

Unified Housing Stance

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Needed, Lundine Says

By JOHN MASIKER

DUNKIRK — Rep. Stanley N. Lundine Monday night told Dunkirk residents he will take no further action on their controversial public housing issue until the elected representatives of the city attain a unified position on it.

Lundine, speaking before about 125 citizens at Dunkirk City Hall, said he has worked with the Washington office of the department of Housing and Urban Development to buy the city more time to make a housing decision acceptable to HUD. Robert Embury, of Washington HUD, must eventually rule on a recommendation from HUD area manager James Anderson, that Dunkirk's \$344,000 fifth-year Community Development Block Grant be rescinded.

"I want you to know that I won't interfere with local decision-making... That is one thing that Stan Lundine will not do," the congressman said.

Some asked Lundine, attending the CAB-sponsored meeting, to break the pro-housing stance of Mayor Gary Michalak.

Lundine told them that this is impossible. "I heard a comment made earlier this evening — and I want to dispell it right now — that if Lundine wanted to resolve this, he could do it with one phone call," the

congressman said. "That's a lot of crap."

Lundine told the people repeatedly that it is up to the city council and the mayor to resolve the housing problem. "I've had a difficult time determining what the official commitment of the community of Dunkirk is. So it's a little difficult for me to go to Washington and ask for this or that. I have written and asked them (HUD) not to take action on that (rescinding the CDBG) until useful local discussion, as to what the community's position is, can take place," the congressman said.

Lundine was told by various members of the Citizen's Action Board, which opposes HUD's housing plan, that the people do not want his help saying the CDBG. They want his help in getting input into that "community position."

"I am not here to be a respondent to problems about the housing authority, or the mayor, or anything within the community," Lundine said. "But once they've reached a decision as to what the community's position is, I will work to help them get the utmost federal aid behind that decision."

Lundine told the citizens that if they are dissatisfied with the housing policy designated for their community, they should petition their local

government for a change in the Housing Assistance Plan, through which the city government reports its housing needs to the federal government.

"If Dunkirk's needs change, your HAP can change... I'm not here to tell you that it should, but maybe it should be changed. That's the power that the local government has," the congressman explained.

"What local government," asked Leo Wycsocki, of CAB.

"City," replied Lundine.

"Not the council," Wycsocki said. Lundine told the citizens that the HAP is drawn up and submitted by the mayor and the council.

The HAP which Dunkirk is presently committed to, drawn up by past administrations, calls for Section 8 — or private developments with subsidized rental — housing, one of various HUD public housing programs.

Adolph Wojnarowski of CAB, speaking of a proposal favored by Councilman Thomas Toftl, told Lundine that he would rather see Dunkirk institute subsidized home ownership for lower income people. He said the government subsidy should go to low-income people rather than the private developers of the rental projects. "I don't want to make the rich richer, I want to help

the poor alone. On a tenant basis, the poor remain continually dependent," Wojnarowski said.

"I smile when you say that," replied Lundine, because I am the author of a bill called the Home Ownership Assistance Plan — adopted by the Senate and House of Representatives — which says we are going to subsidize home ownership rather than rental units in the future. With ownership, properties are kept up better, there's more pride, more participation. The argument against instituting it is that it is a new program and we can't afford to fund it. However, we can't afford to go on subsidizing rental forever."

That remark drew a thunderstorm of applause from the CAB side of the audience.

Interestingly enough, a major topic of discussion was racial segregation. CABers argued that the city is already integrated, and pro-housing forces insisted that they oppose segregation of the community. Looking at the arguments on a practical level, however, one could not help but notice that whites and CAB members were all sitting on one side of the aisle which divides council chambers and blacks and pro-housing forces filled the other side. Lundine stood right in the middle.