

Murphy's 'state of the county' address a mixed bag review

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Efficiency and productivity in government were 1978 goals listed by Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy in his "State of the County" address.

Four of the recommendations Murphy spotlighted for implementation in 1978 dealt directly with government efficiency. At the same time, he excluded the possibility of new programs and services.

"When people want and need something, I hear about it," Murphy said. "I'm not getting any feedback that more services are needed."

THE COUNTY executive advised the board of commissioners, the county's policy-making body, to hold government spending as close to the inflation rate as possible. He asked that the number of new county employees be limited.

Murphy also asked commissioners to freeze budgeted positions at present levels for the first six months of 1978.

The request came after Murphy recommended and gained approval for hefty pay increases for members of his executive staff. In several instances, the pay increases totaled as much as 11 per cent.

"While Oakland County was adding new positions in December, Wayne County was paying off employees," said Murphy. "I think there's a message there, and the message is this—if we do now what Wayne County did in the past, if we blab our government payroll whenever we have a good year at the tax till, then we will have to do in the future what Wayne County has been forced to do now."

Murphy said the time had come for the county to analyze and measure the

productivity of its workers.

He said what could be done in the City of Detroit could be done in Oakland County. Last year, the Economic Growth Council of Detroit, and advisory body to Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, studied nine key city departments.

James Roche, co-chairman of the group, said that after examining the city's environmental protection and maintenance department, the council developed 75 recommendations which could save Detroit more than \$6 million annually.

"We have to take a long, hard look at our people and the services we provide," Murphy said.

OTHER PROPOSALS singled out by Murphy include a new drive for a fixed county millage and the establishment of a special "rainy day" fund.

"The fixed millage was defeated at the polls once before in this county, and it will be defeated once again unless we all put our shoulders to the task of inspiring its passage," he said.

"By August of this year," Murphy said, "every citizen should know that the fixed millage is the first step in the direction of property tax reform. And they should know that a fixed millage would eliminate the current wasteful requirement that many, many hours be spent every year preparing a tax allocation budget which does little more than create mountains of government paperwork."

A fixed millage would, for the first time, allow the county to cut taxes if it had the opportunity, Murphy said. He said he favors fixing the millage at 5.26 mills.

Under the Michigan Constitution, "winter" property taxes are limited to 15 mills. Each year the 15 mill tax pie



DANIEL T. MURPHY
Message is there

is carved up between county government, townships and school districts by the tax allocation board.

With a fixed millage, the allocation is frozen by a vote of the people. It may be altered only by another vote of the people. The same section of the constitution allows voters to raise the total pie to 18 mills (\$18 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation).

For several years, county government has been getting a steady 5.26 mills from the tax allocation board.

IN ADVISING the commissioners to begin petitioning the Michigan Legislature for the authority to establish a special "rainy day" fund, Murphy said it "would allow us to build an adequate reserve so that temporary downturns in the economy could be weathered without tax increases or deficit spending, and to meet unforeseen catastrophic emergencies."

He doubted the proposal would meet much opposition in the legislature. "The state has one, I think we should have one," he said.

Won't fight Detroit for new business, county exec says

While the city of Detroit, with financial backing from the state government and a coalition of business and industry, is setting up a special Economic Growth Corp., County Executive Daniel T. Murphy said his administration will not compete with the new body in an effort to bring new business to Oakland County.

"I'm not interested in bringing new business into this county," Murphy said, "but we'll gladly take the overflow."

"If they (the growth corporation) want us to help them, we would be happy to help them. We have to help them in this respect," he said.

Even though new industry might want to build its plants in Detroit, many of the workers supplying labor to those plants would be living either in or relocating in Oakland County.

"Let them have the business first, we'll have the people," he said.

Murphy's support of the city's economic growth endeavor was not without reservations, however. "We asked that they not come out against roads in the county. After all, the roads will help to carry the workers to those plants," Murphy said.

The Economic Growth Corp. and transportation were among the topics Murphy and Detroit Mayor Coleman Young discussed earlier this week.

The two-hour meeting between the two powerful local politicians was only the second since both took office. Murphy said other meetings were in the works and Young would be coming to Oakland County in about six weeks for their second meeting this year.

"Our goal was build bridges of understanding across Eight Mile Road, and to tear down the walls of mistrust and misunderstanding which have separated us for too long," Murphy said.

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-County Executive Daniel Murphy

He continued, "I have considered it my solemn responsibility to make it clear that Oakland County will break nothing less than a full and equal partnership with Detroit and other governmental units concerned with the welfare of southeastern Michigan."

While Murphy said he was confident the county could build a partnership with the city, he was uncertain to how successful Detroit's attempts to attract new business and industry would be.

Murphy explained that "when times were good and when business and industry were locating in southeastern Michigan—it was advantageous for business to do so. Michigan no longer has that competitive edge, Murphy said.

Not only has it become a highly unionized state, but "the legislature has legislated tremendous increases in workman's compensation and unemployment compensation benefits," he said.

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