

Oakland board rejects Dem effort to cut property tax

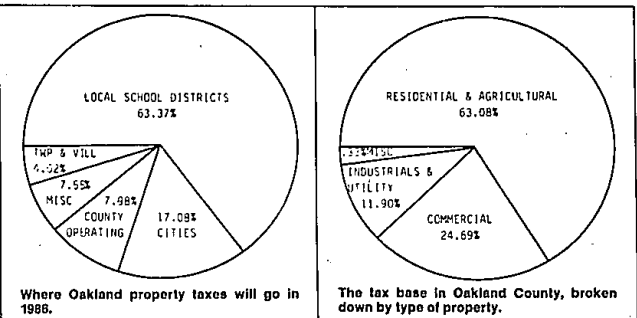
By Tim Richard
staff writer

Oakland County property owners will pay a tax rate of 4.6391 mills again this year.

On almost a straight party-line vote, the county Board of Commissioners rejected a Democratic amendment to cut the rate to 4.5217 mills.

"It's not possible to do it this year," Commissioner Anne Hobart, R-Waterford, told the Democrats, hinting that election-year politics may have motivated the minority party.

If adopted, the Democratic cut would have amounted to 11 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation, or \$140 on a house with a market value of \$80,000 and an SEV of \$40,000.



THE BOARD conducted a public hearing at which no one spoke, rejected the Democratic cut 7-20 and then passed three property tax rates.

Besides the county general government rate, they included 0.25 mills for county parks and 0.25 for Huron-Clinton Metropolitan.

Commissioner Alexander Perinoff, D-Southfield, crossed over to vote with the board's 10 Republicans.

Even at 4.6391 mills, or \$4.64 per \$1,000 of SEV, the county rate is lower than the 5.26 mills allowed under the Headlee tax limitation amendment, which was designed to halt tax increases due to real estate

inflation.

The rate will yield \$76.7 million in revenue, up about \$5.8 million from last year. Most of the increase was due to new construction.

Property taxes provide about half of county general fund revenue.

DEMOCRATIC commissioners said the county general fund didn't need so much money.

Commissioner James Doyon, D-Madison Heights, whose district includes part of Troy, offered the amendment, arguing that the county's SEV grew by \$1.2 billion to \$16.5 billion.

"It is not management skills that give us a surplus," added Commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, "but the underestimation of revenue. Aaron said the tax rate should be cut as long as majority Republicans oppose setting up a satellite office of the county clerk in the populous 'south end' of the county."

Commissioner Betty Partino, D-Waterford, hit a favorite Democratic target — \$1 million spent on the executive's economic development

group. She said it should be cut.

SPEAKING FOR Republicans, Hobart, who chairs the planning and building committee, said, "Most of us have voted for reduced millage in past years."

"But to propose we cut the millage rate when we have increasing costs is absolutely absurd," she said, citing:

- A reserve set up to handle liability suits against the Sheriff's Department, which can't procure liability insurance.
- Solid waste planning and construction of the county's first trash incinerator.
- Services to a population growing rapidly in the high-technology boom.

In a political jibe, Hobart said the tax cut is advocated by "the same ones who want to build the most expensive jail and have their hands out for more for the road commission."

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GOP to hear court hopefuls

Two Michigan Supreme Court candidates will speak to Oakland County Republicans at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday.

They are former U.S. Sen. Robert Griffin and Circuit Judge James T. Kallman of Ingham County.

Oakland GOP Chairman Joe Knollenberg said they will appear at the 300 Club breakfast in Macbus Sly Fox, 725 S. Hunter Blvd., Birmingham.

Tickets are \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. For reservations, call Republican headquarters at 338-1133 in Pontiac.

Supreme Court candidates are nominated at state party conventions but run on a non-partisan ballot. Griffin and Kallman are Republican nominees.

clarification

The E.F. Hutton advertisement in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers last Thursday should have listed 7:30 p.m. as the starting time for the free Tax Action seminar Wednesday in the Kingsley Inn, 4375 N. Woodward. For more information, call Denise Lyons at 879-1400.

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