

# County eyes "dope money" for car phones

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

As the war on crime becomes increasingly high tech, police agencies in Oakland County continue to have an advantage: They can spend the bad guys' money.

A practical example of that advantage was scheduled to come to the attention of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners today when the prosecutor's office asks for au-

thorization to buy six car phones. The car phones are needed so investigators can communicate with each other more readily, according to Gerald D. Poisson, Oakland County chief assistant prosecutor.

Police radios aren't adequate, or private enough, Poisson told members of the board's finance committee last week. So the prosecutor's office wants authorization for six car phones that can easily be trans-

ferred from car to car.

"It won't cost taxpayer money," Poisson said, because the prosecutor's office, or other police agencies, can frequently get car phones — or money to buy them — when they seize property in drug raids.

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE unanimously approved the request and referred it to today's board meeting where it is expected to be approved.

The price is right, said Commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham. "It's a logical use of resources."

Commissioner James D. Ferrens, D-Pontiac, noted that in many incidents, crooks — or people accused of crimes — already have car phones.

"And I like using the dopers' money," said Ferrens, a Pontiac police officer, referring to using confiscated money to buy phones and pay the monthly usage bills.

Poisson said the cost of the car phones is about \$3,500. Tax money will not be used, he said, because money is available from the pool of cash seized in drug raids.

Expenditures from that pool are monitored by a circuit judge. But approval from commissioners is needed before the judge will approve buying the car phones or other equipment, he explained.

Poisson said other police units — specifically the Rochester Hills contingent of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department — already use car

phones, "with good results."

Asked about car phones, Lt. Jerry Carlin, commander of the Rochester Hills police, said, "I can't say enough good things about them."

Carlin cited the investigation into kidnap-murder of Wanda and Glenn Tarr last November as an example of how car phones are useful.

"We were able to team up federal investigators with our detectives and trace more leads," Carlin said. "We couldn't do that with normal police radio frequencies."

ALSO USING CAR phones, investigators were able to set up a command post inside the Tarr residence without tying up the household lines. "We wanted the house phones open for a possible ransom demand," he said.

One problem with car radios, Carlin said, is that all too often criminals — and the media — have scanners that enable them to monitor law police communications. Mindful that conversations on a car phone can be monitored, Carlin said, "Car phones are not completely private. But they're more private than police radios."

Carlin said investigators used car phones — rather than radios — when they eventually found the bodies of Glenn and Wanda Tarr in Pontiac.

"If I had used the car radio, we would have had television news crews at the scene before our investigators could do their job," he said.

**'We were able to team up federal investigators with our detectives and trace more leads. We couldn't do that with normal police radio frequencies.'**

— Lt. Jerry Carlin  
Commander of Rochester Hills police

Carlin said Rochester Hills purchased six car phones — and pays their monthly phone bills, about \$500 — from the regular police budget.

It's a good expenditure for police, Carlin said. "Car phones help individual detectives become more productive."

## Seniors' heart's day party

Senior citizens are invited to a Valentine's Day party sponsored by the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission, the Northwest Parks and Recreation Senior Committee and the Rochester Older Persons Committee.

The party is from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 14, at the Glen Oaks Golf Course on 13 Mile

Road between Orchard Lake and Middlebelt roads.

Besides social opportunities, the party will feature door prizes, a strolling violinist, a vocalist, cash bar, the Ed Peis Band and a prime rib dinner.

Couples and singles are welcome. The cost is \$15 per person. Additional information is available at 858-0906.



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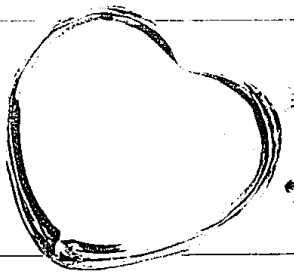
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