society after being denied the warmth of understanding during his formative years.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

Work CBDD Plan Into Master Plan

To the Editor:

At the meeting on the subject of the Central Business District on Feb. 14, there was no opportunity for residents to express their views. Even the "Citizens Committee" appeared to be comprised of persons with business interests in the community.

The groups invited to the meeting seemed to criticize the city commission for their delay in implementing the CBD plan.

I for one would like to commend the approach of the commission to this plan. They raised questions regarding financing, registered concern that the interests of the residents should be protected, counseled against the wisdom of legislation which went beyond the health, safety and welfare of the community and pointed out that the CBD plan as presently constituted left many questions unanswered.

ONE QUESTION which I personally feel must be considered before the plan is implemented is the effect of the CBD plan on the traffic pattern on Oakland Avenue between Hunter and Adams.

The projected Average Peak Hour Traffic Volume study depicted in the Central Business District Study of January, 1961, omits a traffic projection for Oakland Avenue East of Hunter, and yet an access is planned on Oakland which will probably increase traffic considerably.

IN CONTRAST to those who would encourage immediate steps toward adoption and implementation of the CBD Plan I strongly recommend that first the CBD Plan be integrated into the proposed master plan for the city; the study of which is now underway.

This would require analysis and adjustment of the CBD Plan to accommodate residential requirements. Such matters as the future site of the educational and administrative facilities now located in the Baldwin-Hill School area as well as the effect of increased traffic volume on Oakland on the safety of Adams School children should be taken into consideration and integrated into the master plan.

WHEN THE master plan is evaluated and toward which a standard will be available by which proposed changes in the business community can be evaluated and toward which the City can move when financing becomes available.

A president of the South Population Subdivisions Association, I can advise you that in principle, we believe in protecting the future of the merchandising community; but what is best for the merchants must necessarily be evaluated in terms of effect on the residents.

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(See PEOPLE'S COLUMN LETTER ON 1-B)

Yesteryear Happenings

From the Files of The Eccentric

50 YEARS AGO

Feb. 28, 1913
Since last September the pay station in the telephone booth in the D. U. R. waiting room has been robbed seven times and as many pay stations or boxes wrecked. Last Saturday night again the station was robbed and this time Howard Muirge saw the robber, Harry McGraw enter the booth. By means of marked coins, many five and 10-cent pieces placed in the box, the rascal was found guilty.

Without imagination enough to see something better than we now possess, life would indeed be a tragedy. Birmingham, with its beautiful setting, inspires thoughts of possible rapid growth into Detroit's largest residential suburb, thereby rapping not only a lower tax rate, but many other desirable features. There is a reason for a village's growth. It is usually the co-operation of boosters and not an anarch chorus of knockers.

Francisco I. Madero and Pino Suarez, the deposed president and vice president of Mexico, were shot to death last night while a guard of rurales was taking them from the national palace to the penitentiary. Authorities said the two were killed by the bullets of their own friends in an attempt to rescue them.

30 YEARS AGO

March 2, 1933
Approximately 130 families were directly dependent upon the City of Birmingham for the necessities of life, following action of the municipal government in taking over its own poor relief burden from Bloomfield and Troy Townships beginning yesterday, Mar. 1.

(See HAPPENINGS, 7-B)

By KEN WEAVER City Beat

City & Country School of Bloomfield Hills has been receiving national attention for its work with gifted students.

The latest recognition consists of an article in Time, a weekly news magazine. CBS-TV previously had featured the school in a documentary called "Minerva's Children."

Said George A. Roeper, headmaster: "The national recognition given to our school is conspicuous evidence for the prominent place such a school for the gifted is taking on the educational scene."

CITY & COUNTRY has almost doubled its enrollment in the last five years. Roeper says this fact "is another indication of the need for an educational institution which provides for the talented and the gifted."

He sees a need for "a great deal of further study" in this field of education. After a specific program is developed in the grade school, it should be continued through high school, he believes.

CONSEQUENTLY, he sees the need for construction of a high school at City & Country. "It will complete the project of a pioneering effort to educate talented youth," says the headmaster. "The present enrollment of 315 will increase to about 600 students."

But Roeper emphasizes that "the principle of small classes" will be maintained.

The students now enrolled at the school range in age from 3 to 13 and have IQs averaging 144 and going as high as 208.

The philosophy of the school is to get the youngsters involved in intellectual activity, to make use of their creative talents.

SPEAKING OF education, I came across a note the other day that accompanied the gift of a pen-and-pencil set upon my graduation from college.

The message, I believe, is a profound one and may be of interest to anyone giving thought to entering the writing field.

It reads, in part: "Few tools can be used as effectively in shaping the lives of men as the pen."

"It has been used to record noble and courageous deeds and to inspire men to rise to even greater heights. "It has penned documents freeing men from the grasp of tyrants. "Great authors use the pen to create works of art. "Journalists use it to shape opinion through the report of each day's events. (See CITY BEAT, 4-B)

The News Finds New Voices

During the newspaper strike in New York City several reporters, critics and columnists have taken to the TV-radio air waves to disseminate their information. Their untrained voices and "TV jitters" have often served to point up the commendable skill of the professional announcers and commentators.

They also have proved, however, that it is not essential to have a golden voice and a poised stage presence to communicate ideas. Content, too, is important—perhaps more so than is generally supposed.

What these gentlemen lack in professional appearance they have more than made up for in stimulating thought and analysis. As opposed to the usual quiz masters and moderators who so often have nothing to

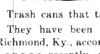
say but say it oh, so beautifully, these gentlemen of the press had much to say though they said it at times haltingly.

IT WILL BE GOOD—the sooner, the better—to have the New York metropolitan presses running again, and the members of the fourth estate back at their familiar typewriters. They will doubtless feel more at home in that environment. Still, some may have been bitten by the limelight bug.

We sincerely hope so. Their lack of TV professionalism and slickness was a refreshing breeze. It is a breeze that broadcasting stations in other parts of the country might do well to set blowing now and again.

Once Over Lightly

by IRMA N. DAVIS



Trash cans that talk back?

They have been known to. For example, in Richmond, Ky., according to an item that we came across recently, members of a woman's club rigged up some of the containers with speakers. Announcers were hidden nearby.

Let anyone drop a scrap of anything on the sidewalk and the nearest trash can let them have it with both barrels. It sure made for clean streets for a while.

As most any woman is, I am firmly convinced that many inanimate objects are on the muscle and I wouldn't put it past our own wastebasket to object to some of the things with which we endow it.

However, aside from the big brother aspect, there are some intriguing ways in which such a system could be employed whether the objects in question get human help or take it upon themselves to reform the world.

not in a glare that would let everyone within a block know about it.

A built-in cursing system for a car might not be so bad either. It would save some of us a lot of energy if some part of the car would talk over when someone makes an illegal left turn in front of us or pulls up short for no apparent reason when one is zipping along. Even if confined to a low mutter, discernible only within our own car, think of the time saved.

Opinions in other areas could be aired when one is safely out of range and could cover any number of topics. For instance that clerk who talked me into the "sweet, little black basic" which got a somewhat sour reception once I was wrapped at home. Come to think of it, that's a bit cowardly so maybe I'd better go back there and do my own exchanging.

While we're still at home, how about a stove that will let you know when that Stroganoff is done to a turn or the roast cooked, but not burned to a crisp?

Or shirts that would march themselves to the laundry and furniture that will tell the kids to "please keep their feet off." Actually, the whole (See ONCE OVER LIGHTLY, 4-B)

ESTABLISHED IN 1878 • A Free, Responsible and Aggressive Press Is Democracy's First Line of Defense

Published every Thursday at Birmingham, Mich., in The Eccentric Building, 1225 Bowers Street Telephone Midwest 4-1100



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