

Dems turn economic office into an '84 election issue

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Democrats have staked out a major issue in the 1984 election — County Executive Daniel T. Murphy's establishment of an Economic Development Group.

"Will increasing these salaries, giving grandiose titles, help economic development?" Commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, asked rhetorically.

"You tell me if anyone in this group has got the smarts to bring in business," added Commissioner Alex Perinoff, D-Southfield. "It's absolutely nonsensical. You've created a monster here again."

"On almost a party line vote, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners gave 15-9 approval Thursday to Murphy's plan to reorganize the economic development division into a separate group, fund it for seven months for \$298,000, add two jobs and increase some salaries."

DEMOCRATS JIBED at Republicans for refusing to debate the measure. "All the decisions are made upstairs or behind closed doors," Aaron said.

Republicans ignored the charge. Commissioner Lillian Moffitt, R-Bloomfield, said, "Oh, he just wants someone to debate him. I'm tired of that. We've gone over this as a board and in committee."

Moffitt pointed to the board's April decisions to approve the concept by a 21-1 vote and to establish the organization by a 21-1 vote. The personnel committee recommended increasing the number of positions to 11 from nine in an 8-1 vote.

Joining eight Democrats in voting against the measure was Republican Ralph Nelson of Rochester. Two commissioners were absent.

THE DEPARTMENT will be headed by Joseph D. Jochim at an annual salary of \$50,348.

A marketing and research division will be managed by G. Sarubb at \$51,150. A business development division will be managed by Jeffrey Kahanek at \$39,677.

The group was created from the former Advanced Program Group and Economic Development Division.

Republicans contend 89,000 new jobs will be needed by 1990 to employ Oakland's growing popu-

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lation. They say a central location for information and assistance will improve industry-hunting prospects.

The department will be a fourth arm in Oakland's economic development effort which includes a fledgling industrial park, a center for financial assistance and job training programs.

"This has been needed for a long time," said Commissioner John Olsen, R-Huntington Woods.

DEMOCRATS criticized it.

Commissioner Larry Pernick, D-Southfield, said an economic development department isn't mandated by state law. He said the money could be better spent on health and police protection. "The state and communities have their own economic development departments," Pernick added.

Pointing to the salaries, Commissioner James Doyon, D-Madison Heights, said, "If this were private enterprise, we'd have had a different position."

Commissioner Betty Fortino, D-Waterford, said the department is "a fine concept. . . But the fact we were able to keep it tabled in finance committee for a few weeks indicates there are reservations among a few (Republican) commissioners."

"A boondoggle. It could have been done within the framework of the Advanced Program Group," said Perinoff.

ONE OTHER issue became partisan — Lynn Allen's request to raise fees in his County Clerk/Registrar of Deeds office for various sized documents from \$1-2 to \$1.50-3.

It passed on a 20-4 vote but not before Aaron criticized the philosophy behind it.

"I notice a very disturbing thing. There hasn't been a meeting recently where we're not asked to increase a fee. Some of us (meaning the Republicans) think there should be a fee for everything. I object as a taxpayer," he said.

He was joined by three other Democrats, including Pernick.

The new fees take effect July 1.

IN OTHER business, the county board, in one of its four times-a-year evening meetings:

• Approved renewal of a contract to operate the city of Southfield's 36-cell detention facility for two years. Cost per officer will be \$34,467 the first year

and \$36,648 the second. The sheriff was directed to make written quarterly reports on inmate population. Southfield will maintain the facility while the county will provide up to 10 corrections personnel.

• Voted 18-7 opposition to House Bill 5453 which would allow persons to register to vote on election day, charging it would overwork elections personnel and lead to possible fraud. Minority Democrats said it would make voting easier.

• Gave 25-0 support to House Bill 5425, which would remove the mandate that counties publish election results in newspapers. The resolution said ample, multi-media news coverage removed the need for requiring the county to spend \$1,000 on regular election results and \$500 on special elections.

• Asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency not to impose air quality sanctions against Oakland County because the county has attempted to persuade the Michigan Legislature to fund a vehicle exhaust testing program. The vote was 22-0. EPA plans to impose the sanctions — cutting off highway funds and limiting industrial expansion — in mid-July.

• Gave 25-0 approval for an application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for \$154,000 to rehabilitate rental housing. About 26 percent of all housing units in Oakland are renter occupied.




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