

No smoke tax for Oakland until late '89

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Oakland County will see no money for two years from the new taxes cigarette smokers are paying. And it will see next to nothing of the three-county hotel taxes that are being used to expand Detroit's Cobo Hall.

"My people are asking 'what are you doing with all that cigarette tax money?'" said Commissioner Ruel McPherson, D-Hazel Park, as the county board's general government committee discussed the effect of new state taxes.

The panel shrugged as it learned from staff members how little new revenue there would be.

TAKE THE CIGARETTE tax increase of four cents a package, often labeled a "Wayne County bailout." Chairman Richard Skarratt, R-Milford, said, "Wayne gets it all (\$33 million) in 1988. Other counties won't get anything until October of 1989. It will be almost two years before any (cigarette tax increase revenue) comes back."

Joseph Mullen, the board's legislative agent, said the other 32 counties will get a total of \$17 million once Wayne's debts are paid off, Oakland is due for \$2.5 million — about \$2.46 per person in a county of 1.1 million.

The new law says the revenue "is to be used for property tax relief unless county commissioners decide to spend the money for jails, youth facilities, court costs or health care."

COMMISSIONER Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, said the board should earmark those funds for a property

tax millage reduction fund. The money could be returned to taxpayers.

He asked for a meeting to focus on that topic of the \$2.5 million new revenue. Aaron expressed four County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, a Republican, would come up with "a spending plan."

Commissioner Lillian Jaffe Oaks, D-Southfield, elected to the board in December, added, "One of the first things people say is 'when are you going to reduce my taxes?'"

But Commissioner Donald Jensen, R-Birmingham, pointed to construction of an expanded jail and predicted

If used for property tax relief, the \$2.5 million cigarette revenue would amount to one-sixth of a mill, or \$8.33 for a house with a market value of \$100,000.

ed the jail would have a higher operating cost. "I agree with your jail comments," said Commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham, "but our first

with a market value of \$100,000.

JAMES BRENNAN, the board's program analyst, had worse news on the tri-county hotel tax that the Legislature passed to provide money to expand Detroit's Cobo Hall.

"In fiscal 1986 Oakland got back \$693,000. It's estimated for 1987 Oakland will get \$17,000," Brennan said.

Oakland hotels provide nearly \$2.7 million in revenue for the program, he said.

The reason for the revenue drop, Brennan said, are bonding requirements for the Cobo project. Needs

were just \$16.4 million in 1986 but climbed to \$18.5 million in '87, \$22.1 million in '88 and \$18 million for 1989 and beyond — at which time Oakland might get some return.

The hotel tax was part of a hotel-liquor tax plan. The hotel tax covers just Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, and the Cobo project has first draw. Half of the liquor tax revenue — when and if it becomes available — must be used for drug abuse programs, Brennan said.

McPherson said that although Oakland gets little revenue, the Cobo Hall expansion benefits suburban hotels and motels.

OU's 'Black Awareness' talks open

Addresses by James Meredith and educator Marva Collins are among the features of Black Awareness Month celebrations at Oakland University.

Meredith, the first black to attend the University of Mississippi and a degree holder from that university, will speak at the inauguration program at 1 p.m. Monday, Feb. 1, in the Oakland Center.

Collins, nationally recognized for her work with the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago, will lecture at 3 p.m. Monday, Feb. 15, in the Oakland Center.

OU WILL celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday Monday, Jan. 18. Students will gather at 1 p.m. for a march around campus and then attend an Oakland Center lecture by Detroit District Judge Warfield Moore Jr.

The Meredith and Judge Moore lectures are free. A \$3 public admission charge will be made for the Marva Collins speech. Theme for the February programs is "Education: Foundation for the Future."

The opening ceremony on Feb. 1 will also feature the university's annual "Focus And Impact Awards" given to individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of education.

Other major public events are:

- Feb. 7 — Moss Brothers Gospel Music, 7 p.m., Oakland Center, free.
- Feb. 9 — Financial Aid Changes — Impact on Higher Education, noon, Oakland Center, free.
- Feb. 10 — "Detecting Racism in Children's Literature," 11 a.m., Oakland Center, free.
- Feb. 18 — Lecture: Joseph Green, Robert Donald Literary Contest, 3 p.m., Oakland Center, free.
- Feb. 23 — Lecture: "Importance of Education on Careers and Success," Oakland Center, noon, free.

Pilot class at Schoolcraft

Schoolcraft College is offering a basic aviation ground school, to instruct future pilots in flight operations, procedures and regulations.

It will be held 7-10 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays for eight weeks, beginning Feb. 9. Fee is \$109.

For registration and fee information, call the college at 591-6400, Ext. 410. The college is at 18600 Haggerty, Livonia.

The course covers areas contained in Federal Aviation Administration examinations.

Budding pilots can also receive one-to-one tutoring through a course offered by Schoolcraft's continuing education services division.

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