

# Rewold remains firm on county waste plan

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Neither low suits nor political opposition will keep Oakland County from going ahead with its controversial solid waste program, according to Roy Rewold, chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

"As far as I'm concerned, we're going ahead with the program as is," the Rochester Republican said Friday.

"They might try to out vote me," he continued, referring to fellow commissioners opposed to the plan, or components of it. "But I'm not sure they can do that. I've got 14 votes, including five Democrats. Rewold made his comments as he and other Republicans commissioners prepared to caucus today about what, if anything, they will do about the threat of a law suit.

Tax foe Richard Headlee has threatened to sue the county if officials proceed with plans to sell \$600 million worth of bonds without approval from voters.

Headlee said he is not particularly opposed to the projects to be funded by the sale of the bonds — the \$10 million computer center, the \$80 million courthouse addition and the \$470 million solid waste plant.

But Headlee contends selling the bonds without voter approval is circumventing the Michigan Constitution, particularly as amended by the 1978 Headlee Amendment limiting tax hikes.

OTHERS ARE opposed to the solid waste plan for a different reason. They don't want the \$175 million waste-to-energy incinerator scheduled to be built in Auburn Hills, directly upwind of the Rochester and Orion Township areas that have supported Rewold for almost two decades.

That group is believed to have encouraged candidates to run against

those commissioners who support the waste program, or more specifically the incinerator they contend threatens their health, lifestyle and property values.

The most identifiable group is RAIL — Residents Against Incinerators and Landfills.

Its members contend Oakland should go ahead with recycling, or even accelerate plans for recycling. But they claim an incinerator is an environmentally destructive weapon that might be avoided by more creative means.

One who feels that way is Judith Ann White, a former nurse who lives in a section of Orion Township with a Poole mailing address. With support from RAIL, she is running against Rewold — hoping to derail the incinerator by defeating... or intimidating... its staunchest supporter.

His support for the incinerator isn't the only reason she's running White said Friday in a telephone interview. "But it's the biggest."

The threatened Headlee suit and/or opposition from anti-incinerator groups has prompted some commissioners to pause and take stock.

Committee meetings last week were paralyzed — and any action on solid waste deferred — as commissioners wondered what they would do about the bonding.

TODAY'S CAUCUS was called to answer that question.

Some, like Commissioner John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy, simply believe voters should vote on a monumental undertaking like the solid waste program — the biggest single project in Oakland history.

Pappageorge and others said early — and often — they wanted residents to vote.

Others came to that conclusion after Headlee threatened his suit and groups like RAIL started to organize their opposition.

But others want to talk the matter over. As Commissioner Jack Olsen, R-Huntington Woods, explained, "I think most commissioners think the solid waste plan is good for the county. But we've got to decide how to fund it."

"We want the caucus so everyone can say what's on their mind," said Olsen, caucus leader. "Once we decide, everybody will be on the same wave length."

Rewold said he understands the need for a caucus. But personally he isn't concerned about the Headlee threat or any political opposition.

For one thing, he's been a big Headlee supporter for years.

Rewold, Nancy McConnell (R-Bloomfield Hills) and also challenged in the primary) and other commissioners — as well as County Executive Daniel T. Murphy — have been Headlee supporters for more than a decade. Some of them circulated Headlee petitions in the 1978 anti-tax campaign.

Headlee admits they are some of his biggest and most important allies. "I need them more than they need me," he acknowledged Friday in a phone conversation.

More important, Rewold is convinced the solid waste program — complete with the incinerator — is the way to go. And he has opinions from three separate law firms that selling bonds to finance it does not violate the Michigan Constitution.

So as far as Rewold is concerned, today's caucus is unnecessary.

"We're going ahead with the solid waste program because the county needs it," he said.



Richard Headlee



Roy Rewold

## Waste problems everywhere

Roy Rewold was mistaken if he hoped to get away from problems related to solid waste — and the controversy they generate — when he went to Alaska for a conference of the National Association of Counties.

Rewold, County Executive Daniel T. Murphy and Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, were in Anchorage for a meeting of the Western Region of the NAC that concluded last week.

Friday, his first day back, Rewold acknowledged that he sort of expected to get away from thoughts about solid waste. "But I was wrong," he said.

"Even in Alaska they're having problems with solid waste," said Rewold, chairman of the board. "Next to protecting the forests, that's their biggest problem. The newspapers are full of it."

Wolf, however, received a little good news Friday. The candidate who filed against him in the Republican primary election has withdrawn from the contest.

Warren R. Dolan of Farmington withdrew his name from the contest by 4 p.m. Friday, the deadline for announced candidates to withdraw.

## 'low priority'

Tax foe Richard Headlee Friday said he is "too busy with other matters" to think much about going ahead with his threatened lawsuit over bonding Oakland County's solid waste program.

"Right now that (the threatened suit) is a very low priority," Headlee said in a telephone interview. "I'm more concerned about something bigger."

Headlee was contacted after two separate committees of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners last week deferred any action on solid waste because of the threatened suit.

Both the planning and building committee and the finance committee discussed solid waste, but put off action pending a GOP caucus meeting today.

In March, Headlee threatened to sue the county if it goes ahead with plans to sell \$600 million worth of bonds to finance three projects without first getting voter approval.

Selling bonds without a vote violates the state constitution, Headlee contends.

In Friday's interview, Headlee said he still holds that position — "very strongly. But other matters are more important."

Headlee was referring to the pending suit in which Oakland County and County Executive Daniel Murphy

contend the Michigan Department of Mental Health and Michigan Department of Management and Budget violated the state own constitution.

Headlee last week sent letters to local municipalities asking them to support Oakland County as the suit is reviewed in the higher courts.

Asked if that means he will not sue Oakland if it proceeds with bonding for its solid waste program without a vote, Headlee said: "I didn't say that."

"I just said that I've got more important things on my mind. There's almost \$800 million at stake (with the Oakland law suit)."

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