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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hard at work

Seniors at the Dyer Senior Center have become an integral part of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Kindergarten Roundup by filling backpacks that will be given out to youngsters. Among the volunteers are Pat Miller (from right to left), Frances Sytkowski and Irene Volakakis who check the contents and zip up the backpacks in preparation for delivery to the schools. See Page A6.

Inspections for rentals find support

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland city officials have heard the horror stories from renters who live in deplorable conditions because of miserly, contemptible landlords.

Officials concede that most landlords are more compassionate, more responsible. But, consider the substantiated allegations against others:

- One landlord occasionally shut off water to save money, leaving residents unable to shower or even drink from their faucets.
- One apartment manager

converted small storage rooms into studio rental units, creating nightmarish and potentially unsafe conditions for responsible tenants.

■ One apartment owner allowed dogs to run free, defecating in picnic areas.

Elected officials and renters revealed those situations Monday as Westland city leaders engaged in talks about a newly proposed rental-inspection program.

While the city already can take slumlords to court, the new program is intended to avert

PLEASE SEE INSPECTIONS, A5

Chamber, educators square off over K-16 fund proposal

BY TONY BRUSCATO
STAFF WRITER

Michigan lawmakers and school administrators are anxiously waiting to see if a coalition seeking guaranteed state funding increases for schools will have enough petition signatures to force the issue onto the November general election ballot.

The K-16 Coalition for Michigan's Future turned in nearly 300,000 signatures last month, and if the Secretary of State's office finds at least 254,000 of them valid, the battle between state lawmakers and the Coalition will have just begun.

The K-16 proposal, which is backed by the Michigan Education Association and most of the school establishment, calls for annual state funding increases equal to the rate of inflation for public schools, as well as public

universities.

With school districts facing annual increases in expenses greater than the increases in state foundation grants, more and more are using reserves in fund balances to balance their budgets, with many projecting negative fund balances this year or next.

CONCERNS RAISED

Those against the measure, led by the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, believe mandatory funding for education will just mean fewer dollars for other state-supported services.

"One of the promises made to us when Proposal A was passed (in 1994) is that there would be stable revenue for schools over time," said Tom White, executive director of

PLEASE SEE FUNDING, A2

EDUCATION FUNDING IN CRISIS

Public school districts across Michigan are facing an unprecedented financial crisis. Programs have been slashed, staffs reduced and school buildings shuttered. Today the *Observer & Eccentric* reports on how this growing threat to public education is affecting our local districts.

More inside:

Proposal A has impacted more than school funding - A3
Comparing local school district budgets - A3

Police charge smoke shop owner with Internet sex crimes

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Westland smoke shop owner was arraigned Friday as an Internet sex predator, following allegations he arranged to meet a 15-year-old girl for sex, police said.

Jonathan Nunoo, 39, became a suspect after a teenager working with authorities went to his business, All-Star Smoke Shop, on Wayne Road south of Marquette.

The local Metro Street Enforcement Team brought in the undercover decoy after receiving a tip that Nunoo was selling cigarettes to minors and possibly engaging underage girls for sex, Police Chief Daniel Pfannes said.

Nunoo is accused of selling the girl cigarettes, even though she told him she was 15, and of steering the conversation toward sex, Pfannes said.

"He corresponded with her by Internet and set up a date and talked about having sex with her," the chief said.

What Nunoo didn't realize, Pfannes said, is that he was corresponding by computer with a deputy from the Wayne County Sheriff's Department, which investigated the case with MSET officers.

"We were able to accomplish

things through teamwork that we wouldn't have been able to accomplish alone," Pfannes said.

Nunoo is accused of arranging to meet the girl in the parking lot of a Wayne Road bowling alley, Town & Country Lanes. When he showed up around 5:45 p.m. Wednesday, authorities arrested him, Pfannes said.

Nunoo had corresponded by e-mail with the sheriff deputy, leading up to his arrest on Wednesday, Pfannes said.

Authorities executed search warrants at Nunoo's business and at his Westland residence, seizing computers that they say contained evidence.

With Nunoo under arrest, no one was answering phone calls at the smoke shop on Thursday.

On Friday, Nunoo was arraigned before Magistrate Donald Vandersloot in Westland District Court where he pleaded not guilty to two counts of using the Internet to commit a crime and one count of child sexually abusive activity. The charges are 20-year felonies and include fines of up to \$100,000.

The defendant was jailed in lieu of a \$500,000 cash or surety bond and scheduled to appear in court Thursday, March 28, for a hearing that will decide whether he should stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court.

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Wayne-Westland softens its fall with cuts

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

A lot can happen in three years. Just ask Gary Martin, the finance man for the Wayne-Westland Community Schools.

When school started in August 2002, the district had a very healthy \$23 million in reserves. But by the time school started in August 2005, reserves were at \$13 million and dropping.

And Martin estimates that the \$23 million the district had worked so hard to accumulate will be gone by the end of the 2007-08 school year, most likely replaced by red ink.

"We've tried to soften the fall

with \$15 million in cost containment, but it's a struggle," said Martin, the district's deputy superintendent of administrative and business services. "The increases we get each year are barely enough to cover, if we can, health care and retirement."

"The problems we have now are due to the Legislature not funding education to cover inflation and the escalating or runaway costs of health care and retirement," Supt. Greg Baracy said. "Any increase we receive in the foundation allowance doesn't cover those two things, so we continue to use up our saving in

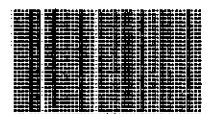


FILE PHOTO

To expand the music curriculum in its elementary schools, Wayne-Westland has turned to the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra which visits the schools throughout the year and presents a children's concert.

PLEASE SEE CUTS, A3

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Search and recovery

Members of the Wayne County Sheriff Department's dive team recently found a pistol in the water at Anthony's Pond, a residential development on Westland's northwest side. In a joint investigation with Westland police, divers found the gun that a suspect had thrown in the pond following a home invasion, according to authorities. Anthony's Pond is located off of Hix Road between Warren and Joy.

Mayor opposes cuts in block grant money

Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli has become a strong opponent of potential cuts to a federal program that has helped pay for local projects ranging from a south-end fire station to senior citizen programs. Cicirelli has written U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Michigan, and Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, both Democrats, asking them to oppose President George W. Bush administration's proposal to slash the Community Development Block Grant program.

The latest proposal would cut the program by 25 percent. Westland's most recent allocation of CDBG funds was \$1.2 million for the current budget year.

Citing the CDBG program as the last form of federal aid to local governments, Cicirelli is lobbying for a full allocation for the program. This amounts to \$4.3 billion nationwide.

"The city of Westland has been very successful in programming these funds for their intended purpose," Cicirelli said in a statement issued by her office. "We have used these funds to provide for the elimination of blight, to provide community policing in eligible areas and to provide services to Westland residents that we would not normally be able to provide with shrinking funding from the state."

According to the mayor's press release, the CDBG program was enacted under President Richard M. Nixon's administration on the belief that the best use of funds is determined by those closest to the people who benefit from them.

FUNDING

FROM PAGE A1

Michigan School Business Officials, and the chairman of the K-16 Coalition. "But, within five years after passage, the legislature engaged in a series of tax cuts that affected our revenue stream. The bottomline, by the year 2000 there was \$500 million less, and by 2002 it was up to \$550 million.

"That's \$3 billion we would have had if they had just left the system alone," added White. "If they would have left Proposal A intact, we wouldn't be here today. In part, this is generated by that frustration."

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce, which represents business, local governments and taxpayers, believes education has been treated very well the past few years, and the K-16 measure would be financially disastrous.

"This proposal really has serious consequences for funding other critical services, like police, fire and health care," said Tricia Kinley, director of tax policy and economic development for the chamber. "We estimate it will cost state government \$1.1 billion a year more, ultimately resulting in tax increases. It's bad policy to let any one interest group circumvent the legislative process and have their funding put on auto pilot."

As chairman of higher education appropriations, state Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth Township, said the K-16 proposal is nothing more than a bargaining chip.

"It's for bargaining purposes, a posturing tool," said Stewart. "I truly believe it's to protect the current level of pension and health care for teachers, who are 80-90 percent of all budgets."

School administrators like the foundation grant increases to a family checkbook. If expenses are higher than income, something has to give.

SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

"For the past 11 years in Plymouth-Canton, the average foundation allowance increase averages 2.29 percent, including this year's \$175 increase, while the CPI (Consumer Price Index) is at 2.51," said Patricia Brand, assistant superintendent for business services. "What that tells you, in a snapshot, is our expenses have increased in excess of the revenue we receive

from foundation allowance increases. Every district in the state, from the wealthiest to the poorest, has had to make changes. Birmingham has cut 23 jobs and turned down the heat in its buildings. Plymouth-Canton is looking at an \$8 million budget deficit. Farmington Public Schools expects to trim \$7 million from its bottom line. Troy recently announced 54 layoffs, and expects to make more in the future.

"The state said, 'Let us worry about the funding.' But, we have not seen full funding. If it wasn't flat, we would not see deficits," said Michael Adamczyk, assistant superintendent for business services for the Troy district. If the coalition gets enough signatures, the issue could be put on the November ballot to ultimately be determined by voters. However, once the signatures are certified, lawmakers have 40 session days to act on the proposal before it's placed as a ballot issue.

White expects to burn plenty of midnight oil before legislators let voters decide. Polls have shown the public is in favor of the coalition proposal. However, like the minimum wage issue, legislators will most likely want to develop a law that is more palatable to them, rather than having one mandated by voters.

"There's a great deal of unease with the proposal on both sides of the aisle," said White. "It's going to take cool heads and thoughtful people to get it done. If not, I'm confident we can make our case to the people of Michigan and we'll win our case at the ballot box."

A compromise measure, or one determined by voters, may be the only way school districts receive more state foundation grant money. Lawmakers, with their inaction, have made it clear they won't touch it.

State School Superintendent Mike Flanagan, who is appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, gives no indication the financial problems will improve in the near future.

"We're not going to have more money for awhile, that's just the way it is," said Flanagan. "But, we still have the number five finance system in the country, we spend \$1 billion a grade. We need to get over the denial that it's all about more money, and think about how you're going to deal with the money you have." tbruscato@hometownlife.com | (734) 459-2700

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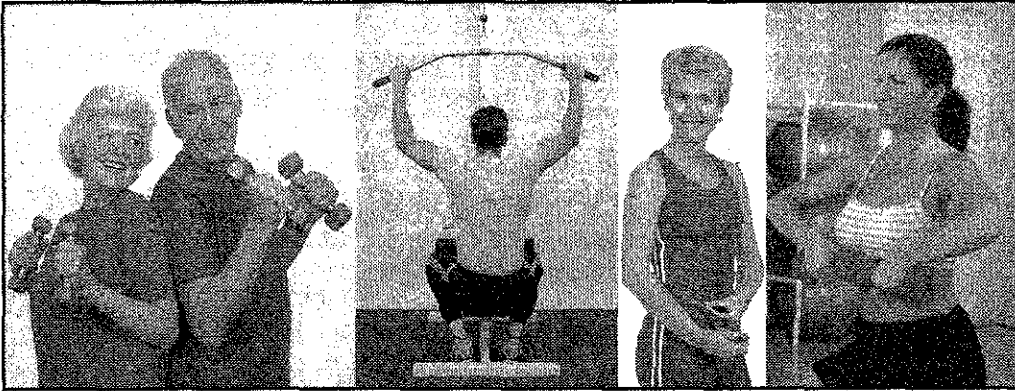
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BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN (R)
1:00, 3:45, 6:30, 9:15

HODDWINKE (PG) 12:15, 2:15, 4:15

AQUAMARINE (PG)
12:05, 2:25, 4:45, 7:05, 9:25
FRI/SAT LS 11:45

DAVE CHAPPELLE'S BLOCK PARTY (R) 8:45, 9:00 FRI/SAT LS 11:15

THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA (R)
1:50, 4:20, 6:50, 9:20
FRI/SAT LS 11:50

EIGHT BELOW (PG)
12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40

CAPTIVE (R)
12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30
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CORRECTIONS

There are a couple of clarifications on Livonia Franklin boys basketball from a recent *Observer* newspaper:
Tyler Canyock (not Travis) hit a three-pointer to put the Patriots up 40-34 with 1:12 to go in the third quarter in a 59-54 Class A district semifinal loss to Livonia Stevenson.
Also, the Patriots last won a district game in 1993 against Garden City (not 1985).

Cherry Hill School of Performing Arts 2006-2007 Open Enrollment April 14-April 28, 2006

Applications available at, and must be submitted to, Cherry Hill School of Performing Arts, 28500 Avondale, Inkster, MI 48141. Lottery, if necessary, May 5, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. at Charter School Administration Services, 20755 Greenfield Road, Suite 300, Southfield, Michigan 48075.

Publish: March 19, 2006

CE06421527

Academy of Westland 2006-2007 Open Enrollment April 14-April 28, 2006

Applications available at, and must be submitted to, Academy of Westland, 300 Henry Ruff Rd., Westland, MI 48186. Lottery, if necessary, May 5, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. at Charter School Administration Services, 20755 Greenfield Road, Suite 300, Southfield, Michigan 48075.

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Academy of Inkster 2006-2007 Open Enrollment April 14-April 28, 2006

Applications available at, and must be submitted to, Academy of Inkster, 28612 Avondale, Inkster, MI 48141. Lottery, if necessary, May 5, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. at Charter School Administration Services, 20755 Greenfield Road, Suite 300, Southfield, Michigan 48075.

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EDUCATION FUNDING IN CRISIS

SCHOOL BUS

Livonia Schools seeks to cut costs

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Public school funding can now be compared to a game of hide and seek. "People are working hard to find where to turn, where to look, under what rock," said Lisa Levesque.

As director of finance for Livonia Public Schools, she faces financial challenges similar to other area districts. Many are seeking additional funding. With K-12 enrollment dropping, stagnant state funding and rising fixed costs the district has instituted cost-saving strategies to keep its budget in balance.

"I think everyone is trying to be creative and cooperative," she said. "Districts are working together."

Districts like LPS are also waiting to hear whether Gov. Jennifer Granholm's recommendation to boost per pupil funding by a total of \$200 next year will become a reality.

"Certainly that increase of about \$3 million would offset our increases in our expenses," Levesque said.

But increases in contractual obligations - like teachers' salaries - as well as health care and retirement costs would still outweigh those additional funds.

"This is a difficult time in the state of Michigan," said Levesque. "There aren't easy answers."

Livonia Public Schools brings in 90 percent of its revenue from the state's foundation allowance. In turn, 90 percent of its expenses are consumed by salaries and benefits - making it difficult to cut costs without losing teachers.

Levesque said over the past five years the district has managed to cut expenses by \$19 million.

"Every year we look at revenue enhancement and cost containment," Levesque said. "Livonia is very proactive.

The district keeps a laundry list of ways it saves money and brings in additional revenue. From leasing out its non-K-12 buildings to forging cooperative efforts with other districts to provide food service and busing, to its printing department services, the district has found ways to reduce rising costs. Savings started with obvious cutbacks, like increased energy efficiency and recycling programs.

"We try to stay ahead of the curve."

The district keeps a laundry list of ways it saves money and brings in additional revenue.

From leasing out its non-K-12 buildings to forging cooperative efforts with other districts to provide food service and busing, to its printing department services, the district has found ways to reduce rising costs.

Savings started with obvious cutbacks, like increased energy efficiency and recycling programs. The district found ways to save money by being a self-insured entity. Livonia Public Schools provides Young Fives and Shared Time classes, which bring in both revenue and students.

"We try to be good stewards of the district," said Levesque.

The much-publicized Legacy Initiative is also meant as a way to cut costs in the district. By closing some schools and reconfiguring grades at the elementary buildings next year, the district will save

between \$1.5 million and \$2 million. Levesque said that savings will be realized beyond the one-time costs associated with the plan, such as purchasing 20 additional buses and renovating some schools and playgrounds.

Livonia Public Schools currently has about \$9 million in that savings account. After covering its projected deficit this year, the district will be left with about \$7.5 million.

Levesque said the district tends to spend \$1 million to \$2 million from fund equity each year, just to keep its budget "as balanced as we can."

She said fund equity is necessary not just to handle a deficit, but also to cover the cash flow issues the district faces because it receives state funding from October to July. A bulk of the district's expenses arise at the end of August. Rather than borrow money to cover the gap in funding and expenses, fund equity allows the district to distribute money more efficiently.

"Any district could be in that situation," Levesque said.

In addition, Livonia Public Schools has experienced a drop in student enrollment - particularly the number of students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

Since 2000, the district has lost 946 elementary students. While populations in the non-K-12 programs have doubled, the enrollment connected to the state's foundation allowance has dropped each year since 1998.

"It's very difficult," said Levesque. "We want to provide the same level of programs and services. That's our top priority. That's what we think about when we sit down to budget. (Budgeting) has become a year-round job."

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A LOOK AT 2005-'06 SCHOOL FINANCES

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	OPERATING BUDGET	PER PUPIL	OPERATING SHORTFALL
AVONDALE	3,816	8	\$36.35 million	\$10,365	\$3.2 million
BIRMINGHAM	8,037	14	\$100 million	\$11,930	\$6.4 million
BLOOMFIELD HILLS	5,858	14	\$103.2 million	\$12,130	none
CLARENCEVILLE	1,939	4	\$19.3 million	\$8,250	\$900,000
CLARKSTON	8,086	11	\$77.7 million	\$9,615	\$4.8 million
FARMINGTON	12,200	20	\$135.6 million	\$12,070	\$7 million
GARDEN CITY	5,343	8	\$43.8 million	\$7,359	na
LAKE ORION	7,856	11	\$64.1 million	\$8,165	none
LIVONIA	17,293	31	\$160 million	\$8,280	\$1.9 million
OXFORD	4,187	8	\$36.1 million	\$8,081	\$1.6 million
PLY/CANTON	18,000	25	\$147.8 million	\$7,200	\$8.1 million
REDFORD UNION	4,150	8	\$37 million	\$8,915	\$12.7 million
ROCHESTER	14,577	21	\$149.7 million	\$10,221	\$5.2 million
SOUTHFIELD	10,037	17	\$135.6 million	\$13,510	\$11 million
SOUTH REDFORD	3,403	6	\$29 million	\$7,801	\$480,000
TROY	12,005	18	\$135.4 million	\$11,285	\$5.6 million
WALLED LAKE	15,700	22	\$159 million	\$10,180	\$3 million
WAYNE-WESTLAND	13,654	23	\$116.9 million	\$7,571	\$4.4 million
W. BLOOMFIELD	6,957	10	\$73.2 million	\$10,525	\$1.8 million

Proposal A's impact goes beyond school funding

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Proposal A, the law that fundamentally changed how the state funds public schools, was created to keep people from being taxed out of their homes. But more than 10 years after its approval, real estate professionals are complaining the law is convincing people it's better to stay put than buy a new home.

Julie Herman, a Realtor with Max Broock in Birmingham, said the tax shifts resulting from the passage of Proposal A have definitely hurt the industry.

"It's put an enormous onus on the purchaser of any property," she said. "People are refraining from purchasing homes as little as six blocks away from their current homes."

The problem is in the taxable value of the home. Proposal A caps the taxable value of a property at the time of the purchase. This is a boon to homeowners because property taxes can't rise precipitously. It's a millstone for purchasers, though.

"Let's say a home hasn't sold since 1994 and the taxable value is \$200,000," Herman said. "If someone buys it, the next year the taxable value becomes \$400,000. That's huge, the taxes doubled."

Kelly Sweeny, president of Weir, Manuel, Snyder and Reinke in Birmingham, said Proposal A has had unintended consequences that make taxation unfair.

"Property taxes are supposed to be equitable," he said. "If you buy a \$1 million house you should pay more than someone who owns a \$500,000 house. In reality, you can have two people in identical houses, next door to each other, who are paying considerably different amounts in taxes. That's clearly not fair."

The other consequence of Proposal A is the creation of a disincentive to buy a home and he said that is a drag on more than just the new home market. When someone buys a house a positive ripple effect goes through the economy. People buy appliances, furniture, carpets and other goods to go with their new houses. When there's a disincentive to buy that new house, there's a resultant effect on every business connected to the home.

UNDERSTANDING PROPOSAL A

Before Proposal A, property tax was based on the State Equalized Value - 50 percent of the property's fair market value. As a result, the taxes on a house went up every time the value of the property rose.

After Proposal A, property taxes were based on the Taxable Value of a property. The Taxable Value was set at the level of the SEV at the time of purchase and can only rise with the Consumer Price Index or 5 percent, whichever is lower. Under the plan, the Taxable Value is only adjusted when the property sells. A new owner pays tax based on the new Taxable Value, based on the SEV at the time of purchase, and the process starts again.

Herman said she doesn't think the legislature considered the effect Proposal A would have on the real estate market, especially on properties that haven't sold in a long time. The effect is particularly pronounced in Birmingham.

"The hit is all over the state but I've got customers who won't buy in Birmingham because of the rise in assessed values there," Herman said. "The millage rate here is higher than in Bloomfield Hills and Bloomfield Township. Property values here went up 5 percent in 2005 where the state was only up 3.3 percent."

She said the legislature will have to do something about taxable value. But there's no going back.

"No way are they going to reverse the system and go back to the old way," Sweeny said. "I don't know the solution, school funding is a complicated issue, but the current situation is bad for the state's economy."

CUTS

FROM PAGE A1

order to make ends meet."

Three years of frozen state school aid payments and pro-rations caught up with the district in 2003-04, the first time expenditures exceeded revenue, by some \$2 million. The gap widened to \$4 million in 2004-05 and again in 2005-06.

BUDGET TIGHTENING

The district tapped into the reserves, but also began cutting expenses.

The \$15 million in cost containment has included leaving vacated positions unfilled, reducing the supplies budget and cutting overtime costs significantly.

"Before the budget cuts, our employees in skilled trades worked a lot of overtime in keeping up with requested building repairs," Baracy said. "Now we're delaying general maintenance to the extent that we'll take care of that later."

Where the district would replace five to seven schools buses a year, it now is replacing one. It's delayed the purchase of new textbooks and lengthened the time frame for computer replacement to six to eight years.

Wayne-Westland has joined in energy cooperatives to save money on gas and electric purchases but, like everyone else, it is dealing with an estimated 40 percent, or \$350,000-\$400,000, increase this winter. "We're trying to be fiscally responsible by looking at every avenue for savings," Baracy said.

The district also is looking to rein in its health care costs. There are those employees who have a different insurance than new hires and "certain folks are at different levels of salary and benefits."

It's a sign of things to come, according to Baracy, who believes the district can still provide good fringe benefits at a lower cost than what it currently has.

"Our employees deserve reasonable benefits and hopefully with cooperation we'll find that middle ground," he said.



Edison first-grader Austin Blosssey, Heidi Bird (from left) were part of the festivities when Edison Elementary School was named a Blue Ribbon school by the state Board of Education.

STATE ACTION NEEDED

Avoiding a deficit won't be easy for the district, which this year is spending \$116.95 million.

It can happen if the state does one of two things, according to Baracy: help contain health care and retirement costs or find another equitable avenue to fund education across the state.

Baracy doesn't think anything will be done about Proposal A. The help most likely will be health care and retirement reform.

"They've been talking about reform for 10 years," he said. "When they shifted the retirement costs to us 10 years ago, they knew it was underfunded. In 1994, we paid 5 percent of all salaries for retirement. It's

16.5 percent today and will be close to 18 percent of total payroll and our payroll is about \$86 million."

The district also is looking at increasing revenue. It's offering an all-day kindergarten as a pilot program at four elementaries this fall and last week the school board approved an intra-county schools of choice program for its K-5 program.

Martin estimates the district has lost up to 1,000 students to charter schools and schools of choice programs in other school districts. Attracting roughly 100 new students a year would offset the 200-250 students the district loses and help stabilize enrollment.

"It's hard to get hard numbers, but we have students going into parochial and char-

ter schools," Baracy said. "Compared to other large districts, our losses are not too bad, but we believe those students should be in our schools, where we offer a rigorous educational program."

"Our facilities are second to none, top-notch, and so is our teaching staff," Martin added. Short term, the Wayne-Westland district will continue to hold down expenses and eat up its reserves to maintain its educational program. And neither Baracy nor Martin see help coming from the state.

"As far as in the future, I don't see any short-term resolutions coming from Lansing," Baracy said. "But the Legislature may just have to bite the bullet and raise taxes."

smason@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

Spaghetti dinner

If you have a hankering for some pasta, head over to the Dyer Senior Center, 36745 Marquette, Friday, March 24, for the 4-7 p.m. monthly all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner. The cost is \$6 for adults \$2.50 for children age 4 and older and free for those age 3 and under for spaghetti, Italian bread, salad, homemade dessert and beverage plus entertainment.

For more information, call (734) 419-2020.

Special events

The AMVETS Hall on Merriman north of Palmer in Westland will host a 6 p.m. dinner Wednesday, March 22, PAWS with Cause. Cost is \$5 per person.

The AMVETS also are hosting a psychic fair noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, March 26. Admission is \$2 plus the cost of a reading -

\$15 and up. For more information, call Bonnie Hill at (734) 427-0831.

Blood Drive

The Bova VFW Post 9885 will host an American Red Cross Blood Drive 2-8 p.m. Monday, March 27, at the post, 6440 N. Hix, north of Ford, Westland. Walk-ins are welcome, however, appointments are encouraged. Call Terry Dana at (517) 521-5646 or Larry Tebor at (734) 377-8329 and leave your name and desired time.

All donors will placed in a drawing for a gift certificate good for up to five people for one hour of free bowling, free shoe rental, one large pizza and a pitcher of pop at Vision Lanes in Westland.

The post holds blood drives on the fourth Monday of the month. Upcoming dates are May 22, July 24, Sept. 25 and Nov. 27.

Where in the world ...

Matthew Mueller of Westland, an eighth-grader at Huron Valley Catholic School in Ypsilanti, will be at Central Michigan University Friday, March 31, to compete in the 2006 Michigan Geographic Bee.

Mueller, the son of John and Claire Mueller, won his school bee and had to pass a qualifying test that was submitted to the National Geographic Society. Students with the top 100 scores were invited to participate in the state competition.

The state winner and his or her teacher will represent Michigan in the national finals at the National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C., May 23-34.

The state winner also will receive \$100 and the trip to Washington, D.C. The national winner will receive a \$25,000 college scholarship.

Coffee Hour

State Rep. Glenn S. Anderson, D-Westland, will have his next local coffee hour 9-10:30 a.m. for Monday at the Westland Big Boy Restaurant, 6360 N. Wayne Road at Hunter.

Citizens are welcome to discuss issues and/or concerns. Anderson holds local coffee hours the third Monday of each month.

Memorial fund-raiser

Enjoy lunch or dinner at UNO Chicago Grill, 7525 Wayne Road, Westland, Wednesday March 29, and help raise money for the Dale Freese Memorial Scholarship Fund.

A fund-raiser is planned for 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the restaurant. Patrons can have 20 percent of their check to go to the Dale Freese Memorial Fund when they present special donation certificates.

The certificates are available

at Norman's Market, 1546 S. Wayne Road north of Palmer. Call (734) 721-6770.

'Historic' dining

Max & Erma's in Westland will sponsor a fund-raiser to help with the restoration of the historic Octagon House - located on Westland Historical Museum property on Wayne Road north of Cherry Hill.

The restaurant, on the southwest corner of Warren and Newburgh roads, will donate 20 percent of its proceeds from lunch and dinner sales on Wednesday, March 22.

Anyone wanting to help may tell the server that they are there to support the fund-raiser. Also, those who want to fill out a flier to designate a portion of their bill for the fund-raiser may go to City Hall, the senior citizen Friendship Center, the Bailey Recreation Center or the senior Dyer Center, or call local histori-

ans Georgia Becker at (734) 728-1605 or Jo Johnson at (734) 522-3918.

Spring bazaar

Edison Elementary is holding a Spring Bazaar and Art Show 6-9 p.m. Thursday, April 6. There will be 25 vendors, a bake sale with eating area, babysitting with crafts for the kids and an art show featuring students' artwork throughout the halls.

Membership month

If you're interested in community citizenship, the opportunity to serve, growth and development, cultural awareness and nice people, then the Wayne Rotary Club wants to hear from you. The club is extending an invitation to people who live or work within the community to join the club as part of its Membership Month. People interested in joining can call Art Quintal at (734) 722-8925.

NOTICE OF SALE RESOLUTION Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds, Series 2006 CITY OF WESTLAND County of Wayne, State of Michigan

Minutes of a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Westland, County of Wayne, Michigan, held on the 6th day of March, 2006, at 7:00 o'clock p.m., Eastern Standard Time.

PRESENT: Members: James Godbout, Cheryl Graunstadt, Michael Kehler Richard LeBlanc, Charles Pickering, Robert Stottlemeyer, William Wild

ABSENT: Members: None

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Members Pickering and supported by Members Godbout:

WHEREAS, the City of Westland, Michigan (the "City") has by an Ordinance duly adopted on March 6, 2006, authorized the issuance and sale of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) in principal amount of the Issuer's 2006 Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds (the "Bonds"); and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to authorize and approve the publication of a notice of sale and certain terms in accordance therewith; and

WHEREAS, the Issuer deems it necessary to undertake the continuing disclosure of certain information in accordance with Rule 15c2-12 of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- The City's Director of Finance/Treasurer (the "Finance Director") is hereby authorized and directed to fix the date for the sale of the Bonds.
- The City Clerk shall cause a Notice of Sale of the Bonds to be published in *The Bond Buyer*, New York, New York, at least seven (7) full days before the date fixed for sale.
- The Notice of Sale of the Bonds shall be in substantially the following form:

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF SALE

\$2,000,000

CITY OF WESTLAND

COUNTY OF WAYNE, STATE OF MICHIGAN

2006 WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM REVENUE BONDS

SEALED BIDS for the purchase of the above bonds will be received by the undersigned at the office of the Finance Director located at Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, Westland, Michigan 48185, on _____, the _____ day of _____, 2006, until _____ o'clock _____ m., Eastern _____ Time, at which place said bids will be publicly opened and read.

SEALED BIDS for the purchase of the above bonds will also be received until the same time on the same date at the offices of Bendzinski & Co., 607 Shelby, Suite 600, Detroit, Michigan 48226, at which time and place said bids will be simultaneously opened and read. The City Council will meet at _____ o'clock p.m., on that date, to consider the award or rejection of bids.

FAXED BIDS: Signed bids may be submitted to the City at the offices of Bendzinski & Co., fax number (313) 961-8220, provided that faxed bids must arrive before the time of sale, the bidder bears all risks of transmission failure and the GOOD FAITH DEPOSIT MUST BE MADE AND RECEIVED as described in the section entitled "GOOD FAITH" below.

ELECTRONIC BIDS: Electronic bids will also be received on the same date and until the same time by Bidcomp/Parity as agent of the undersigned. Further information about Bidcomp/Parity, including any fee charged, may be obtained from Bidcomp/Parity, Anthony Leyden or CLIENT SERVICES, 1359 Broadway, Second Floor, New York, New York 10018, (212) 849-5021. NO ELECTRONIC BID WILL BE ACCEPTED UNLESS THE BIDDER HAS SUBMITTED A FINANCIAL SURETY BOND OR A CERTIFIED OR CASHIERS CHECK IN THE AMOUNT DESCRIBED IN THE SECTION ENTITLED "GOOD FAITH" BELOW. IF ANY PROVISION OF THIS NOTICE OF SALE CONFLICTS WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY BIDCOMP/PARITY, AS THE APPROVED PROVIDER OF ELECTRONIC BIDDING SERVICES, THIS NOTICE OF SALE SHALL CONTROL. NO CHANGE IN THE DATED DATE WILL BE ALLOWED FOR THE COMPUTATION OF THE WINNING BID.

Bidders may choose any means or location to present bids but a bidder may not present a bid in more than one location or by more than one means.

OFFICIAL STATEMENT: A preliminary official statement that the Issuer deems to be final as of its date, except for the omission of information permitted to be omitted by Rule 15c2-12 of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has been prepared and may be obtained from Bendzinski & Co., financial consultant to the Issuer, at the address and telephone listed under FINANCIAL CONSULTANT below. The Issuer will furnish, upon request of the successful bidder, copies of the final Official Statement relating to the above described issue within seven days from the date of sale specified above, in sufficient numbers to permit the successful bidder to comply with Rule 15c2-12 of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The first 100 copies will be delivered at the expense of the Issuer. Additional copies will be supplied upon the bidder's agreement to pay the reasonable copying charges of the Issuer for those copies. Any such request for additional copies should be made to Bendzinski & Co., within 24 hours of the date and time of the sale, and should set forth the number of copies requested and the person and place to whom the final Official Statements should be delivered.

BOND DETAILS: The bonds will be registered bonds of the denomination of \$5,000 or multiples thereof not exceeding for each maturity the aggregate principal amount of that maturity, dated April 1, 2006, numbered in order of registration, and will bear interest from their date payable on October 1, 2006, and semiannually thereafter.

The bonds will mature on the 1st day of April of the years as follows:

Year	Amount	Year	Amount
2007	\$75,000	2012	\$275,000
2008	75,000	2013	275,000
2009	75,000	2014	275,000
2010	100,000	2015	275,000
2011	275,000	2016	300,000

TERM BONDS: The initial purchaser of the bonds may designate bonds maturing in the years 2015 and 2016 as term bonds and the

consecutive maturities which shall be aggregated in the term bonds. THE BID MUST DESIGNATE WHETHER THE ANNUAL PRINCIPAL PAYMENT SHOWN ABOVE FOR THE YEARS 2015 AND 2016 REPRESENTS A SERIAL BOND MATURITY OR A TERM BOND MANDATORY REDEMPTION. SUCH DESIGNATION MUST BE MADE AT THE TIME THE BID IS SUBMITTED. The amounts of the maturities which are aggregated in a designated term bond shall be subject to mandatory redemption on April 1 of the years and in the amounts set forth in the above maturity schedule at a redemption price of par, plus accrued interest to the date of mandatory redemption. Term bonds or portions thereof mandatorily redeemed shall be selected by lot.

BOOK-ENTRY ONLY: The bonds will be issued in book-entry only form as one fully registered bond per maturity and will be registered in the name of Cede & Co., as bondholder and nominee for The Depository Trust Company ("DTC"), New York, New York. DTC will act as securities depository for the bonds. Purchase of the bonds will be made in book-entry-only form, in the denomination of \$5,000 or any multiple thereof. Purchasers will not receive certificates representing their interest in bonds purchased. The book-entry only system is described further in the Preliminary Official Statement for the bonds.

PRIOR REDEMPTION: Bonds maturing in the years 2007 to 2014, inclusive, shall not be subject to redemption prior to maturity. Bonds or portions of bonds in multiples of \$5,000 maturing in the years 2015 and 2016 shall be subject to redemption prior to maturity, at the option of the Issuer, in such order as the Issuer shall determine, on any interest payment date on or after April 1, 2014, at par and accrued interest to the date fixed for redemption.

In case less than the full amount of an outstanding bond is called for redemption, the transfer agent, upon proof of ownership of the bond called for redemption, shall re-register in the name of the registered owner of record a new principal amount for the portion of the original bond not called for redemption.

Notice of redemption shall be given to the registered owners of bonds or portions thereof called for redemption by mailing of such notice not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date fixed for redemption to the registered address of the registered owner of record. Bonds so called for redemption shall not bear interest after the date fixed for redemption provided funds are on hand with the transfer agent to redeem said bonds.

INTEREST RATE AND BIDDING DETAILS: The bonds shall bear interest at a rate or rates not exceeding 6% per annum, to be fixed by the bids therefor, expressed in multiples of 1/8 or 1/20 of 1%, or both. The interest on any one bond shall be at one rate only and all bonds maturing in any one year must carry the same interest rate. The difference between the highest and lowest interest rate on the bonds shall not exceed two percent (2%) per annum. No proposal for the purchase of less than all of the bonds or at a price less than 98.5% of their par value will be considered.

TRANSFER AGENT AND REGISTRATION: Principal shall be payable at the designated office of J.P. Morgan Trust Company, National Association, Detroit, Michigan, or such other transfer agent as the Issuer may thereafter designate by notice mailed to the registered owners of the bonds not less than 60 days prior to any change in transfer agent. Interest shall be paid by check or draft mailed to the registered owners of the bonds as shown by the registration books of the Issuer on the 15th day of the month preceding the interest payment date. The bonds will be transferable only upon the registration books of the Issuer kept by the transfer agent.

PURPOSE AND SECURITY: The bonds are issued under the provisions of Act 94, Public Acts of Michigan, 1933, as amended, Ordinance No. 218, Ordinance No. 244, Ordinance 215-A, Ordinance 244-A, and Ordinance No. _____ of the Issuer, for the purpose of defraying part of the cost of acquiring improvements for the Issuer's Water and Sewer System (the "System"). The bonds are payable solely from the net revenues of the System and any additions thereto, and a statutory first lien on said revenues has been established by said Ordinances. The Issuer has covenanted and agreed to fix and maintain at all times while any bonds payable from the net revenues of the System shall be outstanding such rates for service furnished by the System as shall be sufficient to provide for payment of the necessary expenses of operation, maintenance and administration of the System, of the principal and interest on all of said bonds when due, to create and maintain a bond reserve account thereof, and to provide for such other expenditures and funds for the System as are required by said Ordinance.

The rights or remedies of bondholders may be limited by bankruptcy, insolvency, fraudulent conveyance or other laws affecting creditors' rights generally now existing or hereafter enacted, and by the application of general principles of equity including those relating to equitable subordination.

OUTSTANDING AND ADDITIONAL BONDS: Bonds of this issue are of equal standing and priority of lien as to the net revenues of the System with the Issuer's 1998 Water and Sewer System Revenue Bonds, dated June 1, 1998, in the original principal amount of \$3,225,000 and the Issuer's 2003 Water and Sewer System Revenue Refunding Bonds, dated September 10, 2003, in the original principal amount of \$3,025,000. For the terms upon which additional bonds of equal standing with the bonds of this issue and the outstanding bonds of equal standing as to revenues of the System may be issued reference is made to the above described Ordinances.

GOOD FAITH: A certified or cashier's check drawn upon an incorporated bank or trust company or a Financial Surety Bond, in the amount of \$20,000, and payable to the order of the Treasurer of the Issuer is required for each bid as a guaranty of good faith on the part of the bidder, to be forfeited as liquidated damages if such bid be accepted and the bidder fails to take up and pay for the bonds. If a check is used, it must accompany each bid. If a Financial Surety Bond is used, it must be from an insurance company licensed to issue such a bond in the State of Michigan and such Bond must be submitted to the Issuer's financial advisor prior to the opening of the bids. The Financial Surety Bond must identify each bidder whose good faith deposit is guaranteed by such Financial Surety Bond. If the bonds are awarded to a bidder utilizing a Financial Surety Bond, then that purchaser (the "Purchaser") is required to submit its good faith deposit to the Issuer or its financial advisor in the form of a cashier's check or wire transfer such amount as instructed by the Issuer or its financial advisor not later than Noon, Eastern Standard Time, on the next business day following the award. If such good faith deposit is not received by that time, the Financial Surety Bond may be drawn upon by the Issuer to satisfy the good faith deposit requirement. The good faith deposit will be applied to the purchase price of the bonds. In the event the Purchaser fails to honor its accepted bid, the good faith deposit will be retained by the Issuer. No interest shall be allowed on the good faith check and checks of the unsuccessful bidders will be returned to each bidder's representative or by overnight mail. The good faith check of the successful bidder will be cashed and payment for the balance of the purchase price of the bonds shall be made at the closing.

AWARD OF BONDS: The bonds will be awarded to the bidder whose bid produces the lowest true interest cost determined in the following manner: the lowest true interest cost will be the single

interest rate (compounded on _____ 1, 200_____ and semi-annually thereafter) necessary to discount the debt service payments from their respective payment date to _____ 2006, in an amount equal to the bid price, excluding accrued interest.

LEGAL OPINION: Bids shall be conditioned upon the approving opinion of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C., attorneys of Detroit, Michigan, a copy of which opinion will be printed on the reverse side of each bond, and the original of which will be furnished without expense to the purchaser of the bonds at the delivery thereof. The fees of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C., for services rendered in connection with such approving opinion are expected to be paid from bond proceeds. Except to the extent necessary to issue their unqualified approving opinion as to validity of the above bonds, Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C., has not been requested to examine or review and has not examined or reviewed any financial documents, statements or materials that have been or may be furnished in connection with the authorization, issuance or marketing of the bonds, and accordingly will not express any opinion with respect to the accuracy or completeness of any such financial documents, statements or materials.

TAX MATTERS: In the opinion of bond counsel, assuming compliance with certain covenants, interest on the bonds is excluded from gross income for federal income tax purposes, as described in the opinion, and the bonds and interest thereon are exempt from all taxation in the State of Michigan except inheritance taxes and taxes on gains realized from the sale, payment or other disposition thereof.

QUALIFIED TAX EXEMPT OBLIGATIONS: The Issuer has designated the bonds as "qualified tax exempt obligations" for purposes of deduction of interest by financial institutions.

DELIVERY OF BONDS: The Issuer will furnish bonds ready for execution at its expense. Bonds will be delivered without expense to the purchaser at Detroit, Michigan or such other locations as may be mutually acceptable to the Issuer and the purchaser. The usual closing documents, including a certificate that no litigation is pending affecting the issuance of the bonds, will be delivered at the time of the delivery of the bonds. If the bonds are not tendered for delivery by twelve o'clock noon, Eastern Daylight Time, on the 45th day following the date of sale, or the first business day thereafter if said 45th day is not a business day, the successful bidder may on that day, or any time thereafter until delivery of the bonds, withdraw his proposal by serving notice of cancellation, in writing, on the undersigned in which event the Issuer shall promptly return the good faith deposit. Payment for the bonds shall be made in immediately available funds. Accrued interest to the date of delivery of the bonds shall be paid by the purchaser at the time of delivery. Unless otherwise advised in writing by the successful bidder within ten (10) business days after sale, the Issuer may deliver and the successful bidder shall be required to accept the bonds in the form of one fully registered bond for each maturity in denominations corresponding to each maturity, registered to the purchaser.

"ISSUE PRICE" CERTIFICATE: The successful bidder will be required to furnish, prior the delivery of the bonds, a certificate in a form acceptable to bond counsel as to the "issue price" of the bonds within the meaning of section 1273 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

CUSIP NUMBERS: CUSIP identification numbers will be printed on the bonds, but neither the failure to print the numbers nor any error with respect thereto shall constitute cause for refusal by the purchaser to accept delivery of the bonds. All expenses in relation to the printing of CUSIP numbers shall be paid for by the Issuer except that the CUSIP Service Bureau charge for the assignment of numbers shall be the responsibility of and paid for by the purchaser.

BOND INSURANCE AT PURCHASER'S OPTION: If the bonds qualify for issuance of any policy of municipal bond insurance or commitment therefor at the option of the bidder/purchaser, the purchase of any such insurance policy or the issuance of any such commitment shall be at the sole option and expense of the purchaser of the bonds. Any increased costs of issuance of the bonds resulting from such purchase of insurance shall be paid by the purchaser, except that, if the Issuer has requested and received a rating on the bonds from a rating agency, the Issuer will pay the fee for the requested rating. Any other rating agency fees shall be the responsibility of the purchaser. FAILURE OF THE MUNICIPAL BOND INSURER TO ISSUE THE POLICY AFTER THE BONDS HAVE BEEN AWARDED TO THE PURCHASER, SHALL NOT CONSTITUTE CAUSE FOR FAILURE OR REFUSAL BY THE PURCHASER TO ACCEPT DELIVERY OF THE BONDS FROM THE ISSUER.

CONTINUING DISCLOSURE: The City has agreed by resolution to provide or cause to be provided, in accordance with the requirements of Rule 15c2-12 promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission, on or prior to the last day of the sixth month after the end of the fiscal year of the City commencing with the fiscal year ending June 30, 2006, (i) certain annual financial information and operating data, including audited financial statements for the preceding fiscal year, generally consistent with the information contained or cross-referenced in the Official Statement relating to the bonds, (ii) timely notice of the occurrence of certain material events with respect to the bonds and (iii) timely notice of a failure by the City to provide the required annual financial information on or before the date specified in (i) above.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT: Additional information may be obtained from Bendzinski & Co., 607 Shelby, Suite 600, Detroit, Michigan 48226 (telephone: (313) 961-8222), financial consultant to the Issuer.

THE RIGHT IS RESERVED TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS.

ENVELOPES: containing the bids should be plainly marked "Proposal for Revenue Bonds."

Eileen DeHart
City Clerk
City of Westland

4. The City shall enter into an undertaking for the benefit of the holders and beneficial owners of the bonds, as were specifically set forth in Exhibit A hereto (the "Undertaking"); provided, however, that the terms of the Undertaking are subject to completion and modification prior to delivery of the Bonds by the authorized officers of the City executing the Undertaking as such authorized officer shall deem necessary to comply with law or market requirements. The Finance Director is authorized to execute and deliver the Undertaking of the completion and modification as provided in this resolution.

5. All resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with the provisions of this resolution be and the same hereby are rescinded.

Eileen DeHart
Westland City Clerk

Adopted: March 6, 2006
Effective: March 19, 2006

Published: March 19, 2006

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Listings for the Community Calendar should be submitted in writing. They can be mailed to Sue Mason at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, by fax at (734) 591-7279 or by e-mail at smason@oe.hometownlife.com. For more information, call (734) 953-2112.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ladies Literary Club

The Ladies Literary Club will hold its annual scholarship fund-raiser 9 a.m.-2 p.m., April 8 at the First Congregational Church, located at 2 Towne Square in downtown Wayne (Wayne Road between eastbound and westbound Michigan Avenue). The club will have a "second time around sale" and bake sale, featuring lots of good and "gently" used household items for sale. Baked goods will also be for sale. All proceeds from this sale go to the Frances Blain Hills Scholarship Fund. The club awards two scholarships each year for higher education. Typically, one student from John Glenn and one student from Wayne Memorial receive scholarships. For more information about donating contact Sue at (734) 641-9188, or Carol at (734) 728-7343.

Membership month

If you're interested in community citizenship, the opportunity to serve, growth and development, cultural awareness and nice people, then the Wayne Rotary Club wants to hear from you. The club is extending an invitation to people who live or work within the community to join the club as part of its Membership Month. People interested in joining can call Art Quintal at (734) 722-8925.

FOR SENIORS

Friendship Center

The Senior Resources Department (Friendship Center), 1119 N. Newburgh, Westland, offers a variety of programs for older adults. The Web site www.ci.westland.mi.us offers more

information. Call (734) 722-7632.

Senior dinners

The Wayne Ford Civic League hosts Senior Dinner Dances with live entertainment several times each month for couples and singles 50 years and older. The cost is \$8 donation for members of the league and \$10 donation for non-members. All dances start at noon and run until 3-3:30 p.m. Meals include beer, wine, and fountain pop. For information and schedules, call (734) 728-5010

Crochet & Knit

A crochet and knit group meets 9:30 a.m. every Thursday at the Friendship Center on Newburgh near Marquette. Beverly Kaminski is the instructor. Participants should bring a type "G" crochet hook. Those interested can sign up at the center's front desk or call (734) 722-7632.

Choir

The Senior Choir, under the leadership of Robert Cassidy, is open to those who like to sing. It meets 9:30 a.m. Thursday. For information, call the Friendship Center, (734) 722-7632.

Hearing checks

Every third Tuesday of each month, a representative from Personalized Hearing Care of Westland will check and clean hearing aids free, 2-3 p.m. by appointment only. Call (734) 722-7632 for more information.

Exercise

Simply Jazzercise is designed for exercisers older than 40. The program provides a low to moderate workout. The exercise improves strength, flexibility, balance, posture, coordination and cardiovascular endurance. It incorporates simple dance routines with walking or jogging patterns and resistance exercises. Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes. Light weights and an exercise mat are suggested. Classes are 10:15 a.m. Monday, 5 p.m. Wednesday, 10:15 a.m. Friday, at \$3 per person per class. Sign up at the front desk at the Westland Friendship Center or call (734) 722-7632.

INSPECTIONS

FROM PAGE A1

problems by requiring inspections every three years for more than 15,000 rental units - apartments and houses - in Westland.

"There is a definite need for this," Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said.

City leaders abandoned a similar proposal a few years ago, amid complaints from some property owners and their attorneys. Landlords lamented having to pay inspection fees, saying the cost will force them to increase rent.

In response, Westland Building Director Sue Dodson said the city would now require inspections every three years, rather than every two.

Moreover, inspection fees - necessary to cover the city's costs - have been reduced to \$50 for an apartment, \$100 for a rental home, \$150 for a duplex and \$200 for a four-unit building.

Two property owners in the Norwayne neighborhood indicated preliminary support Monday for the new program, saying they maintain their rental units and wish all landlords would.

"Norwayne should certainly be one of the first priorities," said John Sheridan, a landlord and attorney.

Landlord Bruce Foulk voiced support for a rental-inspection program, but he said some fees may be too high. He also said his tenants would have to agree to an inspection; otherwise, the city would have to seek a court order.

The Westland City Council is expected to vote on the rental program in April or May.

The city would hire at least one new full-time inspector, but the program would likely be administered by an outside firm, CityWorks Inc., which oversees similar programs in other communities.

The company would start by developing a database of all Westland rental properties. Landlords would be given a checklist of items for inspection before any city worker ever makes a visit.

Property owners who refuse to make repairs to bring their rental units up to code could be ticketed.

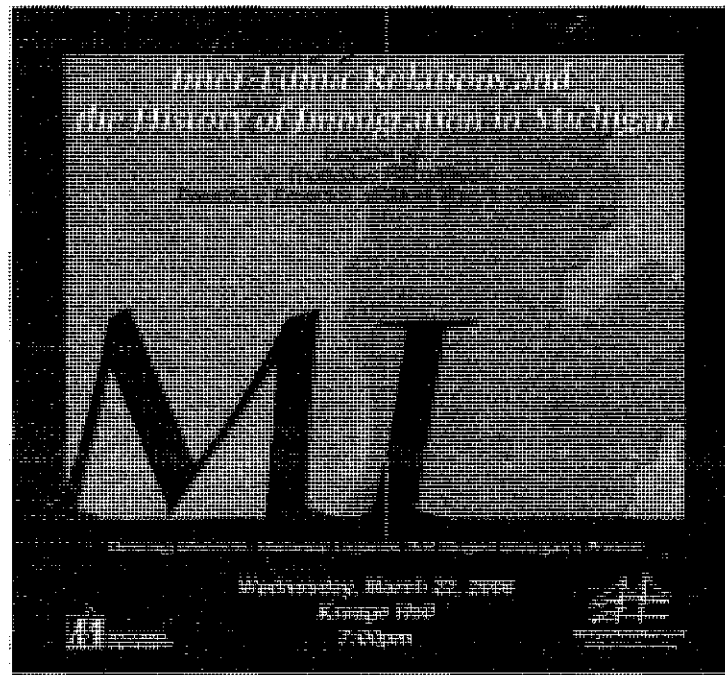
"There are those who will test the system to see if you will enforce it," CityWorks spokesman Stan Jordan told city officials Monday.

Council President William Wild indicated he'd prefer to see older rental properties inspected first.

"Ideally," he said, "I think it would be better to start with the older buildings and work our way toward the newer buildings."

dclem@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

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Seniors pack it up for annual roundup

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The blue and black sign outside the building announced the time and date of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools.

Inside, there was nary a kindergartner to be found, just groups of senior citizens filling bright red backpacks with supplies in assembly line fashion.

"If Bill Ford knew about us, he'd hire us seniors because we're very efficient," said Tess Chick. "We know how to get the job done."

Welcome to the Dyer Senior Center and the annual Kindergarten Roundup backpack packing day. Forty-two members of the senior program spent the morning filling the backpacks that will be distributed at the roundups being held at elementary schools on Tuesday, March 28.

Chick, a Canton resident, hasn't missed a year of filling the backpacks. She's there, she said, to do everything she can

The seniors spent roughly an hour filling more than 800 backpacks that, along with T-shirts, will be handed out at roundups at Wayne-Westland's 17 elementary schools.

for education.

"I believe in doing a good turn especially anything related to school," she said.

"It makes me feel like a kid again," said Nettie Porter. "I like everything in my backpack."

The seniors spent roughly an hour filling more than 800 backpacks that, along with T-shirts, will be handed out at roundups at Wayne-Westland's 17 elementary schools.

The packs are filled with ABC and number charts, crayons, a Mother Goose activities book and Audrey Penn's The Kissing Book, and

are for youngsters and their parents to use to prepare for school in the fall.

Preparation for the stuffing started the day before, when 12-14 seniors showed up at the center to set up and organize the "I" shaped assembly line, according to program Director Mary Browe.

"They organized the tables, pulled stuff out of the boxes and put them on the tables," said Browe who worked side by side with the seniors, filling the packs.

Starting at one end, seniors grabbed a pack from a table then walked along to another set, filling it with one of each item that had been set out. Once filled, they dropped them in stacks on tables where quality control made sure items were placed correctly before zipping them shut.

From there, district employees like Karen Gocha stacked them in lots of five, then put them in black bags in amounts equal to those listed

on labels for the different schools.

"They like to help, it makes them feel good," said Browe.

That's the case for Porter who grew up on a farm in Maryland where there was no kindergartner.

"It's something to do when you're alone," she said. "And it's fun when you look out the window and see the kids go by with their backpacks almost to the ground."

Working in quality control, Barbara Martin and Lian Mariones, both of Westland, and Leona Huff of Livonia, admit the work "keeps us busy."

"This fun and it goes fast," said Mariones. "It helps the kids, helps the schools and it brings back memories."

"And the reward is the smiles on the kids' faces" added Huff. "The kids' faces light up like Christmas trees."

Martin looks forward to filling the backpacks and labeling the district's Connections newsletter three times a year. "We've done it before, so we



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tess Chicks of Canton places one of each item in a backpack that will be given out during the Kindergarten Roundup.

know what to expect," she said of their quality control work.

She also likes the color. "It's nice," she said, "because you can see the kids."

"I wish they had these when my kids went to school," added Mariones.

Porter agrees, noting that they "have such cute things for kids."

Filling the backpacks came just days after the seniors had labeled the spring installment of Connections which

announces this year's Kindergarten Roundup.

Their willingness to do the work is indicative of four of the volunteers who called in sick.

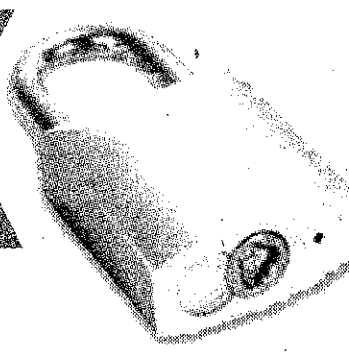
"They were very disappointed and apologized about not being able to be here," said Browe. "The key factor is teamwork, and doing this with them makes them feel needed and me feel needed, too."

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Kindergarten Roundup welcomes Class of '19

Do you know a member of the class of 2019?

If you have or know a student who will be in kindergarten next year, then you do. All 17 elementary schools in the Wayne-Westland Community Schools will host a Kindergarten Roundup for parents and children at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 28.

Parents will have the opportunity to tour the school, meet the principal and kindergarten

teachers, discuss the curriculum and review registration materials.

They'll also hear about the district pilot all-day kindergarten program that will be offered in the fall at four schools — Wildwood in Westland, Hicks in Inkster, Walker-Winter in Canton and Roosevelt-McGrath in Wayne.

Incoming kindergarten students will get the chance to visit the kindergarten rooms,

make a craft and meet the teachers. They also will receive a backpack full of school supplies and T-shirt.

Children who will be 5 years old by Dec. 1, 2006, are eligible for kindergarten. Parents must provide three proofs of residency, the child's birth certificate and immunization record to register their child.

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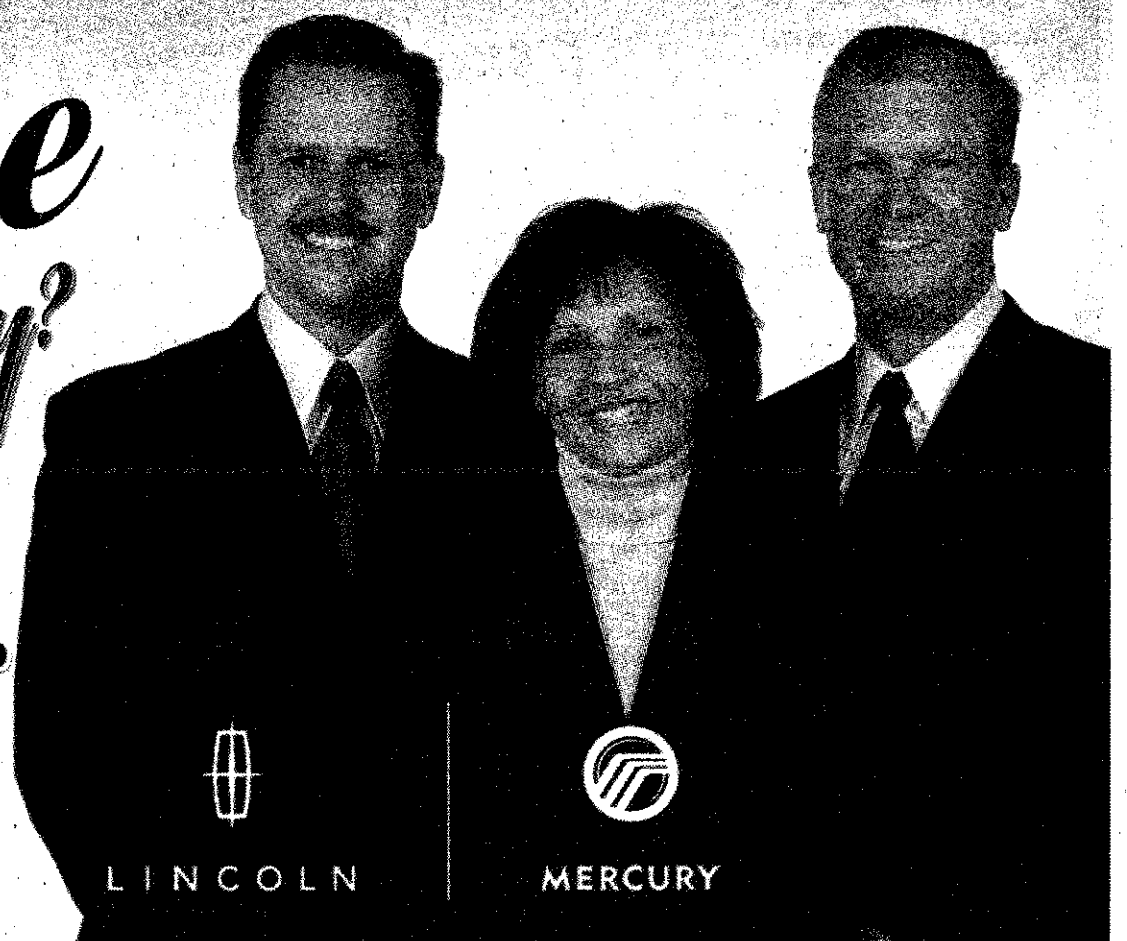
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LINCOLN MERCURY

Reports on school employees must be available to public

This is the conclusion of Sunshine Week, seven days to focus on the critical need to protect public access to government.

But this is America, you say. We have the First Amendment. We have freedom of the press. We have the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act. We have journalists who report on everything government is doing. Why the need for Sunshine Week?

From my perspective as president of the Michigan Press Association, the need has never been greater. In many ways, these are dark and threatening days indeed for the public's right to know.

A cloud came over Sunshine Week just recently in Michigan, when our state Senate gutted HB 5675, an initiative sponsored by Rep. Rick Baxter (R-Hanover) which would have made available to the public the list of all people with criminal convictions employed by Michigan's school systems.

The *Detroit News* started this off early in the year by filing a Freedom of Information Act request for release of that list, which was met with a court injunction on behalf of the Michigan Education Association. This action barred release of the list of 4,600 offenses, including 2,200 felonies, 100 sex crimes, 23 homicides, 355 drug felonies, etc., according to *The Detroit News* accounts.

House leaders jumped in with the Michigan Press Association to develop a bill which would allow the release of the list — on a delayed basis with time for cleaning up inaccuracies (vetting) — and fast-tracked it through to the Senate. The sun was shining and the forecast looked promising.

In the meantime, though, there were many articles pub-

lished around the state repeating accounts of falsely accused school employees included in the list; focusing on potential inaccuracies in the list rather than the larger issue, openness in the interest of the safety of Michigan's school children and the parents' right to know if people with a criminal past are taking care of their children five days each week.

Even though many newspapers took the stance that access to this list was the most important aspect of the issue because it potentially affected hundreds of thousands of children, those stories of some falsely accused school employees led the Senate to send back an eviscerated version of the bill to the House. Our only hope is the House prevails and stops the bloodletting, restoring full access to the list after a brief review period to vet it.

The real crime here is that school workers are being held above the law. Granted, the public would still have access to felonies and misdemeanors involving criminal sexual conduct and assault in the wake of the Senate's plundering of the bill, but other misdemeanors will not be subject to access.

What about shoplifters or those who have plea-bargained theft down to a misdemeanor? Do we want those people entrusted with our children's purses or wallets left in the locker room? What about drunk drivers who have pleaded down to misdemeanor level? Should they be driving students on a field trip?

One after another, groups are pointing to themselves as being worthy of exclusion from what our forefathers designed to be transparency in government. Our free press is in place not to snoop around for our own curiosity, but to stand in the gap for the citizenry, seeking out and reporting information they have a right to know.

An initiative passed late last year in Michigan to do background checks on workers in nursing homes and adult foster care homes. Hurray! A monumental step in the safeguarding of our vulnerable senior citizens

and mentally impaired people, many of whom are helpless in nursing home beds or unable to make decisions. But wait, embedded in that legislation is a FOIA exemption keeping that background information from the public. Now brewing is an omnibus bill, HB 5762, to roll together several statutes regarding nursing homes and adult foster care, including this one — a good thing, but also an opportunity to remove that FOIA exemption. Why? These are licensed by the state of Michigan and receive state and federal funds through Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. This information thus meets the criteria of what should be subject to FOIA.

What is the point of background checks of school employees or potential nursing home or adult foster care workers? Do we just do this for the edification and information of administrators in nursing or adult foster care homes, schools, law-enforcement agencies, or for the supervisors of some other group of government employees or workers whose paychecks are paid with public funds?

While it is crucial for these officials to have this information for hiring and firing purposes, we believe it is even more critical for a parent to have this information to be able to choose whether to leave their child in a school where someone who committed a crime has direct care of their child. Placing a family member in a nursing home or adult foster care facility is wrenching. Wouldn't you feel more confident being able to review the backgrounds of the people taking care of your family member?

An open and transparent government was one of the top objectives of the framers of this democracy. They guaranteed it — or so they thought — in the First Amendment. And it has worked pretty well through all the years we have been a nation.

Marcia Loader is president of the Michigan Press Association and owner/publisher of *The Advance*, a weekly newspaper in Blissfield.



Marcia Loader

Suburban, city 'dance' stalls regional growth

What happened? It seems like only yesterday we were holding hands and singing *Kumbyah*.

Where's the love? Where's that Super Bowl afterglow that was supposed to transform metro Detroit?



Hugh Gallagher

In the immortal words of Rodney King, "Can't we all just get along?"

It was Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick who cobbled a good deal to turn management of the Detroit Zoo over to the zoological society and eventually extricate the city from its financial obligations, while still maintaining ownership.

The Detroit City Council didn't see it that way. Some complained about receiving the contract at the last minute (as the mayor was packing to go on a trip to Africa with his mother, U.S. Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick). Others complained that some of the details of the contract were contrary to the city charter. But, clearly, race was also an issue.

Council member Barbara-Rose Collins opined that Detroit was not a plantation and that "white people don't own black people anymore." That was followed by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson commenting that he'd rather own at 1947 Buick than Barbara-Rose Collins and that the Detroit City Council belongs in the zoo.

Outrageous, bitter and all too common. *The Detroit Free*

Finally, the details got ironed out and the Detroit City Council approved a deal to transfer management, but not ownership (of the Detroit Zoo), to the society by a 6-3 vote.

Press reported that Detroit council members received racist e-mails from suburbanites.

Finally, the details got ironed out and the Detroit City Council approved a deal to transfer management, but not ownership, to the society by a 6-3 vote.

On to the water and sewer battle.

State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, has been pushing for a long time to create a new advisory board to provide oversight for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. The board would be responsible for reviewing rates and reporting "whether the rates were just and reasonable." The board would also review contacts more than \$50,000.

A couple of years ago, Gov. Jennifer Granholm rejected a Toy-sponsored bill as "divisive." Toy reintroduced a revised bill last month and the Detroit City Council did its best to get it through the state Legislature.

Toy's bill would create a new authority that would take all but one appointment away from the mayor of Detroit and give the suburbs a majority vote.

On March 8, the pugnacious city council approved a 5.7-percent rate increase for suburban water and sewer customers and delayed any increase for city users, pending a plan from Kilpatrick to protect low-income users from having their water shut off.

The next day the state House moved swiftly to approve a version of Toy's bill that had already won Senate approval.

Speaker Craig DeRoche, R-

Novi, is quoted as saying, "This is just like the Boston Tea Party; what the council did is taxation without representation."

The council did a reverse again and passed a 5.7-percent rate hike for suburban customers and a 5.4-percent hike for city users. Kilpatrick is still working on the plan to protect low-income users.

On Tuesday, the Senate took final action on the water board bill and Granholm's office quickly announced that she would once again veto.

Toy, a popular and conscientious state senator, insists that her bill is not racially motivated. She says her constituents have concerns about the operation of the DWSD and about increasing rates.

But it's clear that what plays well in the suburbs, raises hackles in the city and vice versa. Many in the city see actions by suburban leaders to "take control" of city operations such as the zoo and DWSD as coming only after the city has a black majority. For them, "regional cooperation" is seen as capitulation to white rule.

It's a sad dance we're doing at a time when regional cooperation is exactly what we need — on water, transportation, parks, cultural institutions. But it has to be inclusive, respectful, measured.

It's hard to see how we'll get from here to there.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of the *Observer Newspapers*. He can be reached by phone at (734) 953-2149, by e-mail at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net or by fax at (734) 591-7279.

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Wayne County makes gains in hiring survey

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano was crowing Friday about a report by Manpower Inc. that found 38 percent of companies in the county plan to hire in the second quarter compared to 25 percent for all companies in southeast Michigan.



Ficano

Manpower Inc., a national temporary employment firm based in Milwaukee, reported that Oakland and Macomb counties would have 10 percent job growth for the quarter. Manpower is reporting strong job growth nationally. Of the 16,000 U.S. employers surveyed, 30 percent foresee an increase in hiring activity in the second quarter, while only 6 percent expect a reduction in payrolls. The Manpower survey is conducted quarterly to measure employers' intentions to increase or decrease the number of employees in their workforce during the next quarter.

"Usually we find Oakland County employers very optimistic, this time they're more cautious," said Denise DeSantis, local spokesman for Manpower.

She said Wayne County was even above the national rate, which shows 30 percent of employers expecting to hire in the next quarter. She said, however, that Wayne County is also ahead of the national average for companies reporting that they will reduce employment, 15 percent compared in 6 percent nationally.

DeSantis said Wayne County is also an exception for the Midwest, which generally shows little change in hiring expectations from the last quarter. She said the South and West are reporting strong hiring expectations for spring.

"We've been doing hard work, planning and businesses and other groups are taking notice," Ficano said.

Ficano said he's seeing job growth in the technical and research and development areas.

"I've had several companies talk to us about the airport and the airport city," Ficano said.

Ficano also cited the plan to go ahead with design of a rail line connecting Ann Arbor with Detroit as a positive development for employers.

"We're close to two research universities (the University of Michigan and Wayne State University) and we have a partnership with Michigan State to develop ethanol," he said.

Ficano said he was happy that the state House Thursday approved a fuels package bill that would create

incentives for gas station owners to install equipment for ethanol and biodiesel, require that the state purchase vehicles that can run on alternative fuels, establish the new renaissance zones for renewable energy facilities and create a Fuels of the Future Commission.

"We think it's a good start," Ficano said. "... I met today with the governor about not taxing ethanol fuel."

Ficano said there are already six million automobiles on the road that could run on the E85 fuel developed by Michigan State University. E85 is a mixture of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline.

DeSantis said excitement generated by the baseball All-Star Game and the Super Bowl may have helped boost employer confidence.

"It was wonderful. We saw the potential when a community comes together," she said. "We had leaders working together."

The positive report on prospective hiring comes on the heels of a report by the U.S. Census that Wayne County's population has fallen below 2 million for the first time since 1940. The Census reports that since the 2000 census report, Wayne County has lost 162,000 people, a 3 percent decrease to 1,998,217 people.

"Obviously Detroit and Wayne County have been losing population," Ficano said. "But we have the tools to slow it down and turn it around."

Detroit leads in new construction units

Development of new construction units in Detroit in 2005 totaled 1,039, the highest among Southeast Michigan communities, according to building permit data collected by SEMCOG. While Detroit has been among the top communities in residential construction over the past few years, this marks the first time Detroit has been first since 1982.

A total of 1,039 residential housing units were permitted in Detroit in 2005, an 11 percent increase over 2004. Since 2003, new housing starts in Detroit have averaged about 1,000 units annually. This infill development has kept pace with development occurring in Macomb Township and Canton Township; those communities recorded 814 and 805 new residential housing units respectively in 2005.

"How sustainable is the feel-good success of the Super Bowl in Detroit?" asked SEMCOG Executive Director Paul Tait. "Along with the revitalization of the commercial aspects of Downtown Detroit, these numbers show promise for the revitalization of both downtown and the neighborhoods. This is a clear demonstration that even in these tough economic times, housing in Detroit is at least com-

petitive with housing in the suburbs. While the suburbs continue to grow, this shows that Detroit is attractive, too."

Added Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick: "The data compiled by SEMCOG serve as a strong indication of our successful efforts to grow Detroit. We will continue building on our progress as a part of our efforts to revitalize Detroit, neighborhood by neighborhood."

Final numbers from every community in the region are still being collected and SEMCOG will release its annual residential construction report in April. It is expected that the total number of new units permitted in the region will be about 20 percent below 2004's total of 25,350 units. The 11 percent increase in Detroit is welcome news in the fact of an overall decline in residential construction regionwide.

Building permit data collected from every community in Southeast Michigan are available on SEMCOG's Web site — www.sem-cog.org.

Link to Building Permits from the Data drop-down menu. The database allows users to create a report for the region, for each of the seven counties, and for all communities. Data go back to 1969.

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