

# McDonald points to 12-year county record

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

**I**NCUMBENT OAKLAND County Commissioner Jack McDonald was surprised at first when he heard his opponent was former Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen.

Now after 12 years of campaign experience, McDonald recently had his first fund-raiser.

"He (Spreen) has name recognition. And I want to win. And yes, I am going to work hard," said McDonald, seeking his seventh two-year term as county commissioner from the 17th District.

Despite his opponent's notoriety, McDonald is convinced his experience on the county board of commissioners is a plus.

"I enjoy the job. And after 12 years, I know what the issues are. It's fun being a part of the growth of the county — so much is happening."

In a county that has attracted unprecedented growth and development, roads — as far as McDonald is concerned — are one of the major issues today.

While there is little doubt which roads need improving, the same can't be said for method of financing improvements.

One thing for sure, though, McDonald is opposed to a county-wide tax for road improvements as long as there still are alternatives available.

A study presented by the Oakland County Road Commission shows that approximately \$750 million will be needed to meet road improvement needs within the next decade. But the road commission receives only \$52 million annually — a far cry from what is needed.

"THERE ARE a number of pro-

posals that should be considered before we consider increasing taxes in order to produce additional revenues," said the 46-year-old attorney and former assistant county prosecutor.

One alternative is encouraging the state Legislature to change the formula used for determining how money of the state's gas and weight taxes are distributed to Oakland County.

Currently, the formula is based on the total mileage of roads in a county. County officials have suggested that the formula should be changed to reflect the areas where the greatest amount of the gas and weight tax derives from. Oakland County — one of the state's most traffic congested areas — receives about 3.9 percent or \$28 million in gas and weight tax revenues.

"The total mileage formula favors the northern counties. If it was based on where the revenue comes from, Oakland County would get more," McDonald said. "If money is available, it should be more equitably distributed."

Other alternatives McDonald believes should be considered include a bonding issue for road projects or a gas tax in Oakland County. A drawback to the gas tax, however, is that it could possibly hurt gas station business in Oakland County. Motorists would cross over Eight Mile to gas stations in Wayne County to avoid paying a gas tax, McDonald said.

**IMPOSING FEES** on developers to help finance road improvements is another alternative that is before the state Legislature, he said. It could possibly hurt gas station business in Oakland County. Motorists would cross over Eight Mile to gas stations in Wayne County to avoid paying a gas tax, McDonald said.

Currently, Oakland County operates the 52nd District Court in Troy,



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as well as in Rochester, Clarkston and Walled Lake. Taxpayers are paying — in their county tax — for these courts as well as their own in their local communities. Other district courts, such as Oak Park's, are also asking the county to take control.

"I don't think we should take over any more district courts. Either the state should take them all over or the county should take them all over. But we should not do it on a piecemeal basis," McDonald said.

The veteran commissioner, however, believes that the most equitable solution would be for the state to take control. If the state refuses, the county should become the control unit.

If the county takes over, however, McDonald believes some changes are in order. Legislation will have to require uniformity in fines and costs, with all revenues — with the excep-

tion of what goes to libraries as required by statute — going to the county.

**REVIEWING** the county government's structure, McDonald opposes any size reduction in the county board of commissioners.

Reducing the board to nine commissioners, for example, means each would represent about 100,000 residents, compared to the approximately 38,000 each of the 27 now represent.

For the most part, commissioners currently represent districts with communities of similar interest, such as Farmington-Farmington Hills. With a smaller board, commissioners would be representing areas with a variety of diverse interests, making it difficult to represent the true needs of the district, McDonald said.

Other alternatives, such as reduc-

ing the size of the board, yet making the commissioners' jobs full time, would only cost taxpayers more money because of full-time salaries. With 27 commissioners, the job is part-time and less costly, he said.

McDonald would also like to see the road commission included under the auspices of the county executive and the main commission under the department of public works. Currently, road commission and district commission officials don't really answer to anyone directly. By including them under other existing departments, the public would have someone to hold accountable.

As a commissioner, McDonald said, he can receive public complaints about the roads, for example. Yet as a commissioner he has no control over the road commission, other than by personal contacts with some of the road officials.

**LANDFILLS** and solid waste are issues that will increasingly draw commissioners' attention as work continues on the county's planned incinerator system, McDonald said.

Actual construction of the facility is about three years away. Questions that remain unanswered are facility size and financing.

As landfills become less available especially for these communities, such as Farmington and Farmington Hills, which have chosen not to participate in the county waste disposal plan, costs will more than likely increase, McDonald said. These communities will be faced again with considering joining the county program.

In that case, commissioners must determine the facility's size — planning for the future when non-participating communities may want to join. "You don't want to build it too small, yet not too large that it will

take years and years to pay off," McDonald said. As far as financing the facility that will be used to burn much of the county's solid waste, a bonding issue appears to be the most likely, with user fees to pay off the debt, McDonald said.

"There is also a good possibility that the energy produced from the burning of solid waste can be sold to various commercial and industrial entities," he said.

**IN LAW** enforcement, McDonald supports involvement of the sheriff's department in specialized areas, such as arson investigation and scientific criminal analysis, to relieve local departments of developing such costly services.

"Why should Farmington Hills put up its own (seismometer), McDonald acknowledges the difficulty in engaging the public's interest in county business. Though McDonald is hoping that might change now that — with his efforts — the former Glen Oaks Country Club is a county park.

"You don't feel the presence of county government in an urban area. People look to the local police. The same with roads, they look to the city. When you are talking services, all your services are coming from the local government."

If reelected, McDonald plans to continue publishing his quarterly newsletter that tell residents what's happening at the county level. As he has done in the past, he plans to continue to attend city council meetings when there is a need to bring a county issue to the fore or when interesting issues are on agendas.

When there is something the city council wants me to do, they call me."

# Spreen calls for a more regional approach

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

**W**HEN JOHANNES Spreen considers Oakland County, he sees an area dotted with communities experiencing similar problems.

When the former Oakland County Sheriff considers solutions, he sees the need for county-wide or regional answers that won't destroy each community's autonomy.

"Problems with growth belong at the county. We need a regional approach. Not only with Oakland County, but with other counties. When you have 61 communities, they can't allways do their own thing. The county should coordinate things," Spreen said.

"I believe I am mature in years but I still have the idealism of youth. I have a young and fertile mind," said the Farmington Hills Democrat. "I believe in the people. And I believe in myself. Now that I'm retired, I can give my full-time attention."

After a two-year absence from the county limelight, the 57-year-old law enforcement professional has thrown his hat into the political ring because he believes such changes are warranted in the county and within the county government structure.

Spreen is running for the county commission seat in the 17th District. "With a county government, a regional approach is so necessary to approach the problems of crime, roads and solid waste," he said.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION** and involvement is the first step in solving some of the county's problems, according to Spreen.

If elected, he plans to meet monthly with interested residents. At the meetings, Spreen plans to keep residents up-to-date with county busi-

ness, as well as solicit opinions to take back to the board of commissioners.

"I will meet down here with them to ascertain their views so I can act intelligently in representing their views," Spreen said. "I would also invite them up to the county board auditorium where there is a 300-person (audience). They have a no-personal audience and no press."

Crime, including prevention of it, is a top issue in Spreen's campaign. The former Detroit police commissioner and New York City police officer would like to consolidate law enforcement services within the county.

"I am not trying to do away with local police departments. I would like to see a consolidation of services rather than of departments," Spreen said.

He believes that certain services or investigative units — traffic, homicide, rape — could be offered on a county level.

Regional services would be in the form of support teams that would provide local police with expertise on certain crimes that many of the local communities rarely encounter, such as homicide and rape. The same would hold true for traffic enforcement, particularly drunk driving and accident control.

**"WE HAVE** fragmentation, duplication and overlapping of police services. Let the local departments do what they do best. They can serve the local community and they know the local community," Spreen said. "You can't control interlocking crime problems with fragmented problems. I think there ought to be a county support team."

As in his 12-year career as county sheriff, Spreen still believes crime is the most important issue for the young — is the best avenue for con-



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trolling crime. Giving tickets and making arrests is not the sole answer.

"Education is good for crime prevention and drug control. We've got to reach the kids before a problem starts."

Spreen also applies the regional approach to other issues he believes are, and will continue to be, challenges for the county government.

Roads top his list of county problems that need immediate attention.

While Spreen lauds the county's tri-party road improvement agreement (the local community, county board of commissioners and Oakland County Road Commission each pay one-third of the cost of a designated improvement), he is flatly opposed to a county-wide tax for improvements.

If financial waste in the county government was eliminated, there would be enough money available to improve roads.

Spreen maintains waste exists in several areas of the county government, including the executive level

with high salaries for appointed employees. Another source of waste Spreen sees is the county's practice of farming out prisoners to other county jails because of the shortage of space in the Oakland County Jail.

"THERE IS waste at the county level. There is waste in the municipalities — they are trying to do things that should be done on a regional basis," Spreen said.

Encouraging the state to revise its gas and weight formulas — used to determine how much money the county receives for roads — is integral in improving county road problems, Spreen said.

But he also believes that in a county experiencing unprecedented growth, developers should pay their share of road improvements. Communities that are providing tax abatements are particularly letting developers off the hook for road problems, Spreen said.

"Those who use the roads or profit from the roads should pay for the

roads. Those who abuse the roads should pay through fines," he said. Getting some of the traffic off the road would help improve road conditions and traffic flow throughout the county.

Unlike other urbanized areas in the country, Oakland County roads are used by one-driver autos — there is no parking. Much of the reason for that is the lack of a "decent transportation system," Spreen said.

**SPREEN ADVOCATES** the creation of services involving the franchising of certain main routes to taxicabs. The cabs would ride up and down a particular route, Grand River, for example.

The service could be provided strictly as a privately financed operation or the county could purchase the cabs and lease them to retired persons or homemakers who wish to earn some money, Spreen said.

"You could have a transportation service that has not been seen before. It could provide jobs. But it should be countywide," he said.

Regionalism is again Spreen's solution to the growing problem of solid waste. Spreen does not support each local community attempting to take care of its own waste problems because eventually landfills will not be available.

"What will happen when the landfills are gone. It's cheaper now. But we have less little independent communities doing their own thing."

Spreen would like to see a centralized waste disposal service and plant, such as is currently being planned at a privately complex in Pontiac. He also would like to see the county recover waste and reuse it as energy, as well as recycle what is recyclable to ease the burden on current landfills.

In order to provide the county with more clout in solving problems on a regional basis, Spreen would

like to a charter commission formed to write a home-rule charter.

**"THE COUNTY** should coordinate things. But without home rule, we won't have clout. So right now, it will have to be with Oakland County's cooperation and assistance. But we need a regional approach even if the local communities have the right to make their own decisions."

"The question is, are we going to be 62 communities, operating independently and being hostile to one another?"

Along with home rule, Spreen would like to see the position of county executive reviewed, possibly making it into a city manager-type of position. But he also would like to avoid putting some of the county functions, such as public works and drain commission, under the executive.

Instead, he would like to see public works and the drain commission combined under one department. "One man or woman in county executive has too much to handle," he said.

In addition, Spreen would like to see requirements for some of the county department positions upgraded. Rather than allowing an elected official to operate the drain commission, this person should be one with certified technical knowledge, as is the sheriff and county prosecutor.

To further streamline county government, Spreen would like to reduce the number of county commissioners from the 27 to perhaps 15 to improve efficiency, accountability and reduce duplication.

"I have seen so much nonsense up there with 27 commissioners. It's a partisan vote anyway. And the subcommittees often don't even have a quorum. If the city of Detroit can do it with nine council members . . . I think we can be safe to drop them from 27 to 15."

# Hills planning commission will convene tonight

The Farmington Hills Planning Commission will meet at 7:30 tonight in council chambers, 31555 11 Mile.

Commissioners' agenda includes discussion of a zoning text amendment for defining and exempting political signs. Other business includes:

- Landscape site plan for multiple in an RP-2 zone at the northeast corner of 13 Mile and Haggerty. Proponent is Richard Marrone of Bestak Properties.
- Site plan for automotive repair in a B-3 zone at 20755, 20765 and 20775 Orchard Lake Road. Proponent is Alex Nebes.
- Site plan for general office in RA-1 (consent judgment) north of Northwestern Highway, east of Middlebelt. Proponent is W. Keith Owen.
- Cluster option in RA-1, west of Gilt Road, north of Freedom. Proponent is Frank Millo.
- Rezoning request from RA-1 to B-3 on the east side of Haggerty, north of 11 Mile. Proponent J.H. Hudnut.
- Rezoning request from RA-2 to B-3 on the east side of Haggerty, north of 11 Mile. Proponent J.H. Hudnut.

B-3 on the east side of Haggerty, south of 14 Mile. Proponent is A.J. Macksey.

• Rezoning request from RA-3 to RC-2, north of Eight Mile, west of Gilt Road.

• Rezoning request from SP-1 and RA-1 to RC-2 on the southwest corner of 13 Mile and Haggerty. Proponent is Abraham Grant.

• Rezoning request from RA-3 to B-3 on Lots 90 and 91 of Supervisors Eight Mile-Grand River. Proponent is Gordon Wrinn.

• Rezoning request from RA-1 to OS-1 at 25500 Haggerty, between 11 Mile and Howard Road. Proponent is Marion Wallace.

• Zoning text amendment for revision of existing ordinance regard-

ing the length and width of cupolas. Also a proposed amendment to allow sky lights to exceed the maximum permitted height limit. Proponent is Jack Bollo for Little Cactus Plaza.

• Lot split on the west half of Lot 20 of Supervisors Plat of West Franklin Estates. The request is for a four-way split. Proponents are Abraham and Marilyn Krispin.

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• Site plan for multifamily in RA-1 on the east side of Haggerty, south of 14 Mile. Proponent is Bernie Gliberman.

• Site plan for office in OS-4 at 35555 12 Mile. Proponent is Kenneth Newmann.

RC-2 on the east side of Middlebelt, south of 10 Mile. Proponent is Michael Downes.

• Site plan for multifamily — condominium in RP-1 on the east side of Haggerty, south of 14 Mile. Proponent is Bernie Gliberman.

• Site plan for office in OS-4 at 35555 12 Mile. Proponent is Kenneth Newmann.

# Taxicab service for seniors under review

Farmington City Council wants more time to review the local transportation system for seniors and the handicapped — a subsidized program that has faced operational problems recently.

The council plans to meet to further discuss the program's needs. Members discussed operational problems of the seven-community system Oct. 6, following a presentation and live demonstration for change from Dan Potter, director of special services for Farmington Hills, who studied the transportation program. He recently made his presentation to the Farmington Hills City Council.

**SINCE** the program began in 1981, it has suffered a decrease in use, due primarily to slow service and the encouragement of shared rides, which caused delays, according to Potter.

The program also has problems related to funding from the Southeast Michigan Transportation au-

thority. The taxi company providing the service is Livonia-based Northwest Transport. It is estimated the subsidized service accounts for 40 percent of the company's business.

Potter outlined five major recommendations in his report. They include:

- Establishing a formal governing structure to supervise and monitor the program.
- Creating a performance evaluation system for the taxicab company.

• Development of a report and follow-up system for addressing communication problems.

• Creation of a new promotional program for the service.

• Development of an orientation program for cab drivers and users. Communities currently participating in the program include the cities of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Livonia, Northville, Plymouth and the townships of Plymouth and Northville. The program is operated

by Livonia, which receives money from each community. The service covers 108 miles.

During July, one third of the rides originated or ended in Farmington or Farmington Hills, according to Potter's statistics. For the total year 1985, local cities accounted for 35 percent of the service.

The service is available to anyone 65 years of age and older, and handicapped residents of each community.