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HOUSE PANEL MOVES ON ANNEXATION BILLS

The House Intergovernmental, Urban and Regional Affairs Committee reported out two bills Wednesday exempting charter townships with at least a population of 20,000 and meeting certain service requirements from annexation, and prohibiting those communities from detaching territory from a city. But unlike legislation in the Senate, which deals more broadly with revisions to annexation procedures, the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan Townships Association weren't at odds over [HB 5779](#) and [HB 5859](#).

[Rep. Marc Corriveau](#) (D-Northville) and Rep Mark Meadows (D-East Lansing), the bills' sponsors, said the legislation will close a "loophole" in the charter township law that allows a parcel of property to be annexed by a city with minimal input from the residents of the township.

While annexation issues relating to Meridian Township in Ingham County were brought up, much of the testimony focused on the site of the former Northville Psychiatric Hospital. Northville Township Supervisor Mark Abbo said the property owners don't want to comply with township zoning ordinances and so are seeking annexation by Livonia. Because there are only eight Northville Township residents on that property, only they will be able to vote on annexation, blocking the vote of the entire community that will be affected, he said.

Tom Sparks of Butzel Long, representing Shostack Brothers and REI, which jointly own REIS-Northville LLC, which owns the site, testified in opposition to the legislation. Mr. Sparks said REIS bought the property from the state with the understanding of the current law, not expecting it to be changed. He said Northville Township rejected the company's site plan, wanted the company to move a Department of State Police gun range that abuts the property and informed REIS the townships' sewer system can't handle the additional development as is.

Mr. Abbo said the township did ask the company to address some things, like setting aside property for a school, but that was because the development will add 1,110 new homes and those residents will have to be educated. He said the community wants the developer to develop that site, but it has to fit the community plan.

David Bertram, legislative liaison for MTA, which has adamantly supported the Senate bills, said the organization mildly supports the House bills. While the Senate bills are more comprehensive, for the "sake of getting something done," MTA can support the House legislation. Mr. Bertram said about 38 townships could be affected by the proposed changes to the law, depending on whether their services fall under the qualifications. He suggested the bills just deal with a population requirement.

But [Rep. Phil Pavlov](#) (R-St. Clair) said having a threshold in the law does not work toward getting everyone to an agreement on what's economically best for a community and he opposes the bills.

The Michigan Realtors Association also is opposed to the bills.

Jerry Richards, Meridian Township supervisor, testified in support of the bills, but asked that the garbage service requirement be amended because residents in his township can choose which service to use, and so he didn't know if they would qualify under the bills.

Andy Schor, legislative associate for the Michigan Municipal League, which had ardently opposed the Senate legislation, said they support the bills because they do provide a targeted fix, whereas the Senate bills won't work on a statewide basis. He said his organization will look into the garbage service issue. Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck) is neutral to the bills.

Both bills were sent to the full chamber on a party-line vote.

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