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GOP inherits Dem budget

By TIM RICHARD

Paul Kasper was less than his usual ebullient as he studied line items in the new Oakland County budget which commissioners passed 14-13 Dec. 18 on a straight party line vote.

Kasper, a Republican commissioner from Bloomfield Hills, will be chairman of the budget-making finance committee next year when the GOP takes over with a 15-12 majority.

In November and December, their first weeks with a majority, Chairman Larry Pernick (D-Southfield) and his majority on the finance committee made some drastic revisions in the post-election budget submitted to them by Republican County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars were chopped from Murphy's staff and from departments he oversees and distributed to programs the executive doesn't control—health, social services, senior citizens, nutrition, the board of commissioners' own staff and the sheriff. A major change was to shift 43 positions out of the Department of Public Works, which the executive heads, and into the office of George Kuhn, the elected Republican drain commissioner who is often at odds with Murphy.

ON PAPER, it would appear that all Kasper and his GOP majority on the finance committee will have to do is amend Pernick's budget to suit themselves, perhaps with the aid of Murphy's veto over Democratic items they don't like.

Patrick Nowak (R-Farmington), who declined to seek reelection in 1978 after two terms, summed up the Republican position.

"They just took a lot of money and jobs away from the county executive and gave it to departments that in some cases didn't ask for it. They waste money. Look what Murphy did. He vetoed money for roads for senior citizens, for nutrition, for social services."

Pernick preaches cooperation and dialog with the executive, but the Democrats ran this budget through and accept no input from Republicans. Everything is partisan. They didn't think out programs. They just threw a lot of money here and there, indiscriminately," said Nowak, adding it wouldn't have been done that way if Democratic Philip Mastin had been elected county executive Nov. 2.

But Nowak, Kasper and any other Republican commissioner you talk to will add that some of the Democrats' changes may stick, though they're hesitant to say which ones, and they concede many Democratic changes will look good to the populace.

HERE ARE THE MAJOR budget changes Democrats made and how Kasper & Co. see them:

• Overall budget size \$67.3 million, up 11.4 per cent or \$6.8 million from 1976. Murphy's budget was \$6.9 million, or 8.3 per cent or \$5.4 million. The big change was that Pernick forces federal counter-cyclical aid coming in at \$1.1 million more than Murphy did. Kasper said the federal figure is really uncertain. "You can throw



COMMISSIONER PAUL KASPER

A tough job ahead

a dart and come up with a figure."

"Many posts cut or eliminated from the executive's staff. A lobbyist (out), a public information officer (cut to half-time), special projects director (out), coordinator of management information systems (out), the car fleet (reduced by 58 vehicles), the DPW posts (shifted to drain commissioner).

Kasper said Republicans will hold to the line that the DPW belongs under the executive; that the drain commissioner's office should be brought under the executive; and that the information officer and management people will be put back.

Commissioner Mary Mead Dearborn (D-Birmingham), outgoing board member who had served on the finance committee, said Murphy's "so-called super chiefs" had been taken care of too well, that drain projects are being tied up because of the skewed state of Oakland's power to issue bonds through the DPW, and that needed drains can only be built by the drain commissioner.

• Pernick's department up \$125,000 to assist the prosecutor's organized crime task force.

Kasper said: "We're going to wait and see what the prosecutor (Republican L. Brooks Patterson) recommends. It's his task force. We'll wait until he comes to us." Significantly, Sheriff Johannes Spreen is a Democrat.

• A transfer to the road commission of \$200,000.

Kasper admitted that item will have a lot of appeal, given the state of Oakland County roads.

Mrs. Dearborn said that with federal aid and state aid, the fund could grow to \$500,000 worth of road work. She said the plan is to make the money available, ask the road commission to come up with a plan for spending it, and then for the



COMMISSIONER LARRY PERNICK

A difference in philosophy

board to make appropriations for the projects it approves of.

• A research staff for the board of commissioners, \$66,000. Democrats visualize splitting the money 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats.

Said Mrs. Dearborn: "We have about four secretaries now, and they have more work than they should because we get so little cooperation from the administration."

Board Chairman Alexander Pernoff (D-Southfield) insists the county executive is setting himself up as God and that the board of commissioners is turning into "a paunchy, pusillanimous, risk-averse group. Never forget that we establish policy." The research positions are seen as a board effort to have independent information about the operation of county programs.

ONLY ONE PRIVATE citizen, John H. King of 5430 Longmeadow, Bloomfield Hills, testified at the public hearing which preceded board action on the budget, and he delivered a sometimes scathing indictment of both sides.

After saying the budget could have been cut 15 per cent and that data processing systems were a job-making, money-wasting disaster, King turned to the commissioners and declared:

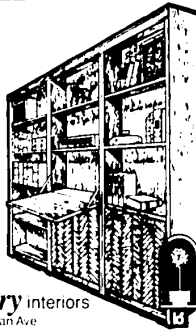
"I have been saying for quite some time, as have others, that partisanship in county matters is a luxury that cannot be afforded. There is no subject which comes before the county commissioners that needs to be, or should be, on a partisan basis. Commissioners should be elected on a non-partisan basis."

"During the past year, the bickering between the two parties has been notorious, and there is more than enough criticism to go around for both parties."

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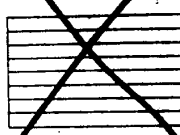
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