

# 2 Dems seek county commission seat



Lillian Jaffe Oaks  
past Southfield councilwoman

Eric Coleman  
Southfield school trustee

primary endorsement, 14A

By Jackie Klein  
staff writer

**A**SCHOOL board trustee and a former city councilwoman are among Southfield Democrats jockeying for position in the Tuesday, Nov. 3, special primary to fill a vacant seat in District 21 of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Eric Coleman, elected to the school board in 1986; Lillian Jaffe Oaks, who served eight years on the city council; and repeat challenger Lew Barnett are seeking the Democratic nomination. Barnett has not responded to requests for interviews by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

The winner will face the lone Republican contender, Douglas Sokolowski of Southfield, on Dec. 8. The seat in District 21, which includes a large portion of Southfield and a small part of southeast Farmington Hills, was vacated by the death of veteran Democratic commissioner Alex Perinoff on Aug. 19.

**COLEMAN POINTS** to his business and school board experience, commitment to the community, accessibility and ability to get things done as reasons he believes he would make an effective county official.

plus in the Oakland County budget, \$5 million was proposed to be allocated for road improvements. County Executive Daniel Murphy vetoed that proposal, Coleman said.

"Southfield gets \$300,000 a year for improvements and our roads are in bad shape," he said. "If elected, I would work with other commissioners and coalitions and be persuasive in trying to get more money for roads. I can't get things done by myself."

**JAFFE OAKS** said there's a need for \$70 million, excluding inflation, to repair and maintain roads in Oakland County.

"The surplus in the county budget has been allocated for road improvements," she said. "The Eight Mile corridor needs help for the county to be rehabilitated. Looking ahead 10 years, we have to consider how the money is going to be obtained."

Since Perinoff died only recently, Jaffe Oaks said, she hasn't had the time to deliberate on methods of funding roads.

While Coleman maintains Farmington Hills faces the same issues as Southfield, Jaffe Oaks says the needs of more residential Farmington Hills differ from Southfield's.

Coleman and Jaffe Oaks both have reservations about an Oakland County plan for solid waste disposal which includes incineration.

"Few dumps are left and you can't bury solid waste anymore," Coleman said. "But the hot issue on solid waste disposal is incinerators burning and releasing chemicals. We need an environmental study. The best effort is in recycling, going back to paper instead of using plastic. There's more to be made and saved if communities get together and recycle."

**JAFFE OAKS** agrees that recycling should be considered. "Incineration is expensive and we're running out of landfills," she said. "A better form of disintegration should be researched. It's the one we've forgotten about saving the environment from pollution. Recycling was big in World War II, but it's been neglected in the last 40 years."

"We need education for recycling and a study on incineration and other areas of waste removal."

Coleman sees problems with proposals to combine public works, the drain commissioner's office and the road commission under the executive.

"We need checks and balances," he said. "What assurances do we have that combining commissions

would be an improvement? What are the cost factors involved? Are we creating a county executive who's unapproachable and has the final word? Would services be the same?" Jaffe Oaks advocates combining public works and the road and drain commissions under the aegis of an

elected official, other than the county executive, working with county commissioners.

"Separate commissions create redundancy," she said. "Combining facilities would be more efficient and would avoid duplication of budgets and services."

## Second try GOP candidate running unopposed

By Casey Hana  
staff writer

**A** 25-year-old Republican challenger is making his second bid for the 21st Oakland County Commission District seat — one that has been controlled by Democrats for nearly 20 years.

Southfield resident Douglas Sokolowski, 25, a computer programmer-analyst for the city of Southfield, faces no competition in the Tuesday, Nov. 3, primary so will serve as his party's candidate in the Tuesday, Dec. 8, general election.

Sokolowski first ran for the county seat in 1986, when he won the primary battle, but lost to veteran county commissioner and Democrat Alexander Perinoff. Perinoff died earlier this year, leaving the seat vacant.

Sokolowski said the time has come for a Republican to win the seat.

"I believe a Republican might be able to get more done," he said. Southfield is not receiving its fair share of services from the county. I think it's a partisan issue."

**THE REPUBLICAN** challenger is already campaigning door-to-door in his district, which includes portions of Southfield and Farmington Hills. His three main campaign issues, he said, are based on what he is hearing from residents, who are concerned with crime, roads and communication.

Sokolowski called for more neighborhood patrols to deter crime in both Southfield and Farmington Hills, and more county road money for Southfield. "Crime is a big issue with anybody," he said. "People just don't feel as safe as they used to."

If elected, Sokolowski said he



Douglas Sokolowski  
Southfield city employee

would immediately begin an informational newsletter to his constituents, who he said have little knowledge of what their county representative can do. "Most people don't

even know they have a county commissioner," he added.

During last year's election, Sokolowski called for an expanded county sheriff's department with free local police to combat residential crime. He also advocated more federal and state support and financial equity among the governmental units in the county. He supports the county's solid waste plan.

**SOKOLOWSKI HOLDS** a bachelor of arts degree in social science from Madonna College and a master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University. He has worked in Southfield's data processing department for 3½ years.

He is a two-term president of the National Camping and Hiking Association Youth Club and has been active in the Boy Scouts of America. He has lived in Southfield for the past six years.

The 21st Oakland County Commission District includes an area from Eight Mile to 10 Mile, west to the boundary of the city of Farmington, and east to Greenfield Road at the boundary of the city of Oak Park.

## Panel oversees county

Oakland County has a 27-member board of commissioners, which functions much like a state legislature or city council.

The board acts on proposals of the county executive, can override an executive veto by two-thirds vote, passes the general government budget, and makes appointments to such boards as the South-

east Michigan Transportation Authority, the Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority and the Oakland County Road Commission.

Elections are partisan. Term of office is two years. Current salary is \$15,088. The 21 County Commission District includes southern Southfield and southeast Farmington Hills.

## Oakland Citizens League questions board hopefulness

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

For 25 years Alex Perinoff had been a fixture in Oakland County government — outspoken, a little irascible, always with an eye on what it cost.

Perinoff, D-Southfield, died in harness late in August, and his 21st County Commission District must pick a successor — first in partisan primaries Nov. 3 and then a run-off Dec. 8.

Three Democrats are lining up in the primary — school board member Eric Coleman, former councilmember Lillian Jaffe Oaks and frequent candidate Lew Barnett, all of Southfield. One Republican is running.

**THE DISTRICT** — which hugs Eight Mile in Southfield and the southeast corner of Farmington Hills — always has gone Democratic, but don't tell that to Douglas Sokolowski, the lone Republican candidate.

"The district is changing. It's a winnable district. People are voting by candidate, not party. I made a fine showing against a very established candidate in 1986," said Sokolowski in an interview with the Oakland Citizens League.

The nonpartisan group gave no "preferred" rating but designated three as "well qualified" — Republican Sokolowski and Democrats Coleman and Oaks.

Barnett, who challenged Perinoff in the 1986 primary, again was unopposed because he submitted no material and was unavailable for the group's interview.

**COLEMAN, 44**, is owner-president of OSC Companies, Inc., and Molly Maid of Oakland, Inc., commercial and home maintenance companies, respectively. Active in Optimist and several youth programs, Coleman won a seat on the school board in 1986 on his third try.

"I'm known for my fiscal responsibility," he said. "I would have mixed emotions (about leaving the school board for county government) because I've made some impact on the school — in hiring practices."

"I was active in the John Grace Center. It was economically deprived . . . but it's better than it was," said Coleman, describing the southwest corner of Southfield as having one of the highest percentages of poverty in Oakland County. "The area has changed. People are now planting grass."

At the county level, he sees "a lack of an urban policy," particularly in road spending. "The Road Commission has \$55 million. Our share (of road spending in Southfield) is \$350,000 to \$400,000. That doesn't go very far in widening roads."

But Coleman opposes consolidating either the Road Commission or drain commissioner under the county executive "because he has not demonstrated that services, operation and economies has improved over the previous arrangements."

He sees Oakland's top needs as roads, solid waste disposal and removal of asbestos from county buildings.

A nearly 12-year resident of Southfield, Coleman said he has been active in the Democratic Party and is founder of the Southfield Youth in Arts degree from the School of the Art in Chicago and a bachelor of general studies degree from Wayne State University.

**OAKS WAS** a Detroit school teacher before going into the real estate development and management business.

A 1937 graduate of Wayne State University, she served eight years on the Southfield City Council and was its president in 1982-3. She later served on Gov. Blanchard's Task Force on the Future of Higher Education.

Memberships include the Democratic Party, National Council for Jewish Women and various arts organizations.

Unable to attend the interview because she was out of the country, Oaks wrote that she favors "consolidation of the Road Commission, the drain commissioner and (executive's) Public Works Department under a single head . . . other than the county executive."

To improve roads, Oaks advocated returning more state gasoline and weight taxes to Oakland County, "raising land developer's costs, a reassessment of how tax incentives are provided businesses, and an increase in the gas and weight tax."

If those steps were taken, "There would be no need for additional property tax increases, which now weigh heavily on the citizens of the county."

She would use county budget surpluses to reduce the property tax rate rather than on capital projects.

**SOKOLOWSKI, 25**, is an analyst programmer in data processing for the city of Southfield. He earned a bachelor's of arts in social science

from Madonna College and a master's of science in administration from Central Michigan University.

Unlike the Democratic candidates, Sokolowski would reorganize all three public works functions — the DPW, drain commissioner and Road Commission — under the executive and county board to "consolidate the chain of command. We elected to go for consolidated county government" in establishing the county executive, he said.

Sokolowski sees southern communities as being shorted in the workings of county government.

Not getting interest-free loans on lake projects, not getting the same kinds of economic development services that the Oakland Tech Park area is getting, needing more help in law enforcement and parks.

"The county has done a fine job in its development of the solid waste plan. The majority of communities have agreed to participate. The energy from the incineration is projected to power the County Service Center, with any excess to be sold to neighboring communities," he said.

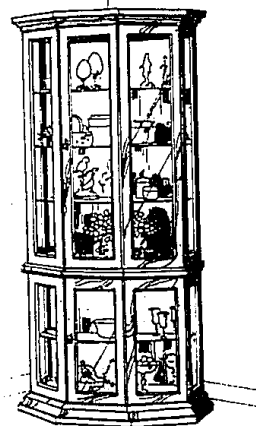
Like many Democratic commissioners, Sokolowski advocates a county service center in the southern part of the county for such offices as the clerk and treasurer.

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