

County dog-license fees up

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Dog licenses will go up in price in many parts of Oakland County Dec. 1, and the increase will help pay for new stainless-steel cages in the animal-care center.

Currently \$4 for all dogs, the license will rise to \$5 for unsexed animals and \$7.50 for male and female dogs. The delinquent fee will go up from \$8 to \$10. And the dog pickup fee will rise from \$15 to \$20 to cover the actual cost of impounding strays.

Amid many jokes about going to the dogs, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners spent more time Thursday wrestling with dog problems than with almost everything else on its agenda. And the split votes cut across party lines.

The license-fee increase affects township and cities such as Farmington Hills which deal with the county on animal-control problems. Most other cities set their own fees and have their own shelters.

THE BOARD gave a bare 14-10 majority to spend \$58,820 on new cages from the lone bidder, Max-Ron, Inc. of Warsaw, Ind.

Opposed was Commissioner James E. Lantini, R-Royal Oak, who argued that "the present cages were put in in 1973, and there's four years of life left. We're in the process of tearing out good cages and putting in new stainless-steel cages that are only big enough for a 35-pound dog."

Lantini's big objection was that commissioners didn't want to raise dog license more.

Commissioner Alexander C. Perinoff, D-Southfield, favored new cages because "they're far easier to clean and wash up. We won't need three or four persons to clean them, and the animals don't have to be removed when you clean them."

Perinoff said Southfield is in the process of contracting with the county for use of the county animal shelter.

Local commissioners favoring the purchase were G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake; Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills; Lillian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township; Robert Page, R-Birmingham; Larry Pernick, D-Southfield; and Perinoff.

Opposed were George B. Jackson, R-Birmingham; Joseph Montante, R-Orchard Lake; and Dennis Murphy, R-Novi. Not voting were Paul Kasper, R-Bloomfield Hills; John McDonald, R-Farmington; and John Peterson, R-Rochester.

THE BOARD amended the proposal of the public-services committee to raise license fees to \$5 for unsexed dogs, \$10 for males and females and \$20 for a delinquent license to \$5, \$7.50, \$15 at the request of County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

"The (committee) proposed rates are exorbitant," Commissioner Lillian Moffitt said. "Some programs need not be self-paying and can be subsidized."

Commissioner Charles Whitlock, R-Clarkston, agreed, saying raising fees too far "may increase the number of unlicensed dogs, thereby defeating the program to get dogs licensed and prevent rabies."

Commissioner William Caddell also

agreed, citing a survey which showed only 25 percent of dogs in Avon Township are licensed.

Supporting the amended fee increase were Caddell, Jackson, Mrs. Moffitt, Montante and Page.

Opposed were Mrs. Gosling, Murphy and Pernick. Not voting were Kasper, McDonald, Perinoff and Peterson.

THE BOARD gave 20-1 approval to raising the pickup fee for the first offense from the current \$15 to \$20. Second and third offenses will remain at \$30 and \$50 respectively.

The increases take effect Dec. 1. Fees were last raised in mid-1979.

The board resolution said, "The cost to the county for damages to persons and property caused by dogs has increased substantially in the past few years, (and) the pickup and transporting costs for impounded dogs by the Oakland County Animal Control Division has increased substantially."

The division estimated the cost of picking up a stray dog at an average of \$20.75. Costs include \$9.75 for 45 minutes of an officer's time, \$5 for mileage, \$3 to handle the dispatch call, \$2 for equipment and office materials, and \$1 for shelter processing.

Without debate, the board also imposed an impoundment fee for livestock of \$90 per incident, effective Dec. 1.

The division estimated the average cost of a livestock impoundment at \$91, including \$78 for two officers and equipment for three hours, \$10 for two vehicles and \$3 per dispatch call.

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Board nixes new probate judges

If the four probate judges of Oakland County felt their ears burning Thursday, it was because someone was talking about them. Harshly.

The County Board of Commissioners rejected 16-5 the judges' request that two more judges be added, raising Oakland's total to six.

"Their attitude is the same as the sheriff," said finance committee chairman Dennis Murphy, R-Novi, in a Republican caucus. "Judge (John J.) O'Brien wants to do what he wants, and it's up to the county board to find the dollars."

"He hawled us out in committee," added Commissioner Joseph Montante, R-Orchard Lake.

THE PROBATE judges asked the board to join them in a task force "to coordinate the installation of two additional probate judges."

The phrase bothered board Vice chairman Lillian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield Township, who said the wording made it "a foregone conclusion" that two judges would be added.

There is also a legal disagreement between the judges and the commissioners over which law governs how many probate judges Oakland may have.

The judges cite Act 116 of 1954, which allots six judges for counties of one million population. In 1954, Oakland's population was less than a half-million, and that section applied only to Wayne County, whose population was more than three million.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE Daniel T. Murphy says the operative law is a 1979 statute which takes precedence because it is more recent and more specific.

The '79 statute mentions Oakland by

name and mandates four probate judges, giving the County Board of Commissioners discretion to establish a fifth judge.

Probate courts handle the probating of wills, the administration of estates and the guardianship of minors and incompetents. Costs are shared almost equally by the state and the county.

Opposing the resolution to coordinate installation of two new judges were William Caddell, R-Walled Lake; Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills; George B. Jackson, R-Birmingham; John McDonald, R-Farmington; Mrs. Moffitt; Montante; Murphy; and Robert Page, R-Birmingham.

Favoring it were Larry Pernick, D-Southfield, and a handful of other Democratic commissioners. Not voting were Paul Kasper, R-Bloomfield Hills; Alex Perinoff, D-Southfield; and John Peterson, R-Rochester.

Electric cars carry the mail

Ten electric vehicles are running mail routes and carrying maintenance people in the Oakland County service center in Pontiac.

"They're part of the county's continuing commitment to energy conservation experiments," said County Executive Daniel T. Murphy as he unveiled them last week.

The vehicles cost about \$150,000, with Oakland picking up \$30,000 and the U.S. Department of Energy granting \$148,000.

The county will pay maintenance and operating costs, said Murphy.

Most are vans and pickup trucks with top speeds of 55. They can run 50 miles at an average speed of 25 mph before their batteries need 8-10 hours of recharging. Several are small hatchbacks with a top speed of 70 mph and a range of 65 miles at 35 mph.

"We have already downsized as much of our fleet as we can," said Murphy, "and

have substituted diesel for gasoline-powered vehicles in many cases.

"Also, we recently began operating a propane-powered car that is used by the sheriff's department for routine patrol duty."

The electrics were manufactured originally as standard gasoline-powered Dodge, Mercury and Subaru vehicles. They were modified by Jet Industries.

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