

County goods go on the block

By Louise Okrusky
staff writer

If you're beguiled by the thought of owning a patrol car with 60,000 miles on it, a 1956 Caterpillar bulldozer or a U.S. Navy-issued portable operating table, then Joseph Hylla has the auction for you.

Hylla, senior buyer for Oakland County's purchasing department, operates the county's twice-yearly auction of surplus goods and unclaimed stolen property.

This time, Hylla and auctioneer John Bell of Flint will begin taking bids on items at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Service Center of the Oakland County complex, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

After seeing enough oddities such as the chassis of an animal control truck and an examining table with stirrups sold on the auction block, Hylla says nothing surprises him.

"You kind of get a little insulated to this," he said.

THE FIRST items on the block will be unclaimed stolen property held for at least six months by the Oakland County Sheriff's Department. Those items include stereo equipment, silverware, bowling balls and an assortment of unclaimed binoculars from Pine Knob's 1981 season.

The fall auction also features a few patrol cars, mostly 1980 Chevrolet Impalas and 1978 Pontiac Catalinas.

Once the cars log 60,000 miles, repairs become more frequent under the heavy use they receive from patrol officers.

A sign of the times in this auction is the inclusion of lounge furniture from mental-health offices cut from the budget.

Other items in varying states of repair include office equipment,

Hoover upright vacuum cleaners, a small Toro snowblower used to clean steps and a 10-year-old Massey-Ferguson tractor.

The sale draws "everybody — people from various walks of life. Businessmen buy the office equipment. I've seen farmers from Bay and Genesee counties attend," Hylla said.

"Some dealers attend but I'm not certain how much they buy. They don't particularly care for auctions. They don't buy too much," he said.

Occasionally an owner will be reunited with a possession which was stolen from him.

"Last spring, when we received boats to auction, a gentleman said, 'I believe that is my boat.' He produced proof and claimed the boat and got it back. It happens from time to time," Hylla said.

In such cases, ownership must be verified through the sheriff's department.

THE SPRING auction, which drew about 2,000 people and featured 450 items, earned the county a gross of \$142,000. After sale-related costs, the county netted \$133,000, according to Hylla.

All sales are final. The county doesn't guarantee the condition of any item. Buyers may come to review the items between 8-10 a.m. Saturday. Vehicles scheduled to be sold will be on display two days before the auction in front of the county court building.

Proceeds from the sale of patrol cars go toward purchase of new vehicles, just as money earned from the sale of surplus office items will be used to buy new ones.

Money from the sale of odd items, such as the portable operating table in a cardboard box, end up in the general fund. The county doesn't guarantee any of the items. All sales are final.

SEMTA readies to slash service

By Suzie Rollins Singer
staff writer

SEMTA will hold public hearings throughout the tri-county area next month to prepare for potentially massive service cutbacks Jan. 1.

Gary Krause, general manager of the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, said he is preparing for the worst if SEMTA loses a \$21 million court case.

The state Court of Appeals is expected to rule this month whether SEMTA is entitled to more than \$21 million it received from taxes on local license plates and vehicle transfers during the past two years.

The potential loss could mean that suburban bus service would be cut 64 percent and bus fares would go from 90 cents to \$1.

"We've got to hold public hearings in

November and December to make sure we have a plan," Krause said in a telephone interview.

"Since we're not a governmental unit, we cannot have deficits, so we have to make provisions," he added. "We're talking about money that's been tied up in escrow accounts while it's been in litigation for two years," Krause said.

The Appeals Court ruled in January that SEMTA was not entitled to the tax money because it had not merged with Detroit's Department of Transportation by April 1981, as the state Legislature required.

SEMTA APPEALED the ruling to the state Supreme Court, which sent it back to the Court of Appeals.

If SEMTA loses the case, the number of large buses running during peak periods would drop from 284 to 96. Commuter rail service between Pontiac

and Detroit and most small-bus service would be eliminated, cutting 60 percent of the riders from the transportation system.

"We've already trimmed our services a great deal," Krause explained.

"We're not doing anyone in the region any good by cutting the transportation services and we're not helping the economy by laying off more people," he added.

Krause is optimistic, he says, that SEMTA will win the case and that it will end the fiscal year 1983 without cutting service.

He said SEMTA hopes to get \$25 million in federal operating subsidies in the federal fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 1983. The Reagan administration proposed \$17.4 million.

SEMTA also expects to collect \$8 million in license plate and vehicle title transfer fees because the Legislature has extended the tax to Dec. 31.

"After the election (Nov. 2), the Legislature will put emphasis on a comprehensive transportation package. The governor is addressing it now and it will deal with both public transportation and road maintenance," he said.

OU professors approve pact

The Oakland University Board of Trustees has approved a three-year contract between the university and the OU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

Professors could get up to 7 percent increases in the first two years and a 9 percent salary increase in the third year of the contract.

The 5-0 vote came at the board's Sept. 22 meeting. Approval is contingent upon ratification by the union membership. No date has been set for the ratification vote.

The contract guarantees raises of approximately 3 percent in each of the first two years and a 5 percent increase in the third year. Union members will receive an additional 2 percent contribution to their retirement plans in the third year.

The union could receive an additional 4 percent raise per member in each of the first two years, and an additional 2 percent in the third year if university revenues rise above a set figure for each of the three contract years.

Jacobs loses campaign suit

Libertarian gubernatorial candidate Dick Jacobs isn't giving up his fight to block the use of \$1.5 million in state campaign funds used by his major party opponents.

Jacobs lost the first battle last week when Oakland County Circuit Judge John N. O'Brien denied his request to order Democratic nominee James Blanchard and Republican nominee Richard Headlee to return taxpayers' money.

All Michigan residents can check off a \$1 contribution on their state income tax forms to be used by major party

candidates during election. Minor party candidates are entitled to funds if they apply for them after securing 5 percent of the vote.

Jacobs is opposed to the idea of giving any candidates taxpayers' money.

A Libertarian party spokesperson said the party expects to appeal O'Brien's decision to the Michigan Court of Appeals.

In a six-page order, O'Brien refused to issue an injunction blocking the use of \$750,000 each for Headlee and Blanchard.

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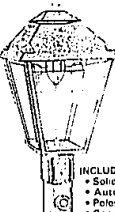


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