

# County balks at endorsing housing center

**By Pat Murphy**  
staff writer

Oakland's fledgling Open Housing Center has met resistance. But the resistance came from an unexpected source, reminding bystanders of the quip by Pogo, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

The center, which officially opens its doors Tuesday in Farmington Hills, is a nonprofit agency that

hopes to promote integration in Oakland neighborhoods, according to Ann Wettlaufer who is co-director with Barbara Talley.

It has an \$80,000 budget and is supported by the communities of Southfield, Lathrup Village, Farmington Hills and Beverly Hills.

While the official opening won't be until 10 a.m., Wettlaufer and Talley last Thursday hoped to get a running start with an endorsement from the Oakland County Board of Commissioners at its regular meeting.

But instead of endorsing the center with a resolution, as expected, commissioners referred the matter to the Public Services Committee for additional review.

"I don't think anybody disagrees with the concept of open housing," said commissioner John Pappageorge, R-Troy. "But I want to find out what passing this resolution means. I want to know if it will cost us money."

THE VOTE was 15 to 7 along partisan lines, with Republicans voting to refer the resolution and Democrats voting for immediate passage.

The one-page resolution, sponsored by commissioners Lillian Jaffe, D-Southfield, and Mark W. Chester, R-Troy, said the board "supports the concept of the Oakland County Center for Open Housing ... for fair and open housing."

It has been reviewed by the board's General Government Committee and recommended to the entire board for adoption. But Pappageorge and others wanted more information.

The resolution is scheduled to go to Public Services Committee Tuesday and could be approved and referred to the board at its next regular meeting on March 22.

"I will feel more comfortable with more information," Pappageorge said. "Another couple of weeks won't matter."

ODDLY ENOUGH, the resolution's two sponsors have mixed reactions to the board's action, which some Democrats considered a rejection.

Oaks was irritated, especially since Wettlaufer, a Birmingham resident, and Talley, from Southfield,

were at the meeting and could answer questions about the center and its goals.

Federal law requires fair and open housing, the Southfield commissioner said. Why couldn't the board wholeheartedly endorse open housing — and the center — instead of dragging its feet?

But Chester said he understands the request for additional information and voted to refer the resolution to committee.

There are a number of agencies concerned with fair housing, Chester said, including the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit and the Michigan Housing Coalition.

How will the fair housing center relate to them? Chester asked. Is there a duplication of effort? "It's reasonable to want answers."

Lawrence R. Pernick, also a Southfield Democrat, privately noted that on March 1, County Executive Daniel T. Murphy, a Republican, proclaimed April as Fair Housing Month. "I'm chucking," he said. "Obviously the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing but what's unusual about that?"

WETTLAUFER SAID she is disappointed the board did not act immediately on the resolution ... disappointed, but not deterred.

"We've already appeared before one committee and I thought we had explained our methods and goals," she said. "But we can do it again."

The center is designed to take affirmative action to integrate neighborhoods, Wettlaufer said. "There has been so little integration, we need to take positive steps."

Appointments can be made between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays at the center, 37935 W. 12 Mile Road. Phone number is 489-1750.

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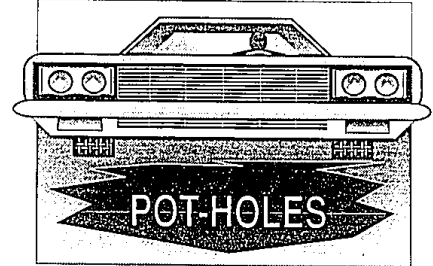
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