

County board freezes wages

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

After a heated debate in caucus, Oakland County Republican commissioners have joined their Democratic colleagues unanimously to approve a pay freeze for themselves and eliminate across-the-board wage hikes for county employees.

In addition, commissioners passed a resolution which directed the county executive not to spend any more in his 1983 budget than he did in 1982. That resolution covers all county departments.

"The county budget has gone up at the rate of \$10 million a year for 10 years," Commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham, told the caucus.

"We have to find a way to hold down spending. We're not asking for a big staff reduction like Wayne County. The concept of no salary increase will help."

SEVERAL WEEKS ago, Republicans proposed holding the line on departmental spending, but it was the Democrats who advocated no pay raises for commissioners and no across-the-board wage hikes.

Opponents of the resolution feared salaried workers may unionize in order to receive mandatory pay hikes.

But county personnel director James Dunkel Jr. said current union contracts could be reopened and wages renegotiated.

Commissioner Joseph Montano, R-Orchard Lake, called the action superfluous.

"We're talking about a county that's run well and in the black. A real cost savings won't be made by holding salaries down. It will come if we don't fill the jobs that are currently vacant because of attrition," he said.

DEPUTY COUNTY Executive William Spinelli said county employees'

efficiency is the reason Oakland County government operates with a balanced budget.

"For us to penalize our work force is doing them a disservice. The reason we have a well run county is because we have efficient employees. We have to pay them well, to do a good job," he said.

But proponents of "no across-the-board hikes" won out. They proved in caucus they had enough votes to pass the resolution, so the minority opinions joined their fellow Republicans on the commission floor.

"I think it's the administration's responsibility to hold the line on spending. If they tell us they need to increase certain employees' wages, then they'll have to tell us why," said Commissioner John Calandro, R-Northville.

County commissioners currently receive annual salaries of \$14,537.

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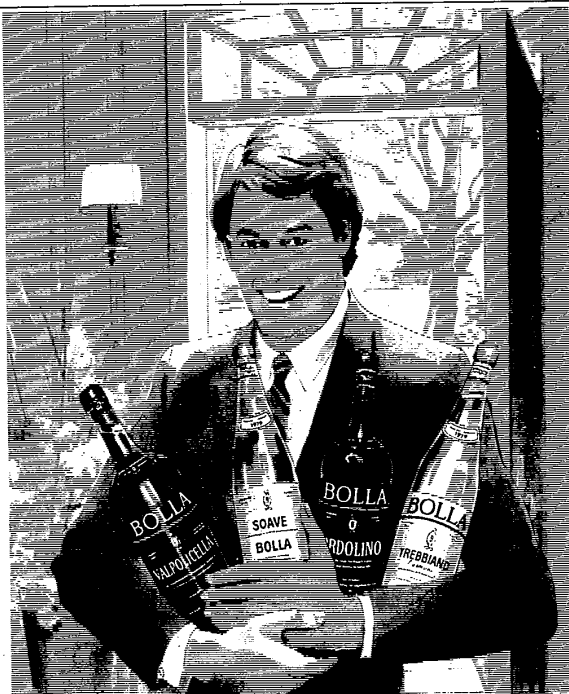


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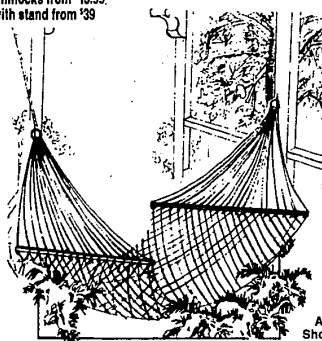
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