

Back to drawing board for Spreen's crime unit

By TIM RICHARD

Sheriff Johannes Spreen will have to cultivate local governments and their police chiefs if he decides to renew his bid for a special "crime and accident prevention unit."

That was the majority's message as the Oakland County Board of Commissioners rejected 15-10 Spreen's bid for a 25-member, \$1 million-a-year unit at the close of its June 2 meeting.

While Democrat Spreen urged the Republican-controlled board to "put partisan politics aside and vote your consciences," the vote departed from party lines. Two Democrats joined the opposition; two Republicans supported him.

LOCAL COMMISSIONERS supporting the Spreen proposal were Henry Root (R-Troy), John McDonald (R-Farmington), Alex Perinoff (D-Southfield) and Larry Pernick (D-Southfield).

Opposed were Paul Kasper (R-Bloomfield Hills), Robert McConnell (R-Farmington Hills), Lillian Moffitt (R-Bloomfield), Joseph Montante (R-Orchard Lake), Ralph Moxley (R-Birmingham), Dennis Murphy (R-Novi), Robert Page (R-Birmingham) and John Peterson (R-Rochester).

Moxley supported a compromise bid by Pernick to seek passage of a scaled-down force but voted against the full package on final roll call.

KASPER, CHAIRMAN of the powerful finance committee, argued against the proposal, which would have cost \$440,000 for the remainder of 1977, despite the presence of \$38,000 in the current contingency fund and last year's \$2 million surplus.

Because those funds are available only once, Kasper said, they should be used only once for capital improvement items. The sheriff's proposal, on the other hand, "will be a recurring cost—a million one year, then more the following years. The money won't be there."

And to citizen-critic John King's charge of partisanship, Kasper retorted: "The sheriff's budget has



SHERIFF JOHANNES SPREEN
Time to start over

doubled in the last 4½ years. If that's partisanship, John Spreen should want more of it."

WHAT SPREEN had sought was a statistical analyst and staff that could spot problem areas in both crime and accidents—problems that might not be immediately apparent to local chiefs whose municipal boundaries are narrow—and a mobile force that could move into those areas.

Some chiefs, however, feared the sheriff was attempting to intrude on their jurisdictions. Many local officials feared they would be hit for part of the cost—which Spreen vehemently denied.

Solicited by the board's personnel committee for comment, only the cities of Farmington and Oak Park were forthrightly in favor.

Flatly opposed were Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Rochester, West Bloomfield Township, Huntington Woods and Ferndale.

South Lyon had too little information to comment, and Northville saw some "equity" questions. Commu-

nities which liked the basic idea but were wary of the cost were Independence Township, Clawson, Milford Township, Springfield Township, Royal Oak, Novi, Orionville and Oxford.

Rochester City Manager William S. Sinclair summed up the feelings of many when he wrote: "There has always been some question in my mind regarding how Sheriff Spreen views his responsibilities versus how they are spelled out by law. The sheriff's viewpoint is generally a much broader interpretation. The board must consider what the sheriff is supposed to do regardless of what he personally feels he should do."

COMMISSIONER Robert Gorsline (R-Tilford), who voted against Spreen's proposal, won the only applause of the debate when he said he would seek "a cooperative effort" to put together a new proposal.

Yet Spreen had his warm supporters.

Root said the special unit "deserves priority. It's a visible service. The sheriff recognized there is a limited amount of funds."

Pernick, co-sponsor with Root of the board resolution, contended: "The funds are there if we feel the projects are worthy. We've been able to find \$2 million for the airport and \$3 million for the county executive's offices. Let's get it started and see how well it works."

PRIVATELY, several commissioners were critical of Spreen's approach to Oakland County politics—hatching a proposal on his own without consulting other power interests, insisting that his approach is "professional" while all others are "political."

They find a "night and day" difference between Spreen and his under-sheriff, John Nichols, in terms of approachability and ability to negotiate over differences.

They're also turned off by what they see as Spreen's "big city" approach—he was a New York City official and Detroit police chief before moving to Farmington Hills and running for sheriff.

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