

Kevorkian faces civil, criminal court actions

Civil court action to stop an Oakland County physician from using the controversial suicide machine he invented is scheduled to continue Monday, despite the doctor's refusal to testify on the grounds he might incriminate himself.

The trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian of Royal Oak is to resume at 9 a.m. before Judge Alice L. Gilbert even though the physician repeatedly cited constitutional safeguards under the Fifth Amendment when proceedings began Tuesday.

Criminal charges against Kevorkian are scheduled to resume Wednesday in district court in Independence Township at his preliminary examination on the charge of murder.

Kevorkian faces both civil and criminal action for his role in the June 4 death of Janet Adkins, the 53-year-old woman from Portland, Oregon, who allegedly died after activating the physician's suicide machine.

Family members have publicly confirmed Adkins, a victim of Alzheimer's disease, sought out Kevorkian to help her end her own life.

THAT ADKINS might have wanted to die has relatively little impact on Kevorkian's role in her death, according to Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson, who said he has a legal obligation to press civil and criminal charges against the physician under Michigan law.

Thompson initiated the civil action to permanently bar Kevorkian from again using his suicide machine shortly after Adkins' death.

The prosecutor filed first degree murder charges against Kevorkian Monday, citing "a constitutional duty" to enforce state law.

"He (Kevorkian) can not avoid his criminal culpability by the clever use of a switch," Thompson said at a press conference, referring to Kevorkian's machine which allows a person to press a switch that releases a fatal dose of drugs into his or her veins.

Thompson said not prosecuting Kevorkian would be a corruption of the law and "turn Oakland County into the suicide mecca of our nation."

Road official gets nod third time

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Republican county commissioners have nominated Richard V. Vogt of White Lake Township for a third term on the Oakland County Road Commission.

Commissioners did not discuss, however, the fate of another road commissioner accused of sexually assaulting a Royal Oak teen-ager.

"We will need more information before taking any action," said Commissioner Roy Rewold of Oakland Township, chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

He was referring to road commissioner James E. Lanni of Royal Oak, who last week was arrested on the complaint of a 15-year-old girl who said on two occasions he fondled her before forcing her to have sexual intercourse.

Lanni stood mute when arraigned in district court in Royal Oak on multiple counts of third-degree sexual conduct. His preliminary examination is scheduled for Friday.

The assaults are alleged to have happened in April at Lanni's home and last month in his car, according to a complaint filed with the Oakland County Prosecutor's office.

Republican commissioners renominated Vogt and other appointees Monday during a caucus in Bloomfield Township.

APPOINTEES MUST be confirmed by a vote of the entire board of commissioners, possibly at next week's meeting.

But being nominated by the GOP caucus is tantamount to appointment because Republicans outnumber Democrats on the 27-member board 19 to 8.

More than 50 people, including commissioners and private citizens, were appointed to a variety of boards, committees, councils and commissions, such as the Community Mental Health Board, the Airport Committee, the Substance Abuse Advisory Council and Oakland County Historical Commission.

But Vogt's nomination probably attracted the most attention.

For one thing, he had opposition during the caucus. Also nominated was Robert W. Grusnick, mayor of Auburn Hills.

Furthermore, the position of road commissioner is a relatively visible position. The three road commissioners set and oversee policy for building and maintaining about 2,400 miles of roads in the county.

The commission has \$54 employees and a 1991 budget of \$54 million.

Road commissioners are considered part-time employees. Commissioners are paid \$10,000 annually, drive county-owned cars and receive fringe benefits like medical insurance and retirement benefits.

Vogt is a retired accountant. He initially worked with the Chrysler Corp. and subsequently General Dynamics after the company purchased part of the automaker.

IF VOGT COMPLETES his third term as expected, he will be one of the few people in recent history to serve 18 years on the road commission, according to public information officer John Joy.

The GOP caucus did not publicly discuss Lanni, who at one time was a county commissioner and is serving

his first six-year term on the road commission.

In private, however, commissioners expressed shock and surprise as well as a firm resolve to presume him innocent until proven otherwise.

"It would be inappropriate for us to comment at this point," summarized Rewold.

Road commissioners are appointed by the county board. Although they aren't sure of the procedure, individual commissioners said they believe they can remove someone from the road commission for cause.

So far, Lanni, whose term expires Dec. 31, 1994, has made no indication he plans to resign. He was unavailable earlier this week.

In the meantime, Lanni remains a road commissioner and cannot not be legally prevented from attending meetings or carrying out official duties.

GOP nominates county board leaders

Commissioners Roy Rewold of Oakland Township and Nancy McConnell of Bloomfield Hills have been nominated for re-election as chairman and vice chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Both were nominated Monday at a caucus of Republicans on the board.

They and others nominated at the GOP caucus must be confirmed by a vote of the entire board. But nomination is tantamount to confirmation because Republicans outnumber Democrats 19 to eight.

Commissioner John G. Pappageorge of Troy was elected chairman of the Republican caucus, succeeding commissioner John E. Olsen of Huntington Woods.

Other commissioners nominated for board positions include:

- G. William Caddell, Waite Lake, and Donald E. Bishop of Rochester Hills, for chairman and vice chairman of the finance committee.

- Richard G. Skarritt, Milford, and Donald W. Jensen, chairman and vice chairman of the general government committee.

- Marilynn E. Gosling of Bloomfield Hills and Thomas A. Law of West Bloomfield as chairwoman and vice chairman of the personnel committee.

- Larry Crake of Pontiac and David L. Moffitt of Bloomfield Township, chairman and vice chairman of the planning and building committee.

- Ruth A. Johnson of Holly and Donn L. Wolf, chairwoman and vice chairman of the public service committee.

Bells Ring on campus

Oakland Community College's Auburn Hills Campus will present the Bellissima Bell Choir, featuring music of the holiday season, as the fourth program in the Auburn Art Series on Friday, Dec. 7.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. in the "Performance Space," Building F, Room 199. Admission is \$3 at the door.

The Auburn Hills Campus is located at 2900 Featherstone Road, two miles east of the Pontiac Silverdome. Free parking will be available in the student lots adjacent to Building F.

For further information, please call 340-6546.

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