

Providence versus Beaumont

EMS politics based on geography

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

The controversy over a county-wide emergency medical services (EMS) system has evolved into a paralytic political battle rather than a traditional squabble along party lines.

Southfield's Providence Hospital and Royal Oak's William Beaumont Hospital, according to Oakland County commissioners and members of the Oakland County Council on Emergency Medical Services (OAKEMS), have been involved in a fierce battle for the designation as the county's EMS communications and medical control center.

"There was a lot of politicking going on. Everyone got calls ahead of time," said Dr. Joseph L. Shirle, vice president for medical affairs at Pontiac General Hospital and chairman of OAKEMS' executive committee.

County commissioners also confirmed that a number of city councils, including those of Southfield, Royal Oak and Troy, have been actively campaigning for either Providence or Beaumont.

THE COMMISSIONERS, who must ultimately approve any plan for county-wide EMS services, and members of OAKEMS, the 40-member advisory

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-County Commissioner James Doyon

sory body to the board, agreed that the EMS issue had broken down along geographic lines.

"That's a sage observation," Commissioner Robert Page solemnly.

"This," said Commissioner James Doyon (R-Royal Oak), "is the first clear cut issue where southeastern Oakland County will be against the rest of the county."

"YOU CAN TELL which commissioners are from which districts," said Dr. Merle F. Rydicki, chief of Providence's emergency department. "You can tell the Southfield boys from the Pontiac boys and the Troy boys," he said.

Commissioners from the Royal Oak-Troy area have lined up almost solidly behind Beaumont, and representatives from the Southfield area are supporting Providence's bid.

Commissioners representing parts of the City of Southfield—Lawrence Pernick (D-Southfield), Alex Perinoff (D-

Southfield) and Lillian Moffit (R-Bloomfield Township)—are all in the Providence camp.

Pernick has been an outspoken Providence supporter throughout the controversy. He has consistently championed the Providence argument by pointing to Providence's five-year record of success operating an advanced life support EMS program in Southfield.

Mrs. Moffit, though not in the forefront, is considered a Providence backer.

IT WAS Mrs. Moffit's actions several weeks ago which threw the matter of the resource hospital into an uproar. At a board public services committee meeting, she revealed that the vote which the OAKEMS executive council took in recommending Beaumont as the county's resource hospital was taken on a secret ballot. This, she said, was illegal.

Robert P. Allen, civil counsel for the

county, confirmed the secret ballot's illegality.

Mrs. Moffit also pointed out that four members the OAKEMS executive committee were employed by hospitals under consideration for the resource hospital appointment. This, she said, was a conflict of interest.

Mrs. Moffit also pointed out that two other members of the executive council may have been in conflict of interest when they voted.

Pernick and Mrs. Moffit found an unexpected ally in Commissioner Dennis Murphy (R-Novi).

Murphy, last week in a board finance committee meeting, led the way in postponing any immediate action by that committee concerning the resource hospital appointment. Finance committee action was needed to accept a \$151,000 grant to help finance the county-wide EMS system.

Other finance committee members, including James Lanni (R-Royal Oak), Henry W. Hoot (R-Troy) and Robert Page (R-Birmingham), all early Beaumont supporters, wanted to routinely send the Beaumont recommendation to the full board of commissioners for action.

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