

Visits complete, OCC to select chancellor

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The Oakland Community College Trustees has scheduled a special meeting for Monday, with a majority of the board ready to pick a new chancellor.

"Don't quote me (by name), but you can look for the white smoke to go up the chimney," said one trustee, referring to the way cardinals within the Roman Catholic Church signal they have selected a new pope.

Trustees have been searching for a new chancellor since May, and have narrowed the field of candidates to two, Patsy J. Fulton, president of a branch of the Oakland Community College and Thomas

Ten Hoeve, president of Oakland Community College in Des Plaines, Ill.

Four trustees were scheduled to go to Dallas this week for an on-site visit at Fulton's home campus. They made a similar visit to Oakland Community College earlier this month to visit Ten Hoeve's home campus.

"I think we have two highly qualified candidates," said OCC Board chairman Sandra L. Ritter. "I can only speak for myself, but the next OCC chancellor will be one of the two (Fulton or Ten Hoeve) and I'll be ready to vote Monday."

OCC has been looking for a chancellor since May, when R. Stephen Nicholson announced his resignation to take a similar post with the Higher Colleges of Technology of the

United Arab Emirates in the Persian Gulf.

Following guidelines suggested by the Association of Community College Trustees, the board advertised nationally for a replacement and subsequently narrowed the field from about 50, to six and finally two.

Most trustees say they are generally happy with the selection process, and fully expect to select Fulton or Ten Hoeve as the next chancellor.

There was some speculation the board might decide neither Fulton nor Ten Hoeve was "the right candidate for the right job" and simply begin the search process anew.

But there is little chance of that happening, according to trustees who say they are ready to select

from the two finalists.

"We've put a lot of time into this selection process," said Trustee Richard A. Blom of Rochester Hills. "I'm absolutely ready to vote Monday."

Board chairman Ritter said she and other trustees are going to Dallas "with an open mind" for the on-site visit to Fulton's home turf.

"We'll probably discuss the matter in private," Ritter said. "But I'll be ready to vote Monday."

Trustee Judith Wiser said she is undecided. "Both candidates are highly qualified." But neither has proven administrative experience at the level required at the OCC level, she said.

Wiser said she will keep an open mind. "But if I decide neither is the

right person, I'm not reluctant to start (the selection process) over."

Wiser and Trustee David Hackett, board vice president, have not totally abandoned the idea of changing the selection process to consider acting chancellor Richard Thompson, for full-time appointment.

Under guidelines stipulated by the board early in the search process, Thompson excluded himself for consideration for job permanently by accepting the post of acting chancellor. Hackett and Wiser have suggested the board change its own procedure and allow Thompson to apply for the full-time position.

But they were outvoted by other trustees who admit Thompson would be an outstanding candidate, but in-

sist the board would lose credibility if it changed its selection process.

"I still think Thompson would be an excellent candidate," said Wiser, a resident of West Bloomfield.

Hackett agrees that Thompson would be an excellent candidate. "But there's a good chance we're going to make our selection Monday. Fulton and Ten Hoeve have very good credentials."

Asked the likelihood of the new chancellor being announced next week, trustee Douglas H. Wakefield of Southfield said, "I'm not sure. I, for one, haven't decided yet."

To name a new chancellor, the board needs a majority of its seven members.

'Graying' prisoners present problems in Michigan

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

The phrase, "Lock 'em up and throw away the key" causes penologist William Lovett to pause, especially after leading a recently completed, yearlong study on the graying of Michigan's inmate population.

"What we are really saying when we suggest throwing away the key, is the state has the responsibility of providing a comparable community standard of care forever. The courts have held that inmates are entitled to such a standard," said Lovett of the state Department of Corrections.

Providing a comparable standard is made more challenging for some 400 prisoners, the estimated 300 men and 20 women serving time in Michigan prisons who are 60 years or older.

er. Sixty-five of the total number are over 70 years of age, five are over 80.

Their numbers are expected to double by 1995, the result of mandatory sentencing and increasing convictions among the elderly for crimes of passion, sexual misconduct and drug offenses, according to Lovett's study.

It is the second group that is perhaps most unsettling, the 233 senior citizens who are first-time offenders.

"YOU ARE BLENDING serious violent crime with a human twist. The normal aging process may well have figured in the crime. Less impulse control, senility or forgetting medication may all be precipitating factors," Lovett said.

Some "genuinely forget what they

have done," continuing to maintain innocence long after conviction.

Three years ago, a then 74-year-old World War II veteran awarded a Purple Heart, was sentenced to life for murder. Married for 48 years, he was retired from a job where he had been employed 31 years.

He and some 60 other old inmates are incarcerated at the Lakeland Correctional Facility, a single-level former hospital that accommodates wheelchair, walkers and other paraphernalia of the elderly.

Across the way at the Florence Crane Women's Facility, a grandmother bides time with an estimated

20 other aged female prisoners. On a November morning in 1987, "the past years of mental abuse came to an end" when she killed her husband. She is scheduled for release in 1992.

Another woman, a former manager and buyer for a large corporation and now convicted of murder, speaks of her situation.

"The fact that he was abusive made no difference. The fact that I had never committed a crime made no difference. I became a victim along with my husband. He is dead and I am serving a life sentence."

OF THE ELDERLY who are first-

time offenders, 79 are serving life sentences with no possibility of parole. Another 34 are sentenced to terms of 15 years or more, including two with sentences of 50 years each.

A 62-year-old armed robber is perhaps typical of the 69 elderly inmates who are multiple offenders. Serving 25 to 40 years, the sentence reflects Habitual Offender status. He has four prior convictions on the same charge. Still, he is eligible for parole in 11 years, 2001.

The cost of caring for aging inmates is approximately the same as for other prisoners, providing they are in good health. Lovett said otherwise, medical costs can be high.

There are 200 chronically ill inmates of all ages, including those suffering from traditional aging diseases like hypertension, heart attack and stroke, as well as cancer and AIDS.

The expense of medical care for all inmates reflects that of the general population, according to Lovett, highest in the final year of life and particularly so the last three months.

As a population, prisoners tend to be more prone to illness, either because "they were abused in their formative years or they didn't take care of themselves in later years."



John Burrows



Leon Lowe

Inmates optimistic despite long odds

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

If John Burrows or Leon Lowe of the Western Wayne Correctional Facility in Plymouth are any measure, inmates facing aging and dying in prison prefer ignoring the disturbing prospect.

"I look to get out someday, if I can. I'm hoping," said Burrows, 56, a man of gentle demeanor who is serving natural life for the 1973 slaying of an Oakland County woman he once dated. His only hope of release is a governor's pardon. In eight years, there has been only one granted in Michigan.

Lowe, who has spent 19 of his 59 years in prison and now faces a life sentence for sexual assault, nods. "I'm already old." But, his chances for release are infinitely better. He is now eligible for parole but knows that as a fourth-time offender, it will not be easily granted even though previous convictions were on drug charges.

Both men look for a "light at the end of the tunnel," miraculous release. In the interim, they concentrate on the present.

"PEOPLE HERE don't like to look at getting old," Burrows said. "Prison isn't made for human beings to get old in. It's not for people who are looking to die."

He eases by "doing (time) day by day. Some are good days. Some are bad days." A Michigan native who has become a master auto mechanic in prison, Burrows' only visitors are three adult daughters who come annually.

LOWE CONSIDERS HIMSELF more fortunate than Burrows because "eventually, I know I'll get out of here."

"John. There's a possibility maybe someday down the road, after he's served 35 years or so. It's extremely hard for guys doing life like him. I've talked to scores of old-timers. They do their time day by day. You can't help but sympathize with them."

Lowe, an articulate man who has earned a college degree in prison, tutors other inmates enrolled in classes and, until recently, helped coordinate a college program offered by Schoolcraft College.

In terms of time spent in prison,

Burrows and Lowe are considered "old-timers," experienced cons who serve as sources of knowledgeable advice for novices or younger and newer inmates.

"Fortunately," Lowe said, "they have respect for John and me. If they need assistance, have a problem, they know they can come talk to us without all the bull."

John is most frequently asked questions about "how I go wrong in the street and family stuff, like their wife is mad and wants a divorce. What should they do?"

Lowe elaborates. "The youngsters want information from the old inmates on how to get life in order. I don't coddle them, so some don't talk to me long."

In recent years, he has noticed a significant difference in attitudes among many of the new arrivals. "Today, a lot of them are not interested in getting life in order."

EDUCATION IS THE KEY," for successful re-entry into the outside world, both men agree.

"I honestly believe," Lowe said, "if I was on the parole board I wouldn't release a man until he had completed training of some kind, his GED (high school equivalency), vocational training, something. You have to have a marketable skill upon release."

The correctional facility offers programs in basic and remedial education and vocational training in auto mechanics and building trades. An associate degree program through Schoolcraft College has been temporarily discontinued because of a lack of funds.

A whole lot of these kids need a chance. A lot of them would like to get into computers and welding. We don't have either," Burrows said, adding education is important. "But they've got to want to do it. You can't force a man."

Lowe expresses one final thought. In view of prison overcrowding and skyrocketing costs in containing prisoners, "I suggest a second look at people like us. Guys like John would be productive citizens if turned loose."

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