

Wheel! Oakland has \$6.5 million surplus

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

"Today's mood in Oakland County is like the New Mexico Legislature in the 1980 glory days of the oil and gas boom.

"With a \$1 billion budget, New Mexico found itself with a one-third surplus — \$300 million — and delighted in figuring out benefits to bestow on the voters.

"One of the nice things you can do is give it back to the taxpayers," said commissioner James Doyon, D-Madison Heights, as Oakland began deciding what to do with the \$6.5 million surplus left over from 1986's \$230 million budget.

"No. We've done that three times," replied county executive Daniel T. Murphy, visualizing a darker economy in the future when the revenue may be needed again.

"WE ALREADY have one of the lowest rates in the state," the executive said, pointing to a 4.6 mill property tax rate.

Murphy's priority list includes retirees' hospitalization, better insula-

tion of buildings, records storage, computer terminals for law enforcement vehicles, a landfill for the waste recovery program and economic development.

County board committees this week are studying his proposals.

EXCLUDED FROM his list are:

• **Building space** — "an immediate need. I wholeheartedly support the building of a North Wing to the Courthouse, a library building and (because of technical and security reasons) a special computer facility." But for those two and jail expansion, all long-term projects, Murphy will recommend a bond issue.

• **Roads** — Nothing, at least until the semi-autonomous three-man Road Commission is dissolved and the road system brought under the executive and Board of Commissioners. It will require a change in state law. Only Wayne County, with a home-rule charter, has been able to integrate road operations with general government.

OAKLAND'S SURPLUSES, said Murphy deputy Patrick Nowak, have



Daniel T. Murphy
not for roads

grated from \$300,000 to \$6.5 million over the years. Thus, no long-range commitment, such as a tax cut, should be undertaken.

"With roads, \$6.5 million doesn't go very far," said Nowak, noting the Road Commission projects county-wide needs at \$640 million over 10 years.

The 1986 surplus, he went on, amounts of only 0.4 mill — 40 cents per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation, or \$12 to \$15 a year on an average house. County government collects \$75 million a year in property taxes.

Two Democratic commissioners,

Alex Perinoff and Larry Pernick, both of Southfield, praised the Murphy proposal addressing the funding of retirees' medical care.

HERE IS Murphy's "to do" list:

- Retirees hospitalization, \$2.8 million to fund the current portion of the first year amortization of the accrued liability. "Oakland County has been granting this benefit for the last 22 years and has built up a \$40 million liability."

- Insulation review, \$500,000 "for review of various insulation materials used in construction (of county buildings) . . . and to bring buildings up to current standards."
- Optical records storage, \$1.2 million. "Modern technology now allows computer storage and retrieval which would result in considerable time and space savings."

- In-car terminals, \$800,000. "This capability would increase police productivity, improve law enforcement and most importantly increase police and the public's safety by allowing law enforcement officers in the field to directly access LEIN, CLEMIS and Secretary of State files."

- Landfill, \$600,000 "for a site to be utilized for the county's waste recovery program. Landfill availability will be severely limited in four or five years. These funds would be recovered (from) future users of the landfill."

- Economic grants, \$250,000 for

communities eligible for federal urban development action grants (UDAG). The funds would be "seed and matching funds to develop systematic efforts to maintain and enhance economic development."

- I-696 planning, \$100,000 "for a consultant to the I-696 corridor to coordinate and promote economic development."

- **Camp Oakland repairs**, \$100,000, to bring it "to a good state of repairs to ensure the success of

Camp Oakland going private."

IN OTHER business, the county board, in a one-hour meeting last week, approved two contracts with Pine Knob Music Theatre, near Clarkston in Independence Township, for use of sheriff's deputies.

One is for crowd control, the other for traffic control, and cost to Pine Knob will be \$28.44 an hour per officer "on an availability overtime basis."

Business outlook softer — purchasers

Business conditions softened in the Detroit area during March 1987, according to the latest survey of the Purchasing Management Association of Detroit.

March's summary report from local purchasing managers showed a composite index of 46.2, down from 50.6 in February. "A composite index number below 50 generally indicates deteriorating conditions," said David L. Littmann, vice president and senior economist with Manufacturers National Bank of Detroit.

BETWEEN FEBRUARY and March, he said, the greatest weak-

ness appeared in the categories of new orders and employment.

"There has been considerable volatility in each of the components of the composite index since the beginning of the year," Littmann said, "but the fact remains that, for the first quarter of 1987, the PMAD composite index is 11 points lower than during the first quarter of 1986."

In contrast to the local survey, the U.S. survey continued to show a modest overall business expansion, averaging 53.9 in the first quarter of 1987, compared with 51.2 in the same quarter one year earlier.

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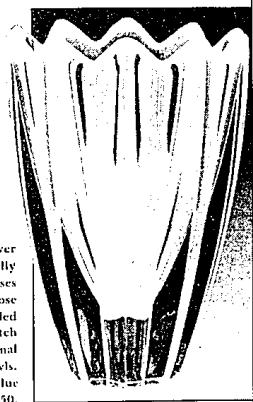
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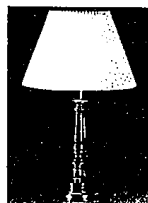
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