

# County panel OKs rehiring 20 road patrol deputies

By Carol Azizian  
staff writer

Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen won round one in his fight to put laid-off sheriff's deputies back on the job.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners public services committee Tuesday approved a resolution to put 20 road patrol officers back on the road. Two Republicans joined two Democrats to give the measure 4-3 approval.

Spreen has to fight three more rounds before he wins his bid: the personnel committee, which was scheduled to take up the measure Wednesday; the finance committee, due to take it up today; and the full board of commissioners, which ordered the layoffs in December.

Supporting the recall Tuesday were Republicans Richard D. Kuhn Jr. of Independence Township and Susan Kuhn of Clawson and Democrats Hubert Price and Walter Moore, both of Pontiac.

Dissenting were Republicans Thomas A. Law of West Bloomfield, George Berton Jackson of Birmingham and Chairman James E. Lanni of Royal Oak.

RICHARD KUHN said "it's blatantly unfair to eliminate 20 road patrol deputies who provide protection for this county."

"These deputies arrested 226 drunk drivers during 1982. The citizens in this county are fed up with drunk drivers. And they generated more than \$126,000 in revenue from traffic citations."

The county is being "penny-wise and pound foolish" by keeping the deputies off road patrol duties, Kuhn said.

Kuhn claimed it was unfair that deputies had to be laid off to compensate for increases in the sheriff's department budget.

"It's not fair that 33 jail employees can arbitrarily knock out deputies on the road," he said.

The jail staff was increased last year to comply with a federal court order intended to alleviate overcrowded conditions in the county jail.

"We send fewer prisoners to the jail than communities in the south end of the county, but we still pay for the services," he said.

"It's a bunch of hogwash to say the south end of the county subsidizes the north end."

Northern townships contract with the sheriff for road patrol services.

LANNI DISAGREED, saying he couldn't justify spending "general county dollars to subsidize services in the north end."

"Police millages have been turned down in some areas. Now, they want the services reinstated. Everybody wants something for nothing." Lanni argued that if the board decides to spend \$833,000 to restore the road patrol positions, it should also approve spending \$1 million for police protection in Royal Oak.

Lanni already has introduced a resolution that would require the county to spend the money to help Royal Oak out of its budget crisis.

Law agreed with Lanni, saying, "The people who will be the primary beneficiaries of the road patrol services have been getting it free over the years. They're sitting back like vultures trying to get the services for nothing."

SHERIFF SPREEN, who says the department could be destroyed if the positions are not restored, claimed he was "caught in the middle of a rock and a hard place."

"I feel like Solomon did when he had to make a decision to cut the baby in half," said Spreen, a Democrat who often has found himself at odds with a Republican administration and Republican-dominated board.

Spreen argues the cuts, if not restored, will mean Oakland can't qualify for \$544,000 in state grants because the sheriff's road patrol will fall below its 1978 staffing level.

But other county officials said Oakland had 80 officers in 1978, still had 89 after the layoffs and will continue to qualify for state aid.

JAMES M. BRENNAN, the county's director of management and budget, urged commissioners to take cost factors into account when making their decision.

He said law enforcement costs have risen faster than other areas of the county budget.

"In the law enforcement area, where they have significant power to arbitrate, they're already 13 percent ahead of the general county employee," Brennan said.

If the Police Officers Association of Michigan, which is currently involved in arbitration proceedings, wins all its demands, then the county could wind up spending an additional \$1.9 million, he said.

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## CORRECTION:

Regarding the advertisement for "Strategies: The Second Annual Career Convention for Women," which appeared in the March 3 Observer & Economist, a portion of the ad should have read: 9-11 A.M., Sat. March 12 (in Exhibit Area) PAULA L. BLANCHARD, Michigan's First Lady, will talk with and encourage attendees to "Say Yes" to women-owned entrepreneurship. EXHIBIT AREA FREE TO PUBLIC.

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