

County may reconsider Jewish War Vets' request

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners is expected to take a second look at a request from the Jewish War Veterans for \$5,000 to defer the cost of the organization's 50th anniversary.

"I think (the request) was turned down on the basis of incomplete information," said commissioner Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park.

Aaron said he will ask his colleagues to reconsider the request during today's regular meeting of the county board. The request has been approved by the board's public services committee, but turned down by the finance committee.

At issue, commissioners generally agree, is where and when the county grants money to private organizations.

The county gets requests from numerous organizations, said commissioner Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Hills and vice chairman of the board. "They're all deserving," she said. "But when does the county draw the line?"

The Jewish War Veterans asked for \$5,000 to help defer costs associ-

ated with its golden anniversary celebration in Southfield in June.

THAT REQUEST is almost identical to one received — and granted — last year when the Military Order of the Purple Heart held its national convention in Novi.

But times have changed, insists commissioner G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake and chairman of the finance committee. "This is a very tight year."

Even in good times, however, commissioners should take a very close — and prudent approach — to granting such requests, said commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham, a member of the finance committee who voted against the request. "It's a matter of precedent."

Aaron, however, said his colleagues should reconsider. "We should be doing everything we can to encourage convention business."

Aaron theorized his colleagues voted against the request because they are concerned all 12 of the veteran organizations in Michigan could make similar requests — and demand equal consideration.

Existing state law enables cities or counties to provide public money to chartered veterans groups holding

a convention within their boundaries.

However, Aaron insists, "There is no danger of that happening in Oakland County." That being the case, commissioners should approve the funding since the Jewish War Veterans is the only group to make such a request this year.

COMMISSIONER LAWRENCE R. Pernick, D-Southfield, said he favors the county granting the request from the Jewish War Veterans as a matter of uniformity. "What we do for one, we should do for all."

"But the (Jewish) veterans said they didn't want the request to become a big political issue," Pernick said.

Commissioner John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy, voted against the grant. He contends the appropriate way to handle such requests is during the budget process.

If a specific amount is set aside for such purposes, he said, all groups that might qualify for public funds could compete on equal footing.

Correspondingly, commissioners would be obligated to review each request on the basis of merit and decide accordingly.

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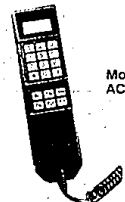
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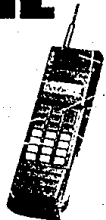
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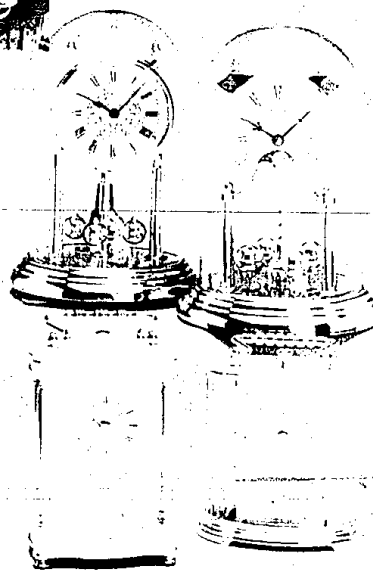
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