

## But tighter controls stall

# Oakland gives a hoot about county car usage

Oakland County Commissioner Henry Hoot (R-Troy) was appointed at the way his proposed county car policy was chopped up and amended, but other board members said Hoot should be pleased that the county finally has a policy governing use of its cars by all departments.

Hoot was chairman of a special committee that drafted the car policy proposal. The amended version last week passed the board of commissioners on a 19-4 vote, with Paul Kasper (R-Bloomfield Hills) the only local board member opposing it.

Commissioner John McDonald (R-Farmington) introduced the package of three amendments which Hoot complained "gutted" his committee's work. McDonald's amendments, approved 15-8, provided:

- "Elect and public officials (the latter being major non-civil service appointees) would be exempt from having the eight-inch county seal on their car doors. (Cars used in criminal investigations were the only ones exempt under Hoot's committee's recommendation.)
- "The new gas policy will take effect 45 days after passage. The Hoot committee had wanted it effective only a week after passage.
- "The county would be required to

reduce its "vehicle" fleet by 20 units per year. The Hoot committee had proposed 20 "cars" per year. Hoot argued that there was no abuse among employee use of non-car vehicles.

Hoot was the only local commissioner to oppose the McDonald package of amendments, which was supported by Kasper, Robert McConnell (R-Farmington Hills), McDonald, Lillian Moffitt (R-Bloomfield), Joseph Montane (R-Orchard Lake), Ralph Moxley (R-Birmingham), Dennis Murphy (R-Nov), Robert Page (R-Birmingham),

Larry Pernick (D-Southfield) and John Peterson (R-Rochester).

PERNICK OFFERED his own amendment—to deduct \$25 biweekly from the salaries of all county employees provided a 24-hour county car.

It died 15-8 on a straight party-line vote.

Hoot called the final package "lukewarm, tepid, milktoast," but agreed with board Chairman Wallace Gabler (R-Royal Oak) that the county finally has a policy.

The policies provide that "any new positions or changes in existing positions resulting from changes in job assignments, resignations or retirements will automatically result in withdrawal of car privileges, unless an exception is granted by the finance committee."

"All users (will) be required to complete on a 'daily basis mileage reports' showing origin, destination

and reason for the trip, to be totaled up and submitted at the end of each month.

"All county vehicles, except those in use in criminal investigations, the black-and-whites and elected and public officials, shall have an eight-inch seal prominently displayed on the two front doors.

"The total vehicle fleet (will) be reduced by 20 vehicles each year for the next three years.

"The car policy committee hereby directs that no county vehicle shall be gassed at the county gas station, effective 45 days following adoption of this policy, unless they carry the county seal or have been specifically excluded by the finance committee as to this regulation."

Citizen observer John King of Bloomfield Hills agreed with Hoot's original report and asked the county to "downgrade the size of vehicles" to conserve fuel.



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## Author says neighborhoods are small towns

Whether you need to borrow a lawn spreader, locate a babysitter or petition the city for a new traffic light, the most immediate resource is your neighborhood.

"Neighborhoods represent a source of information, identity and mutual aid to the people who live in them," according to University of Michigan social psychologist Rachelle B. Warren.

"And they can represent a critical organizational base through which policy makers can reach local citizens and citizens can reach one another."

The strategies are explained in "The Neighborhood Organizer's Handbook," coauthored by Warren, a senior research associate at the UM Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, and her husband Donald I. Warren, chairman of the sociology-anthropology department at Oakland University. The publisher is University of Notre Dame Press.

Based on five years of almost door-to-door research under grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, the book describes six different kinds of neighborhoods and the ways each responds to individual or government social efforts. It outlines methods for identifying the neighborhoods' strengths and resources, and for using them to bring about social change.

"The book is designed for government officials, social service agencies, school boards and planning commissions—and especially for the average citizen who wants to make his or her neighborhood and community a better place in which to live."

"Neighborhoods are the missing link in urban national policy," Rachelle Warren says. "In many cases they contain invisible leaders who

opinions are respected and who have reputations for getting things done. These people can be an important asset to the isolated bureaucrat who is charged with serving local citizens."

"Likewise, these grassroots leaders are an asset to their neighborhoods because they are familiar with resources in the outside community, and know how to mobilize support for bringing about a particular goal."

Warren does not see neighborhoods as collections of houses but as support systems for their residents. To varying degrees, neighborhoods serve as arenas for opinion sharing, political organizing, group identity, status display and mutual aid.

"In the suburbs, this might take the form of watching the house next door while the family is on vacation, or helping a neighbor build his garage in exchange for repairing your car."

"In the city, however, the neighborhood's help-sharing potential is more critical," Warren says. "It is necessary to peoples' survival."

"At one time in our history, the small town provided a filter through which government programs could reach family units. But families and individuals now tend to be isolated and the help-giving networks dormant in urban mass society. The neighborhood can provide the missing link between policy makers and people."

It can be argued that in an era of cross-crossing expressways, mass media and urban renewal, the neighborhood is an obsolete entity. Warren insists that it is more important than ever.

"The future of the city is the future of neighborhoods," she stresses, "and their destiny depends on our simultaneous reinvestment in both."

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## Oakland court tops nationally in efficiency

The Oakland Circuit Court's methods of judicial efficiency will be studied by the National Center for State Courts, as a part of a national program to improve judicial administration.

"We are proud to have been recognized by the National Center for State Courts," said Chief Judge Robert B. Webster. "We are told that we were chosen for this study because a preliminary review by the national center indicated that our circuit ranked first in judicial efficiency, nationally."

Webster indicated that in 1976 when the docket load of the Oakland circuit increased sharply, the court had reduced the number of cases awaiting trial. This success was attributed to "just plain hard work on the part of 11 dedicated judges, and innovative systems of docket control and assignment," Webster said.

The National Center for State Courts was founded in 1971 by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger and other national leaders of the bench and bar. The center is a central national resource to help states modernize their court systems.

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