

Spreen has jail administrator waiting in wings

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

As Oakland County's jail administrator, Stephen Saunders has a goal of bringing "unanimitly" to the troubled program. His first test came even before getting the job.

Enger to hire a director of correctional services, Sheriff Johannes Spreen Thursday turned up at the Oakland County Board of Commissioners meeting with his candidate.

The controversial Democratic sherr-d demanded the Republican-controlled board hire the Florida resident on the spot.

When Republican commissioners chose to wait, the appointment almost became a political battle.

But Saunders, a correctional consultant, quickly cooled the situation.

"I would like to be director of correctional services, but I also hope to bring unanimity to the program," he

told Democrats pressing for immediate action. "If it would be appropriate, I'd like to start with a div of okmf istiveness than someone else here."

BECAUSE OF A result filed by a group of inmates in March 1978, Oakland County is under federal court order to improve jail conditions. There has been some progress, including expansion of the Inmate Job, credit-card bonding and an exercise program.

A jail monitor has suggested more improvements, and Sheriff was given authority to hire an administrator to implement them.

After interviewing candidates — three from Michigan and two from other states — Spree selected Saunders for the \$40,600 job.

Before going into consulting, the Georgia native was precectional administrator with the Inmate County Sheriff's Department in Sanford, Fla. He also was director of correctional or-

'Why do I always have to be in this kind of pickle? The Democratic-Republican politics in this county are something else.'

— Sheriff Johannes Spreen

ganizations with the Orange County Sheriff's Department, Orlando, Fla.

Saunders has a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's in public administration from the University of Georgia.

He is a top-notch professional who will have full authority," said Spreen.

INSTEAD OF submitting his name to the commission's general government committee for approval as required, the sheriff asked commissioners to suspend the rules and approve Saunders immediately.

If approved by the committee at its meeting today, the appointment could be made at the April 12 board meeting.

"We do have problems, and I'd like him to get to work as soon as possible," Spreen explained during a Republican caucus meeting.

When told he should go through the regular procedure, the sheriff "implored" commissioners to reconsider. "This man is up here from Florida, and it's really an imposition on him. And we have pressing problems," he told the commissioners.

But Republicans stood their ground, suggesting Spreen put his candidate on the payroll on a temporary basis.

"Every time something comes to us without proper preparation, we end up with egg on our face," said commissioner Anne Hobart, R-Pontiac.

"What does he do for the next two weeks?" Spreen asked.

"We didn't invite him here, Sheriff," the commissioner replied.

QUESTIONED ABOUT his short notice, Spreen told the Republicans that Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy suggested he bring Saunders to their caucus meeting. He also explained that the candidate paid his own expenses to the area.

"We are under the gun because of the consent judgment," Spreen added.

"If I can't get a jail administrator of my choosing, I will write to the judge and get him to appoint a jail master to take control of the jail. And that will cost you millions."

Visiting the Democratic caucus, Spreen explained to his fellow party members that the appointment will go through committee. Democrats suggested preparing a resolution to confirm Saunders immediately. If it failed, the action then would be referred to the general government committee.

"I don't want to stir up something that shouldn't be stirred," said the sheriff.

County arbitration award is amended

Oakland County has received an amended arbitration award covering Sheriff's Department employees for contract years 1982-83 and 1983-84. The amended award replaces the original arbitration panel award issued in December 1983, which covered only 1982 and 1983.

Approximately 300 sheriff's employees are covered by the award. Included are: patrol officers, correction officers, detention officers, communication agents, crime lab specialists, arson investigators and para-professionals.

A top-of-the-scale deputy will receive about \$5,000 covering 27 months of retroactive pay, excluding overtime.

Cost of the 1982-83 amended award is \$1.87 million. Cost of the 1983-84 award is \$3.7 million, which includes

the built-in salary increases from the 1982-83 award.

Highlights of the amended award are:

- Removal of the cost-of-living clause included in the original award.
- Classification revisions including a new civilian sheriff's office agent jail category, a deputy classification for possible use in rd control, and deputy II, formerly known as patrol officers.
- No longevity pay for employees hired after March 15, 1983.
- Two improvements to the union's retirement plan will be phased.
- Wage increases for the third and fourth years of the amended award of 3.5 percent and 4.6 percent respectively.

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