

Asylum Lake threatened by fuel tank leak

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An underground fuel spill and a failed septic tank system near the shores of Asylum Lake are two reasons why sewers are needed in the area — with or without a university business-research park, say area environmental officials.

Steps to keep septic wastes from flowing from a mobile home park on Drake Road into the lake are merely "stopgap measures," says Kalamazoo County's top environmental official.

Across the busy Drake Road-Stadium Drive intersection, contaminated ground water beneath the Amoco service station will be treated, then dumped via storm sewers into Asylum Lake.

"No doubt sewer is needed up there badly," said Patrick Krause, environmental health program manager for the county Human Services Department.

A sewer system would be installed along the north shore of Asylum Lake if Western Michigan University goes ahead with its proposed business-research park at Drake and Parkview Avenue.

But opponents of the sewer and of the WMU park say sewer construction would harm the delicate environment around Asylum Lake.

The city of Kalamazoo in the early 1980s had to forfeit a federal grant to pay for a sewer line across the Asylum Lake property because it couldn't obtain an easement from WMU.

If the university's business park goes in, local utility users would help to pay for the \$300,000 project.

The ground water at the Amoco service station was contaminated by a leaking underground fuel tank, said Bruce Minsley, deputy

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Trustees to vote on research park

The Western Michigan University Board of Trustees is expected to vote Friday on a proposal to create a business-research park.

The meeting begins at 10:45 a.m. in the second-floor board room at the Bernhard Student Center.

The business park proposed for south of Parkview Avenue and west of Drake Road has triggered intense community debate since plans were unveiled by WMU in April 1990.

director for Kalamazoo's public utilities department. The polluted water will be treated on site and discharged into Asylum Lake under a permit issued by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

"If there was a sewer in there, they would have had the option of sending the contaminated ground water to the city's waste-water plant" rather than into the lake, Minsley said.

At the trailer home park, wastes must be pumped out nearly every week and transported to Kalamazoo's sewage-treatment plant for disposal, Krause said.

Sewers would be installed for slightly more than a half mile from the Winchell Way apartments west to Drake. The sewer line would then be extended up Drake to serve the 54-acre Colony Farm Or-

chard at the corner of Parkview Avenue. That parcel and the 265-acre Lee Baker Farm south of Parkview comprise the 319-acre business park.

Deed restrictions on the Colony Farm property would require the state Legislature to approve WMU's park project for the site.

A WMU Faculty Senate report that backs the park says damage to the environment in constructing the sewer could be reduced by using "hand-digging and other methods that minimize the use of heavy machinery." Every effort should be made to preserve trees and shoreline, the committee said.

Minsley said the city has staked out a proposed easement that does just that. "We're not going in there to rape the earth," he said.

Along with the sewers, drainage basins and filtration ponds could



GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

A sewer system would protect Asylum Lake, officials say.

be installed to prevent storm water runoff from further polluting the Asylum Lake property with road salts and oils, the faculty committee said.

Road improvements are also needed in the area — even if WMU's park isn't developed, said William Nelson, Kalamazoo's public works director. Widening of Parkview and Drake is needed because of the growing traffic load, he said.

Construction of an interchange at Parkview Avenue and U.S. 131 to

ease congestion on Parkview has been ruled out because it's close to the Stadium Drive and the I-94-U.S. 131 interchanges, said John Polasek, project development engineer for the Michigan Department of Transportation's Kalamazoo District.

The WMU Faculty Senate report recommended widening Parkview to a four-lane boulevard near the park site west to Drake if necessary. A 100-foot right-of-way for road improvements is included as part of the deed restrictions on the

Asylum Lake property north of Parkview.

Truck traffic should be prohibited on Parkview east of the business park and general widening of the road avoided in those residential areas, the report said.

Besides public tax dollars, state grants and a Tax Increment Financing district could be used to pay for road and sewer improvements. Under TIF, revenue generated from development in the park would be used to pay for the capital projects.