

Survey reports majority supports waste program

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Eighty percent of those responding to a telephone survey said Oakland needs an "integrated waste disposal program" that includes incineration, according to findings released Wednesday by a research firm hired by the county's department of public works.

The survey, taken from Feb. 8-12, indicated that only 4 percent of those responding are against an integrated waste program, said Robert L. Van Dam, chairman of Nordhaus Research Inc. in Southfield.

About 600 households were contacted during the survey. Van Dam said during a press conference at the County Commissioners' Auditorium. But that sampling is large enough to conclude that findings are probably representative of the opinions held by the general population, he said.

Oakland is attempting to implement a \$500 million solid waste program that includes two controversial incinerators, a new facility in Auburn Hills and a reopened plant in Madison Heights.

County commissioners have been bombarded with criticism about the incinerators. The telephone survey was commissioned to determine the extent, if any, that such criticism reflects sentiment of the county population in general.

"THE SURVEY is important because it means most of the residents agree with the course we are on."

'I'm sure the survey won't make one bit of difference to Rochester Hills. We're still going to oppose it (incineration).' — Jeffrey W. Cobee
Rochester Hills official

said commissioner Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Hills, vice chairman of the board of commissioners. McConnell said the survey supports the board's decision not to put the solid waste plan to a vote of the people. "Most residents would have supported it anyway."

A representative from Rochester Hills, one of the communities most opposed to incineration, said the survey results would probably not cause any opponents to change their minds. "I haven't studied the findings," said Jeffrey W. Cobee, operations coordinator for Rochester Hills, who attended the press conference. "But I'm sure they would be different if a significant number of people close to the incinerators were contacted."

"I'm sure the survey won't make one bit of difference to Rochester Hills. We're still going to oppose the incinerator," Cobee said.

According to Van Dam, the county was divided into four areas. About 150 households in each area were contacted, with each being asked a series of questions during a 13-minute interview.

SUPPORT OR opposition to an integrated waste disposal program was almost uniform in each of the four areas, Van Dam said, regardless of whether or not the area included one of the incinerators proposed in the county plan.

Eighty percent of those responding favored an integrated solid waste program, including incineration, while 4 percent opposed it, Van Dam said. About 16 percent were undecided.

The small minority who object to an integrated solid waste disposal program (4 percent) do so on the grounds of perceived cost or increased taxes, according to the survey.

THE NIMBY (not in my backyard) phenomenon was clearly evident in survey responses, according to the study. While respondents said there is a clear-waste problem and incinerators are a necessary part of the solution, they did not hesitate to say they wouldn't want an incinerator in their neighborhood or town.

School choice

Hot debate expected soon in Lansing

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Look for "schools of choice" to be an issue in Michigan in two months or so. Don't look for it to be a panacea. Expect a lot of distrust in the educational establishment.

That's the prognosis for a plan by which parents would choose the schools their youngsters would attend, and educators would be empowered to offer specialized programs for them to choose from.

"Choice won't be on the front burner for two months," lobbyist Tom White told his boss, the Michigan Association of School Boards, in a convention last week.

Added Mike Addonizio, the former college professor who is Gov. John Engler's education adviser: "We do not have a full-blown program for choice. The governor does not view it as a panna, not as an end in itself."

A year of planning would be needed for choice, said Addonizio, pointing to fall of 1992 as a starting date. The governor and Legislature would be interested in supporting the costs, particularly counseling for families and transportation.

WHITE SAID MASH, which represents the elected trustees who govern school districts, is more interested in finding equity between distantly poor and well-off districts. Choice detracts from the

real issues of finance and school improvement."

MASH's interests are getting the state to fund transportation, staff development and parental counseling if a "choice" program is adopted here. "We want to be there if this is imposed," White said.

In this area, many districts are wary of choice, fearing their quality program would be inundated with applicants from lesser districts.

ADDONIZIO'S words were reassuring to trustees. An economist and former state Senate Fiscal Agency analyst, he used the words the governor is interested in.

Engler's goal is improved pupil outcomes, and choice is only one element in that program, Addonizio said. More important elements are state aid, equity between districts and site-based management, he said.

Engler and the State Board of Education have endorsed inter-district choice, and Addonizio said an additional year of planning would be needed. The governor would be interested in providing state grants for pilot programs, transportation costs and formula aid.

To an Oakland County school board member who asked how a limited number of slots would be allocated, Addonizio replied it would be done by random selection. Everyone seeking a place

has the same chance. We wouldn't let free (receiving) schools choose. In large districts which offer choice programs, they guarantee a family one of their first three choices," he said.

THE STATE WILL come close to giving districts the monetary aid increase they want next fall, it appeared.

Lobbyist White said public schools will need an increase of 4 to 6 percent to "keep pace with inflation" on top of rising retirement costs.

Addonizio said they can expect better than 4 percent, which is not remarkable by mid-1990s standards, but is good in a period of downgrading state government.

K-12 education is a very important human service, said Rep. James O'Neill, D-Saginaw, chair of the House appropriations subcommittee. Over the last 10 years, a lot of money has been diverted from education to other programs.

THE LAWMAKERS said it's unlikely the state would follow through with money for classroom computers, a program started by former Gov. James Blanchard. "It is not his (Engler's) favorite program," said DeGraw. "School districts were notified they would purchase computers at their own risk. Any computer money will come from the K-12 slice of the pie (general state aid)."

Two appointed to Annapolis

Two Oakland County seniors have been appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, the office of U.S. Rep. William Broomfield has announced.

They are Justin P. Orlich of Bloomfield Hills and John C. Cowan of Farmington Hills.

If they accept the appointments, Orlich and Cowan will begin seven weeks of training, called "Habe

Summer," in July. The academic year begins in late August.

Orlich, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Orlich, is a senior at the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy.

Cowan, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Cowan, is a senior at Brother Rice High School.

Other qualified nominees may be accepted until May 1.

Genealogists slate meeting

The Oakland County Genealogical Society presents a program on "Organizing Your Genealogical Junk" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 4, at the Baldwin Public Library in Birmingham.

A panel of society members will explain the use of various genealogical forms and other techniques they have found helpful in organizing, storing and retrieving family information.

The meeting will be held in the Henry Hosts of the library, located at 300 W. Merrill two blocks south of Maple and two blocks east of Southfield Road.

The public is invited at no charge. For more information, call Jane Van Dragt at 646-0223.

Sane/Freeze hosts meeting

Michigan Sane/Freeze is sponsoring a second town meeting to address the war in the Persian Gulf, 3 p.m. Sunday, March 3, in Northwest Unitarian Church, 23025 Northwest Highway, at Mount Vernon, Southfield.

All viewpoints are welcome to be expressed, Sane/Freeze members said.

Additional information is available by calling Sane/Freeze offices in Ferndale, 548-0929 or Ann Arbor, 663-3913.

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