

# County from page A1

and understanding of what the county board is and does.

"The county government is one of the least-known forms...and information should be available to the interested public," he said.

Sever, a printer and former Hills city councilman now completing his first year on the commission - and his first also as Republican caucus vice-chair - cited his work in creating a utilities task force on electric power outages, upon which both he and Moffitt serve.

The sponsor of the resolution creating the task force, Sever said the intent is "to exercise the power the county has to make the utilities accountable."

Moffitt said the upgrading of the 911 system and the police radio communications - the latter of which gives all the county's law enforcement agencies a way of communicating more quickly and efficiently - "has got to be the top issue the commission has dealt with."

The 911 enhancements - federally mandated for the year 2000 - permit cell-phone calls to go directly to local police instead of being routed to the state police.

They also permit law enforcement agencies to virtually pinpoint the location of wireless callers, thus improving emergency response.

The police upgrade - prompted by technical problems that kept police agencies at the Wixom Ford Plant shootings from coordinating their efforts - also is highly significant, said Moffitt.

"This was a huge technical, political, financial and policy task," Moffitt said of the nearly 30-month-long effort, which involved securing federal radio frequencies, coordinating technology, placing radio towers and "the political process of getting everybody to agree to do it."

"In terms of personal safety, in terms of quality of life, this is the most dramatic step forward in ensuring public safety in this county in recent memory," said Moffitt, now in his eighth term as a commissioner.

A 4 percent (\$6.84 per year) surcharge on county residential phone lines was approved by commissioners to fund the ongoing part of the upgrade, but Moffitt vowed to remain "vigilant" about reducing it "if operating efficiencies permit."

## 'Different way'

Sever, while agreeing the upgrades were important, said however he "would have liked to see us find a different way to fund" them. "But either way, it costs the taxpayers money."

As for stormwater and sewerage disposal, Sever said the establishment of a \$5 million per year infrastructure fund recommended by County Executive L. Brooks Patterson was "a major accomplishment."

"A lot of communities throughout the county are going to be faced with major repairs and improvements to water and sewer lines," he said.

"It's certainly going to help get it started," and will help supplement "other things that have to be done," Sever added.

"What's important is, it's money we hope will have an impact on surface flooding and back-up in peoples' basements, where improvements need to be made."

## Over \$400,000

Farmington and Farmington Hills are going to get more than \$400,000 per year over the next five years, he said, but it's not tax money: It's interest and other earnings from a delinquent-tax revolving fund.

Moffitt, recently appointed to the National Association of Counties' environment, energy and land use committee, wants "a comprehensive...infrastructure improvement" on stormwater and sewerage disposal.

Regarding roads, Sever is urging the commission to "put pressure on the state to do needs assessment with roads statewide" as a way to "influence and improve Oakland County funding."

"If they do it based on needs rather than the formula they're using now" - which employs linear feet of roads per county - Sever said he is certain Oakland County "will get more money because our needs are certainly greater."

Moffitt said improving roads in the county - in particular, widening roads as the population expands northward - is "the most immediate need...for residents to live and work."

Sever, who sponsored the resolution creating the county's utilities

task force as a response to the continuing Detroit Edison power outages, said the intent is "to exercise the power the county has to make the utilities accountable."

Besides the electricity problem, he said, are problems such as "charges that people are unaware of, lots of seniors in particular."

## Message changed

Sever cited Ameritech's callback feature. "Ameritech has

come to our meetings because we put their feet to the fire," he said, adding the company changed its message to let people know "up-front...they were paying for things."

Moffitt, who has spent 20 years representing and opposing multinational energy and waste management companies in federal and state courts, said the task force shows "the county has stepped forward and picked up the ball" instead of letting municipalities such as Farmington

Hills, "which might not have the resources," deal with it.

He said he "will continue to pursue" televising county commission meetings - whether on a live basis, on tape-delay or even through the county's computerized Infotek system on the Internet.

Despite having "a full-time law practice and also what seems to be a full-time county commission job - and two doubly full-time children," Moffitt said he still watches city council and board of

education meetings as well as C-SPAN "when pertinent, on selected issues of interest."

"The availability of council meetings on TV greatly increases the public's awareness of what city councils and boards of education do and how, and I would expect no less from televised county commission meetings," he said.

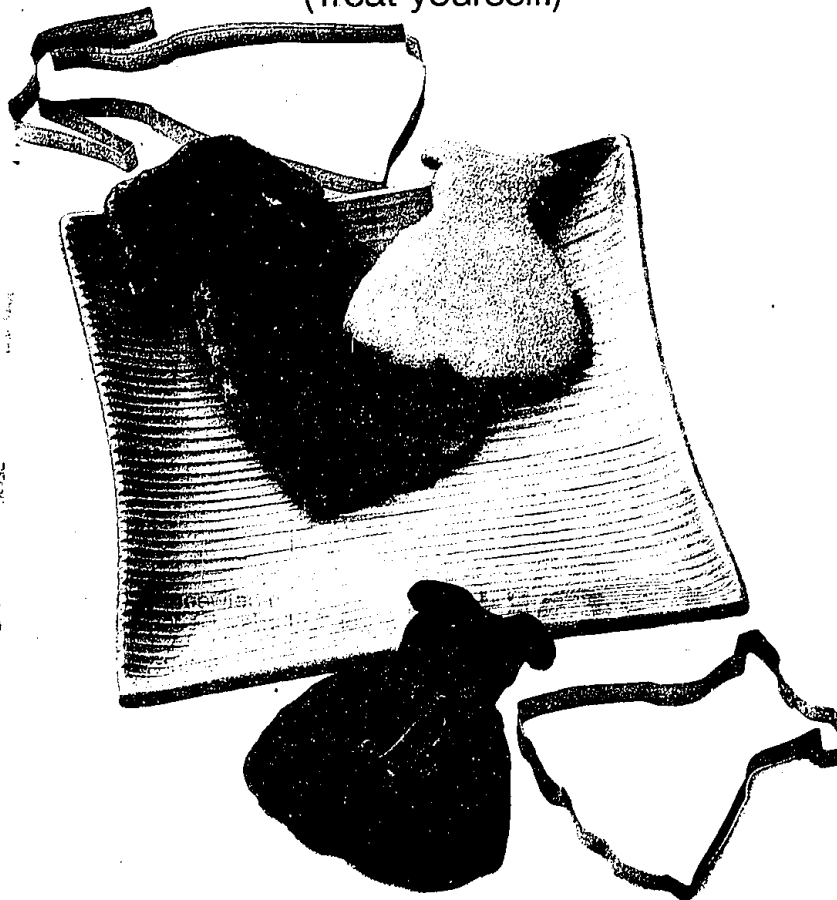
Moffitt chaired the first-ever televised county board of commissioners meeting, held in Farmington Hills in April. The

second such meeting was televised by Comcast Cable Tuesday from the Pontiac City Council chambers and Moffitt said he would try to get tapes so that other cable systems could show it.

As for serving on the commission, new member Sever said he's seen "a definite improvement in relationships between commissioners" along the lines of non-partisan cooperation.

"There's not much bickering or partisan issues," he said.

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