

Staying on

Patterson retains 6 of Murphy's key people

PAT MURPHY

Six holdovers from the outgoing administration have landed jobs with Oakland County executive-elect L. Brooks Patterson.

The six, who held key jobs with outgoing executive Daniel T. Murphy, were introduced Thursday at a press conference by Patterson, who said he would announce the remainder of his appointments on Dec. 1.

In what was his second press conference since being elected, Patterson also offered condolences to the nine staffers he fired.

"All of these individuals have long and distinguished records of public service," Patterson said of his new appointees. "And they are committed, as I am, to moving Oakland County forward. I wanted my own team with fresh ideas."

But that should not reflect poorly on the Murphy staffers he fired, Patterson emphasized. "They are competent and dedicated, and I'm sure they will get comparable jobs. The hardest job facing any new executive is telling people they no longer have a job."

Patterson, who easily defeated Democratic challenger Elizabeth "Betty" Howe in the Nov. 3 election, was criticized for the way he handled the dismissals of the nine Murphy appointees.

Critics, including some of those dismissed, berated Patterson for acting so soon after the election, rather than granting a six-month waiting period as they said he promised during the campaign.

They also accused Patterson of being callous by notifying them by letter — delivered while he was on

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L. Brooks Patterson



vacation — rather than telling them personally.

Patterson was defensive, almost apologetic. But he steadfastly defended his decisions and the way they were carried out.

"I never promised a grace period," he said. "I said I would take about six months to review county departments, but I never said I'd wait that long before making changes."

The firings were handled deliberately and fairly, he insisted. "I patterned my transition on the model Gov. John Engler used when he took office."

To illustrate, Patterson noted that news of the dismissals were conveyed in letters over his signature delivered swiftly and decisively. To linger or delay, he said, "would have been cruel."

He deliberately chose people outside government to deliver the news, Patterson said, so there would be no hard feelings to cause internal problems later on.

Asked why he returned campaign contributions, Patterson said it would have been "unfair"

to do otherwise. "I wouldn't say it would have been unethical to accept those contributions, that's too strong. But I simply didn't feel right about it."

One dismissed appointee termed the return of his contribution as "almost insulting."

Patterson's new appointees are:

■ C. Vincent Luzzi, who will serve as personnel director, the same position he held under Murphy.

■ Stanley B. Fayne, reappointed as director of risk management and safety.

■ Jack C. Hays, reappointed as director of the county's department of corporation counsel.

■ Roger J. Smith, reappointed as deputy director of county solid waste.

■ J. David VanderVeen, who was the county's manager of aviation under Murphy, will be the new director of central services.

■ David W. Ross, the county's new director of public works. He was manager of the county's facilities, maintenance and operations under Murphy.

Asked why there are no women or minorities among his new appointees, Patterson responded, "Hold off on your criticism. I intend to have women and minorities in the appointments I announce on Dec. 1."

Patterson endorses Archer, Alexander

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Two lawyers — one a Democrat, the other a Republican — drew endorsements from L. Brooks Patterson.

Those endorsements reflect Patterson's personal preference, of course. But they also indicate how the Oakland County executive-elect interacts with diverse players in southeastern Michigan.

At a press conference called Thursday to announce some appointments, Patterson endorsed Democrat Dennis Archer in his bid to become mayor of Detroit, and Republican James M. Alexander, who's battling to keep his job as the county GOP chairman.

In response to questions, Patterson said he knew Archer from dealings on several levels, including some when Archer was a member of the Michigan

Supreme Court.

Archer resigned that post in 1990, amid speculation he would run for mayor of Detroit. Archer, a former ally of incumbent Mayor Coleman A. Young, held a press conference Thursday to announce his candidacy. "I don't want to jinx my campaign," Patterson chuckled. "But I've known Archer to be a professional" with a high degree of integrity.

Patterson mentioned Alexander the day after a meeting at which some disgruntled Republicans served notice they were not pleased with Alexander's leadership and indicated they would try to oust him as county chairman.

The Nov. 3 general election was successful for Oakland County Republicans, who under Alexander's chairmanship delivered the county to President George Bush.

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