

Bennethum, Moffitt are at odds in 15th

By Dave Varga
staff writer

The two candidates vying for 15th District Oakland County Commissioner apparently don't agree on much.

Mary Lu Bennethum is the challenger facing incumbent Commissioner David Moffitt Tuesday, Aug. 5, in the Republican primary for the county seat to represent part of Bloomfield Township, all of Franklin, part of Farmington Hills and a small southeastern section of West Bloomfield.

In an interview with the *Eccentric* last week, they offered divergent opinions on who should supervise the drain commissioner's office, how to pay for road development and who should run the district courts.

The county commission's debate over whether to consolidate the drain commissioner's office with public works under the county executive or to transfer public works from the executive's control to the drain commissioner caused a striking philosophical difference.

Bennethum said she strongly favors consolidation of departments and keeping the power over the drain commission in the hands of the county commission.

"I BELIEVE it was the intent of the legislature to keep the power with the people through their elected officials," she said.

In contrast, Moffitt said he believes in the strong county executive form of government because "the

county can be more cost effective and run as a business."

"The county commission is no body to govern on a day-to-day level to operate county government," Moffitt said. He noted that a consolidation would take an act of the state legislature and that is not likely.

On the question of road development, both candidates agreed that Oakland County's burgeoning economy has forced the need for both new roads and infrastructure repairs on old roads and that need will cost around \$750 million.

Moffitt said there are several options to pay for the work. Collecting fees from developers for new roads their developments require is one way to fund the roads, but only "as long as it doesn't stop our boom," Moffitt said.

ANOTHER OPTION will be an additional use tax on gasoline or a property tax increase that would require voter approval. "Some sort of additional tax is going to be necessary," Moffitt said. But voters would never approve "without an extensive education" about road needs, he said.

In her opinion, Bennethum said, property taxes should not be used for new road construction and repairs. "We should not go beyond campaigning for a use tax," she said.

Bennethum said she also believes developers should pay for new roads, gasoline discounts should be discontinued and local funds could be directed toward roads. Also, the state should devote some funds for this construction since "good roads bene-



David Moffitt
incumbent

fit all," she said.

The district court system has been the subject of controversy recently, as Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills and West Bloomfield have sought to leave the 48th District and move under the county jurisdiction. Bloomfield Township wants to remain with a locally controlled court. Another issue involving the courts is the claim that some communities are double-taxed because they fund a local district court and the county district court system.

COURTS CANNOT be added to county control on a piecemeal basis, as some municipalities have requested, Moffitt said. That's because com-



Mary Lu Bennethum
challenger

missioners are divided about the county taking over the district courts — with most of the controlling municipalities from the profitable 48th District and the financially strapped Pontiac court both among those seeking inclusion. And, just moves to add jurisdictions under the county system "have cost us a fortune," Moffitt said.

He supports keeping local control at 48th District Court, Moffitt said. But if the county was to take over any other courts, Moffitt suggested it should take over all the district courts at once, Moffitt said. That would save money on computer and other costs by achieving an economy of scale.

Bennethum disagreed. The current

set up should not be changed because a combined district court system would be "exorbitantly expensive," she said.

The blame for the county district court system losing money is easy to affix, according to Bennethum. "If it is not efficiently run, it's the commissioners who are responsible and the county executive," she said.

AS FOR PAYING money back to the communities that are taxed for both court systems, while only using one, Moffitt said there should be some compensation.

"I would not oppose what has been come to be called equity for communities," he said. "The trouble is, just what is the amount we should give these communities? How is it determined? One stop is to have an audit of all the district courts."

Financial equity is only possible if the state commits to funding Oakland County's district courts in the same way it funds the district court in Detroit, Bennethum said.

The two candidates do have similarities. Both are attorneys. And both live in Bloomfield Township.

Bennethum, a former tenured teacher, is an instructor on legal topics ranging from credit and consumer law to estate planning, having worked with Oakland County Community College, the Women's Justice Center and the Institute of Continuing Legal Education.

She has also been involved with the Women's Survival Center, Actor's Alliance, the East Michigan Environmental Action Council, the Booth Elementary School PTO,

Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters, and chairs the environmental health committee of the Oakland County Sub-Area Advisory Council.

IN THE REPUBLICAN party, she has worked as a precinct delegate and delegate to state conventions, an editor for the Bloomfield Republican Women's Club, an executive committee member of the Republican Committee of Oakland County and with the state control committee and the county committee of the district committee.

Moffitt was elected to fill the county commission slot in 1984 after his mother, Lillian Moffitt, decided not to seek re-election. On the commission, he serves as a member of the Personnel and Health and Human Services committees. He was also elected GOP commissioner's spokesman to the Oakland County Republican Executive Committee.

A partner in a Bingham Farms law firm, Moffitt has served as a public hearing officer with the Oakland County Road Commission, staff lecturer with the University of Michigan graduate school, the Michigan Association of Realtors and Detroit Board of Realtors.

He has been a precinct delegate, delegate and member of the credentials committee of the Republican state convention, served as general counsel and parliamentarian of the Republican Committee of Oakland County and served as chairman of the 1984 Birmingham-Bloomfield Michigan Week Parade.

Clarenceville joins suit for state money

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

The Clarenceville School District may join some 30 other districts in a court battle for state money lost after the Headlee tax amendment was passed in 1978.

The district, which includes parts of Livonia, Redford and Farmington Hills, could win "several hundreds of thousands of dollars," Superintendent Michael Shiber said.

"We just need more information — the length of time that this litigation could involve and the cost," he said. "We're taking a risk. If you don't prevail, you still have the (legal) expenses."

The Clarenceville Board of Education tabled the issue at its July 10

meeting. It is scheduled to consider the matter again when it meets July 24.

CLARENCEVILLE LOST a total of \$450,000 for special education and special education transportation since the 1979-80 school year, said Edward Salisz, assistant superintendent of school business affairs.

"It affected (programs) without any particular ones (being) dropped," he said. "There were probably programs that we could have looked up if we had the money. We kept the class ratio higher than we would like to see it and went without additional personnel here and there."

Livonia Public Schools was one of the first districts to file a similar lawsuit in 1979, superintendent

James Carli said. He said the district could recover as much as \$1 million for each year.

The district includes most of Livonia and northern Westland.

"I really don't expect to have a definitive answer on that for quite a long time," Carli said.

SOME 30 districts in the state filed a lawsuit in the Michigan Court of Appeals last month. The suit charges that inadequate reimbursement since the 1979-80 school year is a violation of the Michigan Constitution and state law.

Farmington Public Schools, Southfield Public Schools and other districts filed with the Michigan Claims Review Board instead. As many as 150 of the school districts in the state

could file claims, an official of the Michigan Association of School Boards has said. Last year, 57 intermediate and 525 local K-12 school districts were in Michigan.

Each district will be heard individually by the review board, a legislative committee formed after the Headlee bill was passed.

Auntie Pasta's

ITALIAN CUISINE • PIZZA • COCKTAILS
Specializing in Veal, Chicken, Steaks & Shrimp
Daily Lunch & Dinner Specials

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT DINNER SPECIALS
 MON. CRAB LEGS \$3.95 WED. SIRLOIN STEAK \$3.95

1492 Sheldon Rd. • Plymouth • 455-1424
(Next to Family Discount Drugs)

Under New Management

MISS J

Ease into your day with comfortable cotton knit underwear by Calvin Klein.

In white or new midnight blue. T-back, deep-V front bra. Sizes 32 to 36, \$10. Matching hi-cut briefs. Sizes 5 to 7, each \$6. 3 for 21.50.

Jacobsons

We welcome Jacobson's Charge Card or The American Express® Card.

Shop until 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday
Until 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday

'86 Summer Bible Conference

July 24
Josh McDowell

July 31
Dr. David Jeremiah

August 7
Rev. Joseph Stowell, Jr.

August 14
Pastor Tom Mahabir

August 21
Dr. George Sweeting

TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

July 24 — August 21
Thursdays 7:30 P.M.

23800 W. Chicago Redford, MI. 48239
Phone (313) 255-3333

Pastor Truman Dollar