

Wayne's delay on county exec deals Oakland chief a setback

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy should keep any plans for a new organizational chart stashed in his files.

He will not gain control of the Oakland County Road Commission and the parks and recreation commission for a long time.

To bring the two powerful, autonomous commissions into his administrative fold, he needs an enabling act of the state legislature. But he has been unsuccessful in making his case in Lansing.

Recently he tried a new tack. He went to Detroit to convince the Wayne County Board of Commissioners to

analysis

adopt the executive form of government. He said such a governmental shift would be good for Wayne's 2.5 million residents and would put some much-needed clout behind his consolidation efforts.

If Wayne County adopted the executive form of government, he reasoned, it, too, would demand the changes he has been seeking. It would mean Michigan's two largest counties, with one-third of the state's population, would be working in tandem.

WAYNE COUNTY, however, probably will not have an elected county executive until 1980.

Wayne County commissioners generally agree that a mayor-like executive is needed to help put the county's deteriorating house in order. But they disagree over whether a state law allowing the county executive form of government should be improved before the voters are asked to adopt it.

"I believe there is no hope of getting a county executive unless the legislation is amended to more clearly define the powers of the executive and to eliminate ambiguities, conflicts and confusion from the act," said Wayne County Commissioner Edward Michalski (D-Detroit), chairman of a committee examining the executive form of government.

Some commissioners also argue that the county cannot afford the \$700,000 that might be needed to finance a special election before 1980.

"As a practical matter," Michalski said, "the question can't be put before

the voters before the 1980 election because I don't think the taxpayers will stand for a special election at the cost of a half-million dollars in order to do it sooner."

OAKLAND OFFICIALS reject those explanations.

"It's not the citizens who are preventing a county executive (form of government)," said Patrick Nowak, one of Murphy's chief assistants. "What's preventing it is that the diverse political power centers in Wayne County want to remain diverse political power centers." Murphy, who was in Washington, was unavailable for comment.

Nowak said absence of a Wayne County executive will hurt attempts to consolidate the road and parks commissions under the executive administration.

"The Democrat-controlled legislature is still unwilling to place in the hands of one Republican county executive those powers he needs to do the job," Nowak said.

Road chiefs' salaries hiked

Fourteen Oakland County Road Commission executives received seven per cent raises effective Jan. 1.

"This increase is in line with (President Jimmy Carter's) voluntary guidelines and is the same as that granted to (Oakland County's) non-union employees," said Road Commission Chairman Fred D. Houghton.

He said that the executives—11 department heads, the managing director, an assistant managing director and the county highway engineer—do not receive cost of living allowances or longevity pay increases as do other road commission employees.

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