

County road board called unprofessional in handling of insurance contract

The three-man Oakland County Road Commission will meet in special session Tuesday to vote on a budget in the wake of a charge that its handling of an insurance contract will hurt its "image."

That charge came from Sam H. McGoun, an insurance company president who said the OCR's handling of the contract makes "our business look very unprofessional."

With only two members present at the Dec. 22 meeting, OCR Chairman Fred D. Houghton had considered the budget, and the insurance contract, delayed to the special meeting. Commissioner Richard V. Vogt was absent; commissioner John R. Gnan Jr. attended.

Notice of the special meeting was received by this newspaper Friday, but Houghton was away from his office at Community National Bank and couldn't be reached for comment.

The OCR meets in the board office at 31001 Lahser, Beverly Hills.

ACCORDING TO McGoun's written statement and OCR records, here is the sequence of events: On Dec. 8, the last day of bidding, two companies bid on the OCR's insurance package — workers compensation, fleet, general and auto.

The firm of Huttenlocher, Kerns and Nowell of Waterford bid \$1,017,213. The Troy firm McGoun heads, Fred S. James & Co. of Michigan, bid \$522,696.

"Friday, Dec. 19, at 4:30 p.m., two weeks after our presentation, we were advised that a late bid had been submitted for your consideration," said McGoun. "This bid was from the same insurance companies (the Huttenlocher group) who had previously quoted a substantially higher premium."

An OCR source said the second Huttenlocher

bid was \$523,911, or about half its first bid, and nearly \$30,000 below the James company bid.

John Grubba, managing director of the OCR, reportedly recommended the James company's bid, saying it was unfair to consider the second Huttenlocher bid. Gnan agreed.

McGoun said, "We have never experienced a situation like this, and quite honestly, have not had time to react to it. The only reaction that I have today is that I think circumstances such as this make our business look very unprofessional."

"Is this (Huttenlocher's second bid) the final price? How could the companies have cut their prices literally in half?"

"Should we (Fred S. James companies) go back to our companies and ask them to reduce their prices? And if we do and are successful, will a third price then be submitted? Where does it end?"

"And what does this do to the image of the OCR that we have portrayed to the companies we have worked with?"

McGoun asked that the insurance contract be given to the James' companies, adding, "Where would you have been on your insurance costs for fiscal '82 without the involvement of Fred S. James?"

McGoun said Friday that if the OCR accepts the second Huttenlocher bid, it would have the effect of "discouraging insurance brokers and insurance companies from wanting to quote bids." He said that would leave Huttenlocher to bid alone in future years.

THE INSURANCE package is part of the OCR's risk management program which involves large deductibles, forcing the road unit to get control of its costs.

The insurance item is one item in the 1982 budget, which was also set aside for tomorrow's meeting.

Joint hospital endeavor looks to stem holiday blues statistics

The holidays are traditionally a busy time full of activity and a sense of purpose. But for those whose lives don't fit the idealized concept of Christmas — the traditional Christmas portrait of a big family, a snow-covered house and enough money to buy gifts for everyone, the holiday season may mean suffering — perhaps to the point of suicide.

"There's a big gulch for some people between the spirit of the holidays and reality," said Gerald

Shiener, M.D., Sinai Hospital psychiatrist.

"People see everyone else's wishes gratified, with gift giving and family togetherness implicit in the holiday season. But for people who are alone, or are unable to participate in the gift-giving for economic or other reasons, this perception makes for disappointment and generates more distress at this time of the year."

Hospital staffs note a greater influx of patients during the holidays suffering from severe physical ailments, problems may often be the result of psychiatric distress.

When physicians identify a possible psychiatric concern at Sinai or Mount Carmel Hospitals, they refer the patient to the Emergency Response Program.

Often those referred include persons with difficulty adjusting to a physical illness, depressed or suicidal patients and those experiencing severe anxiety or psychosis, said

Bernadette Pierczynski, program coordinator.

"We are often involved with rape and assault victims or victims of child abuse, and we're also available to give support to those who take care of patients on the nursing units," she said.

Helping a person recognize his or her physical or emotional concerns in a part of what the crisis intervention staff faces daily.

The Sinai/Mount Carmel program was developed in response to a need for crisis care for a significant segment of the more than 50,000 trauma and medical emergency patients entering Mt. Carmel's Emergency Room each year.

The program was developed by a joint task force from both hospitals who created the Sinai/Mount Carmel Emergency Response Program.

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