

Prosecutor to defend GOP boundary plan

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Now that both sides have hired legal consultants, the challenge to a plan for redrawing boundaries of county commission districts could move swiftly in the Michigan Court of Appeals, according to Donald Tucker, chairman of the Oakland Democratic Party.

"I expect some action by the end of the month or early in November," said Tucker, a lawyer who last month filed suit against the reapportionment plan drafted by his Republican counterpart, James M. Alexander, a lawyer with Foster, Swift, Col-

lins and Smith of Birmingham. Tucker, Alexander and three other members of the Oakland Reapportionment Committee started to move the process along Wednesday when they authorized legal counsel to defend against the Democratic challenge.

The reapportionment committee agreed that Oakland County prosecutor Richard Thompson will represent the Republican position, with consulting help from Alexander's law firm.

Alexander said the choice was obvious. "We're the best county in the state, we should have the best representation... that's my firm. To

hire another firm would be to penalize Oakland simply because I'm a member of this firm."

HIRING ALEXANDER'S law firm raised eyebrows among some Democrats, who say it appeared to be a conflict of interest. County commissioner Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park, assailed the hiring at Thursday's board meeting.

Another commissioner, Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield, said he objected to the reapportionment committee "going outside the normal channels" in authorizing up to \$5,000 in consulting fees.

County procedures require that an agency, like the reapportionment committee, seek legal advice through the county corporation counsel, Pernick said. Procedure also dictates that additional legal fees be approved by the board of commissioners, he said. "Those policies weren't followed in this case."

Despite complaints from fellow

Democrats, Tucker Friday defended hiring Alexander's firm.

"The prosecutor's office will do most of the work," Tucker said, "with limited help from Jim's (Alexander's) firm. There's a cap of \$5,000, so we're not talking about a great deal of money."

"A client (in this case the reapportionment committee) should get to pick its own lawyers — and Foster, Swift, Collins and Smith are among the best."

Tucker said he and other members of the reapportionment committee — Thompson, County Clerk Lynn Allen and Treasurer C. Hugh Dohany — voted to hire the firm. "Alexander obtained (from voting) to avoid any conflict of interest."

Democrats, by the way, have already hired "the best (legal counsel) in the state," said Tucker. That's Ted Sachs and Mark Brewer in Lansing, at an expected cost of \$50,000 to \$75,000.

The Democratic Party will pay its

legal fees from its own coffers. Tucker said, even though he's convinced they should be paid by the county.

"This is a public policy issue," he said. "It's not Don Tucker's or the Democratic Party's. It's an issue that vitally concerns the average citizen."

TUCKER AND the Democrats contend the proposed Republican reapportionment plan ignores redistricting guidelines and gerrymanders districts to enhance GOP political power.

"I'm convinced the three-judge panel will take one look and rule that we're right," said Tucker. After a pause he said, "But then, I also

said U-M would beat Florida State."

Alexander Friday said he is confident his plan will prevail in court. "But I still think we might work out some kind of compromise with Democrats."

Among other things, his plan reduces the number of county commission districts from 27 to 25. It also sets up a number of districts in which incumbents, Republicans and Democrats alike, would run against each other in 1992, assuming they all seek re-election and none changes residences.

"I'm very confident my plan will hold up in court," said Alexander. No word, however, on whether he picked Michigan or Florida State.

Area students offered scholarships.

The University of Dayton has offered several local students academic scholarships for the 1991-92 year. The program is designed to recognize prospective students who have attained exceptional academic records.

Sarah M. Porretta of Bloomfield Hills was offered the Frank J. Jauch Family Scholarship and Molly P. Janik of Southfield was awarded the Dean of Arts-Sciences Scholarship.

Stephen E. Goodman of Troy was the recipient of the Presidents Scholarship and Christopher J. Merve of West Bloomfield received the Special Achievement Award.

Janet C. Mueller of Farmington Hills was offered the University Leadership Award and Julie Kronk of Farmington was awarded the Dean of Arts-Sciences Scholarship. Julie A. Rotman of Union Lake received the Dean of Arts-Sciences Scholarship.

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