

# County drain board drains us, Troy complains

**By Mike Scanlon**  
staff writer

Oakland County has nearly 800 miles of drains, and last year two elected county officials were paid \$9,375 — \$25 each per meeting — to manage them.

Is that too much?  
The Troy City Council would prefer the question be phrased differently: Is \$25 too much to pay for a drain management meeting that lasts four minutes? Or put another way, is \$25 apiece too much for two or three or more consecutive, brief drain management meetings?

lars" but forced more \$25 meetings.

**OAKLAND COUNTY** drains are managed by about 300 three-member drainage boards which met 197 separate times last year.

That may sound like an administrative nightmare, but by state law all 300 drainage boards are comprised of the same three persons — the county drain commissioner, the chairman of the county board of commissioners and the chairman of the board finance committee.

This year, it means drains from Ferndale to Ortonville are managed by George Kuhn, drain commissioner; Richard Wilcox, this year's chairman of the county board of commissioners, and Dennis Murphy, the board's finance committee chair.

Kuhn doesn't get paid beyond his regular salary, but both Wilcox and Murphy — or whoever else sits on the two "civilian" drainage board seats — get paid \$25 each per meeting.

Last year Murphy and the then-board chairman, Wallace Gabler Jr., received \$9,375 between them to attend drainage board meetings.

That may be a reasonable fee, but the Troy City Council still doesn't like it.

**TROY'S OBJECTION** was lodged formally in a council resolution last year. But since that Rochester Road drain has been under construction in Troy since 1980, the council has had a gaping ditch around to remind it of the effect of that resolution.

There was no effect at all. In fact

drainage board meetings on the Troy drain have been frequent.

But Murphy responds that those meetings were frequently necessary because of expensive drain engineering mistakes by Troy's municipal engineering department.

"I'll say this about Troy," said Murphy. "People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones."

"We've been paid a couple hundred bucks (for drainage board meetings concerning the Rochester Road drain). The change orders we've had to put in because of a certain engineering department will cost tens of thousands of dollars."

Asked if he meant Troy's engineering department, Murphy said: "That's a strong possibility. If you're going to complain about \$25, you'd better make

sure your own house is in order."

Oakland County drain figures privately complained about the engineering errors on the Troy drain. Wilcox, however, said he wasn't aware of any.

"I think (Murphy's) remarks are politically motivated, and I'm going to withhold any further comment. I'd prefer to work with facts, and I don't have any facts," said Troy City Manager Frank Gerstenecker when asked if he knew of any engineering mistakes.

**TROY'S OBJECTIONS** concern such incidents as these:

- At 12:10 p.m. April 22, Kuhn, Wilcox and Murphy called to order a drainage board meeting for the Roth Drain. Six items were voted on, each approved 3-0. They included approving the minutes from the last Roth Drain

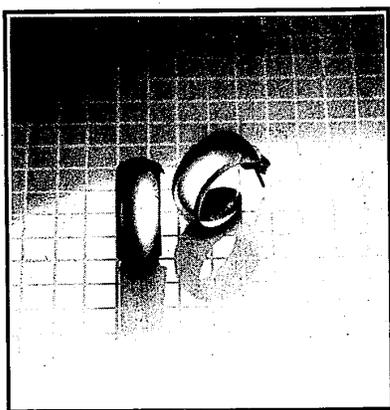
drainage board meeting, on Nov. 20, 1980, \$8,333 in invoices; \$292 in revolving fund payments; a reduction in earnest money for a contractor; a \$91,973 construction contract; and paying Wilcox and Murphy \$25 for attending the meeting.

Total elapsed time was four minutes — the equivalent of \$375 an hour for each man.

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