

Oakland's '88 budget in place, unscathed

By Tim Richard
staff writer

After months of work by the Board of Commissioners and 11 Democratic amendments offered at the last minute, Oakland County's 1988 budget was adopted pretty much the way County Executive Daniel T. Murphy proposed it. The county Board of Commissioners Thursday passed it on almost a party-line vote.

"Where were you the last 90 to 120 days?" said commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham, taunting Democrats for their last-minute amendment offerings. "I don't think these (Democrats' ideas) are practical at this late date."

"The budget is up \$20 million, half

due to an increased property tax base," said Democratic caucus chairman Larry Pernick of Southfield. "But services are not up proportionately. We use up all the money available. The taxpayers want a little relief."

In the end, the 18-9 Republican county board majority tossed out seven Democratic amendments but sent three to committee for study. Democrats, accustomed to losing everything, felt they had accomplished a little.

THE 1988 spending plan calls for \$264 million going out, up \$20 million or 8 percent from the current year. The property tax rate will remain at 4.6 mills, where it has been

since 1981, and bring in one-third of the revenue.

Biggest changes will be in the law enforcement area. Murphy's budget allocated some \$3 million for jail expansion this year and raised Sheriff John Nichols' staff from 522 to 540 positions. Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson will see his staff rise from the current 125 to 155. Some of the increase will be due to federal grants for drug law prosecutions.

MOST COUNTY employees and elected officials will see their salaries rise 4.5 percent.

Judges did better, getting 10.6 percent increases in both the state-funded and county-funded portions of their salaries. Circuit judges will go

to \$92,000 from \$86,480 probate and district judges to \$88,000 from \$82,780.

The county pays about 40 percent of circuit judges' salaries, half of probate judges' and 44 percent of district judges' salaries.

At \$264 million, Oakland County's general fund budget is larger than debt-ridden Wayne County's, at \$217 million, Murphy noted, although Wayne has double the population.

THE LONGEST debate was over a Democratic proposal to freeze all county departmental spending except the sheriff's at 1987 levels plus 2 percent.

Republicans usually simply vote down the Democratic floor amendments with little comment, but Page

ripped into the opposition's blanket approach.

"We've said yes to the prosecutor on bringing his people into the retirement system. We've said yes to the prosecutor for more people. We've said yes to the sheriff on drug programs. We've said yes to the clerk because of the 1988 elections," Page said.

But Republicans sent three Democratic proposals to committee for further study.

One calls for extending the existing, county-funded 52nd District Court computer system to all district courts. A second, already under study for several months, would set up a countywide in-car computer system for all law enforcement agencies. A third would eliminate an administration newsletter.

SHOT DOWN were these Demo-

cratic amendments:

- Eliminating the salary of Patrick Nowak, one of two deputy county executives.

- Setting up a satellite office of the county clerk in the "south end" of the county to handle such paperwork matters as marriage licenses. Democrats argued people in the populous southern communities shouldn't have to travel all the way to Pontiac for such routine matters. Countered Page: "The other side started on an economy kick. Where do you get the money?"

- Setting up a "millage reduction fund" for any budget surplus. Republicans said surpluses are being used for the following year's budget.

- Transferring part of the executive's public safety division to the Sheriff's Department.

- Deleting the job of the manager for employment and training.

ACLU to honor 29 demonstrators

The American Civil Liberties Union will pay tribute Tuesday to 29 people jailed for demonstrating in front of an Oakland County defense subcontractor's plant.

That date marks the 196th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, said ACLU chapter president Leonard Grossman.

The observance will take place

from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Globe Building, corner of Fort and Brush in downtown Detroit.

ACLU's award recognizes "the firm resolution and steadfast commitment of demonstrators at the plant of Williams International who refused to surrender the freedom of conscience and their civil liberties in the face of an improper judicial sentence to an indefinite jail term."

Grossman said. Williams makes engines for low-flying cruise missiles deployed in

western Europe. Its plant is on W. Maple west of Haggerty Road in Commerce Township.

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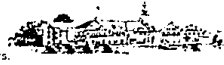
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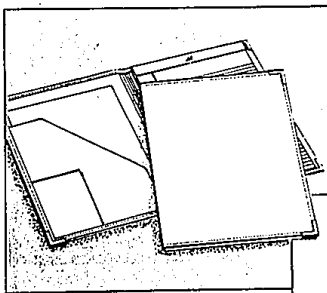
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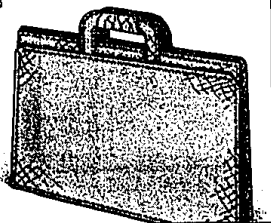
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