

Road commissioners up for salary hike

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

After 19 years at the same salary level, members of the Oakland County Road Commission may be in line for a 33 percent pay hike.

But at least one member of the County Board of Commissioners opposes the pay hike, insisting they are

adequately compensated considering fringe benefits such as health insurance and a county-owned automobile equipped with car phone.

The board's Government and Transportation Committee this week voted 6-1 in favor of a resolution increasing salaries for the three road commissioners from \$7,600 to \$10,000 per year. The salary for the chairman of the road commission would increase from \$8,500 to \$11,000.

The resolution was referred to the board for consideration at its Oct. 12 meeting.

The road commission is an autonomous body with responsibility for more than 2,400 miles of roads and highways within Oakland County. Its three members — currently Richard V. Vogt, Lawrence E. Litten and James E. Lanni — are appointed by county commissioners and set policy for the commission that has 594 employees and a \$65 million budget in fiscal 1989.

JOHN L. GRUBBA, managing director and secretary/clerk of the road commission, asked for the salary increase noting that commissioners have not received a pay increase in 19 years.

Compensation for commissioners was set in 1970, Grubba said, when the position was downgraded from full time to part time, and the per annum salary was reduced from \$13,500 to \$7,500.

The \$7,500 figure was established,

he said, because it was the same rate of compensation paid to county commissioners, another position considered to be a part-time job.

Commissioners currently receive a base annual salary of \$13,200. Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park, said compensation for road commissioners is adequate, considering they are obligated for one meeting per week and receive the same fringe benefits as other county employees in comparable positions.

"I don't know how you have the guts" to say they warrant a pay hike, said Aaron, the only commissioner to vote against the resolution.

Commissioners are frequently invited to — and expected to — irregularly scheduled meetings in townships or cities, Grubba countered. "They are also expected to conduct on-site inspections," he said.

GRUBBA NOTED that road commissioners in Kent, Jackson, Genesee and Macomb counties are compensated at higher rates than those in Oakland County, even though they generally have responsibility for fewer miles of highway.

Commissioners in those counties also drive county-owned vehicles and, presumably, get other fringe benefits, he said.

Commissioner Thomas A. Law, R-West Bloomfield Township, said he supports the salary increase. "I think commissioners do a good job and should receive pay hikes like others," he said.

Court broadens terms for parole

The Michigan Supreme Court has ruled a person serving a life sentence for conspiracy to commit murder can be considered for parole.

The decision is retroactive, the high court said in appeals coming from Oakland and Livingston counties.

"While defendants in these cases were found guilty of an extremely heinous offense, it cannot be said that they were convicted for first-degree murder," said the opinion written by Justice Robert Griffin.

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Justice Robert Griffin,
Michigan Supreme Court

IN ONE OPINION, the high court resolved two conflicting state Court of Appeals decisions. The Supreme Court:

• Affirmed two Court of Appeals decisions allowing parole in Oakland County cases. George Dodgeon and Jimmie R. Tipsword were convicted by an Oakland Circuit Court jury of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder. Losing the appeal was former prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

• Reversed the decision against Monroe Jahner, who was convicted by a Livingston Circuit Court jury of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder and assault with intent to commit murder. The appeals court held her conspiracy conviction was non-parolable.

THE SUPREME Court found ambiguity in the laws mandating life sentences without parole and said, "Doubt is to be resolved in favor of the accused."

Signing Griffin's opinion were Chief Justice Dorothy Comstock Hiley and Justices Charles Levin, James Brickley, Michael Cavanagh and Dennis Archer.

Justice Patricia Boyle concurred in a separate opinion.

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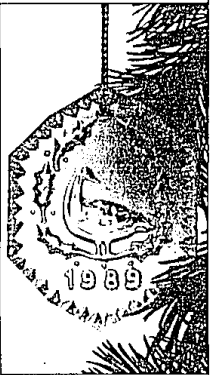
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