

Oakland looks to outside computer contractor

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Oakland County, after two years of study and political maneuvering, last week took a small step in solving the substantial problems of the county-operated Computer Services Division.

The board of commissioners' finance committee recommended that County Executive Daniel T. Murphy be authorized to negotiate a contract with System Computers Technology (SCT) of West Chester, Pa. for a partial takeover of the county's computer operations. That recommendation will be

considered by the full board of commissioners Nov. 29.

While the finance committee left the details of any contract undefined, committee vice-chairman Dennis Murphy (R-Now) predicted the county executive would return to the board with at least a one-year contract. A one-year contract could cost the county \$3.8 million.

"This temporarily puts it back in the county executive's lap and rightfully so," Murphy said. "That's where the problem started. He should be the one to clean it up."

THE PROBLEMS, according to a county-financed report, several commissioners and others, include a serious lack of managerial talent, a lack of accountability within the department, a lack of credibility among top managers, declining morale among the rest of the division's staff and serious delays in servicing the computer system's users.

The computer division provides data processing services to 24 county departments, 28 local police agencies, 26 Oakland cities, 14 villages, a district court, a state agency and a non-profit agency.

Currently, the computers hold files from which tax assessments, rolls and bills are calculated for 59 local units of government within the county as well as files for Oakland County Circuit Court and the Courts and Law Enforcement Management Information System (CLEMIS), which services 28 of the county's 42 local police departments.

According to a \$40,000 September 1977 report by the public accounting

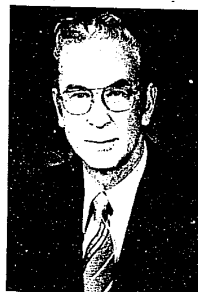
firm Elmer, Fox, Westheimer & Co., the computer division's top management should have been immediately replaced. Some commissioners candidly admit they "blew it" by ignoring the report's recommendations.

Commissioners agreed the troubled situation in the computer division had deteriorated past the point of no return when they discovered an expensive computer which they had not authorized being put into operation.

Commissioner Ralph Moxley (R-Birmingham) brought the installation of the new IBM 3031 model computer to light. The county rents the unit, which is valued at \$1 million, for \$27,000 a month.

Moxley, who had been complaining that the computer services division was consciously keeping the board in the dark, also objected that the division's management began trying to find out who "leaked the information to me."

CHANGES ARE apparently on the way, according to a commissioner who wished to remain unnamed, and com-

RALPH MOXLEY
Discovered computer

puter division managers Ken Patterson, Don Lumsden and John Witherspoon are likely to be replaced in the near future.

SCT, if the county board approves a contract, would bring in its own managers and key computer technicians.

Company President Fred Cross said as many as 15 managers and technicians could be moved to Oakland County.

Other computer division personnel will remain on the county payroll.

THE FINANCE committee chairman called the recommendation a compromise. Murphy said the move could help rid the commissioners and the county executive of an embarrassing "political liability" in the 1980 election.

He said giving SCT managerial control of the county's data processing unit would help restore discipline and accountability within the division.

The committee's recommendation came after more than seven hours of deliberations during which the top executives of SCT, Computer Sciences Corp. of El Segundo, Calif., and Planning and Research Corp. of McLean, Va., all made presentations. The three firms were selected from an original group of five computer science outfits that bid for the county contract.

In choosing to go, at least initially, with just a managerial takeover, the board put an end to speculation that it would enter into a three-year contract for a complete takeover of the computer center's operations.

Township tell county politicians: 'Get along'

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Apparently some local officials have had enough of the partisan and inter-departmental squabbling at the top levels of county government.

The Oakland County Association of Township Supervisors, in a recent letter to the county's leaders, chastised them for their inability to focus all their attention and energy to solving Oakland's problems.

"Hardly a day goes by," wrote the association's chairman Leslie Wright, supervisor of Brandon Township, "without some report in the news media of a conflict or confrontation between two or more departments or individuals at the county."

"The charges, countercharges, allegations, personality conflicts and political bickering have reached the point of being totally ridiculous," he said.

"It is very unfortunate," he said, "that during a time when citizens across the country are subjecting government and public officials at all levels to microscopic scrutiny, Oakland County officials are adding fuel to the fires of discontent."

The supervisors' association lastly asked the officials to "get along with each other."

The letter was directed to County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, Board of Commissioners Chairman Wallace Gahler (R-Royal Oak), Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, Road Commission Managing Director John Grubbs, Sheriff Johannes Spreen and Drain Commissioner George Kuhn.

While there have been battles among Oakland's various elected officials periodically through the year, relations hit a low point prior to the Nov. 7 election. At that time Spreen, a Democrat, charged that six county commissioners had repeatedly refused him department needed money and personnel and were soft on crime. He asked Oakland voters to turn them out of office.

Of the six—Gahler, Ralph Moxley (R-Birmingham), John McDonald (R-Farmington), Lillian Moffitt (R-Bloomfield Township), Dennis Murphy (R-Now) and James Lanni (R-Royal Oak)—only Lanni lost his reelection bid.

2 new sites added by OU extension

The Division of Continuing Education, Oakland University, now in its 20th year of operation, will reach out to new learning areas and locations beginning with the 1979 winter term.

Evening courses will be offered at Harrison High School, on Twelve Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills, and at Stevenson High School, 38701 Dodge Park Road, north of 16 Mile, Sterling Heights.

Day courses will be held at the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education, 746 Purdy.

New Dimensions courses, which explore personal abilities, writing resumes, and controlling one's life and finances, are scheduled for days and evenings off-campus. Courses to improve interpersonal relationships

are scheduled both days in Birmingham and evenings on campus.

A new series of retail courses, designed to explain the fundamentals of retailing for those seeking employment or change of jobs in retailing will be conducted on site beginning Jan. 16.

Legal assistant courses will be conducted evenings in Sterling Heights as well as on campus.

New courses in the award-winning small business program, to be offered evenings on campus, are designed to develop a competitive edge. The small business courses received top national awards in 1978 from U.S. Small Business Administration for innovative programming.

Brochures detailing the 1979 winter term may be obtained by calling Continuing Education office, 377-3120.

OU hires extension chief

A University of Maryland administrator has been selected for the newly created position of director of community education at Oakland University.

Freddie Martin Jr., 41, has been an academic program director for the University of Maryland since 1976. His O.U. appointment is effective immediately.

Martin will work in the Center for General and Career Studies with

responsibility for expansion of university extension sites at Farmington Hills, Sterling Heights, Birmingham, Royal Oak and other locations.

At the University of Maryland, Martin was responsible for all operational and managerial aspects of academic programming, including supervision, assessment and evaluation of staff. He holds a PhD from Michigan State University.

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