

State Official Says:

No 'Giveaway' At Asylum Lake

By P.N. TODD
Gazette Staff Writer

There will be no "giveaway" of state property at Asylum Lake, a state administrative official says, and the state may need the land in the future.

Walter McVicker, sites section chief for the Department of Management and Budget, said today that while the land around the lake may be "surplus" to Kalamazoo State Hospital, "it is not surplus to the state."

It'll be about a year, McVicker said in a telephone interview with The Gazette, before an inventory of state lands is completed "to see what we need and what we don't."

Besides that, McVicker said, the State Administrative Board—consisting of the governor and several lesser officials—has a policy of selling surplus state land at fair market value.

Following comments from McVicker Tuesday, said State Sen. John Welborn, who sponsored a bill to lease the state land to Kalamazoo County for a park, three of the five Senate State Affairs Committee members agreed to let the bill die without action.

Welborn said he and Donald Kelley, Kalamazoo County parks director, presented information to the committee including citizen petitions supporting a park; support from other local

government bodies; the Kalamazoo State Hospital superintendent's declaration that the property was surplus to its needs; and a letter from Michigan State University, withdrawing its request for more land for agricultural experiments.

Welborn said he'll reintroduce his bill, which would authorize lease of 267 acres of lake frontage and flat land to the county for park use, at \$1 a year.

"The bureaucrats won out," Welborn said of the bill's impending death. He said the committee should at least report out Sen. Charles Zollar's bill which would authorize the State Administrative Board to dispose of the land, instead of leaving responsibility with the state hospital here.

McVicker said that statewide, there are many municipalities and groups who "want part of our land for parkland and other uses." Part of the reason is that more community mental health care is being emphasized, and mental health institutions are being consolidated.

Although KSH administrators consider the lake property and flatland along 12th street surplus, McVicker said, Department of Mental Health officials have asked that no transfer of the land take place now.

Besides, McVicker said, "A lease of this property to the County of Kalamazoo would be in effect a gift,