

College building cash rides on prison coattails

By Tim Richard
staff writer

"A personal victory," beamed state Sen. Patrick McCollough, D-Deerborn. "A pork barrel," snorted state Rep. Lyn Banks, R-Livonia.

"A very expensive piece of legislation," intoned Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy. "There was something here Northville Township wanted," explained Sen. Robert Geake, R-Northville.

"I don't see the Wayne State University library project," demanded Sen. David Holmes, D-Detroit.

"They're zipping it through," complained Rep. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion.

THEY WERE talking about the same bills — the joint capital outlay package: \$323 million in construction, including \$184 million for new prisons and \$339 million for colleges.

The companion bills meant different things to different people.

While most Democrats supported it, all area Republicans but two were opposed.

Sen. Richard Pessler, R-West Bloomfield, was absent. And the second exception was Geake, who said constituents would be pleased by an unspecified amount for a renovation study of a power plant at Northville Regional Psychiatric Hospital. Nearby residents complain their air is polluted by "heavy, black ugly smoke" from the hospital.

BANKS, a first-term Republican from Livonia, said she was "upset at

voting against prison money. The only money absolutely necessary was the prison construction money."

Despite his own "yes" vote, Geake agreed with her, noting that "the popular clamor for prisons was used to drive through the bill for new buildings. The colleges are using the popularity of prisons to drive through a bill which does both (construct colleges and prison buildings)."

Geake, a member of both the Senate Appropriations Committee and Joint Capital Outlay Committee, said the package also includes:

- \$10 million for continued construction of the \$33.5 million Scott Regional Prison in Northville Township.
- \$1 million for clear title to the former Plymouth Center for Human Development properties west of Sheldon Road. When the state acquired the site from Wayne County, there was a clause saying the land would revert to the county if the state used it for anything other than a children's mental institution. The state intends to sell the land, possibly to a private developer.
- \$25 million for plans and the start of construction of a \$9 million library for Oakland University.

McCOLLOUGH, WHOSE Senate district includes both the University of Michigan-Deerborn campus and Garden City, trumpeted his victory in getting \$350,000 in planning money toward \$11 million worth of renovations at the UM-D campus.

"This was not an easy assignment, given a commission report questioning the future of the UM-Deerborn cam-

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—state Sen. Robert Geake R-Northville Twp.

pus," said McCollough, referring to a report by Gov. Blanchard's special commission on higher education which did indeed question the need for UM-D.

"The turning point in our effort came this fall when budget director Robert Nafaty accepted my invitation and toured the Dearborn campus with me," the senator said.

"Only then — after witnessing the need for better classroom space, the replacement of 10 outmoded modular structures, and the use of otherwise abandoned space in the old student activities building for university and community-oriented cultural programs — did he agree to include the initial \$550,000."

DUNASKISS' northern Oakland County district had been eyed by the

state Corrections Commission for a regional prison, and he is unhappy about it.

Area residents are vehemently opposed to the site — near an elementary school — and the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, after ducking the issue last May, recommended in favor of vacant land next to a mental hospital in Pontiac.

Dunaskiss voted against these two measures.

Meanwhile, the Corrections Commis-

sion took the Orion Township site off its Dec. 19 agenda and will consider it again this month. Reason for the delay is that the site is state recreation land paid for with federal funds, and it may not be converted to another use without a federal waiver.

EACH STATE university got money for one or more projects. Examples:

- UM-Ann Arbor got \$11 million toward a chemical sciences building and \$675,000 to renovate their Natural Sciences Building.
- Michigan State scored \$1.6 million toward a veterinary center, \$1.1 million toward an engineering building and \$3.5 million to complete a plant and soil sciences building.
- Wayne State got \$375,000 to start renovations of Mackenzie Hall, \$850,000 to start a biology building and \$1.4 million to complete an engineering building.

ONE BONE of contention was a science building earmarked for Central Michigan University, home base for Senate Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mt. Pleasant.

Engler demanded that in exchange for Senate passage of the prison money, Gov. Blanchard would agree not to use his line-item veto. Blanchard had earlier vetoed money for the CMU project.

Blanchard in a news conference accused Engler of "holding crime-fighting money hostage." The Democratic governor urged Senate Republicans to "work around him or convince him he's wrong."

But Geake said Senate Republicans fully supported the position and felt Blanchard's veto of the CMU building was "political."

OCC offers phys ed plant

Several physical fitness offerings are open to the public at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus, 1-696 at Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills.

They include open recreation, structured physical education classes, fitness membership plans and specialty programs. Programs are structured for various skill levels. OCC encourages

leisure-time community use of its physical education facilities.

The campus Community Activities Building features an Olympic-sized pool, weight-exercise room, gym and racquetball courts.

Information on winter semester offerings is available from the Community Activities Building supervisor at 471-7717 during business hours, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and 471-7599 from 4-9 p.m.

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