

Oversight may leave county without chief

By SUSAN L. SILK
OAKLAND COUNTY-Oakland County government may spend several months as a "headless horseman" due to a surprising oversight in the legislation by which county voters Tuesday approved a unified county government under a full-time elected executive.

Apparently, amended Public Act 139 may dissolve the three-man board of auditors—the day-to-day "housekeepers" of county affairs—before the elected executive is selected by voters and takes office Jan. 1.

Oakland County's 27-member board of commissioners is now awaiting an official legal opinion by county corporation counsel, Robert Allen, as requested by Commissioner Bernard Lennon (D-18), chairman of the party caucus.

Oakland County voters were offered a choice between unification under an appointed manager administrator or an elected executive Aug. 6. Both these alternatives were placed on the primary ballot by a vote of the board of commissioners, as permitted under the amendments to the act.

Amended Public Act 139, signed into law in November permits the board of commissioners to offer one form of fulltime administrator-appointed manager or elected executive to the voters and for petitioners to place the other option on the ballot, or the board alone to place one option on the ballot.

Under either of these approaches the unification law says the plan receiving the largest number of votes goes into effect within 30 days of certifying the primary vote.

WHEN BOTH alternatives are placed on the ballot by two petition drives, the law says the highest vote getter becomes effective within 180 days after the election.

All that is said of the Oakland County situation when the board votes to place both options on the ballot is that it is legal to do so. Nothing is said as to when the unification, if approved, under either form of leadership becomes effective.

County Democrats interpret Oakland County's unification as becoming effective within 30 days of vote certification—perhaps as early as Sept. 15.

Should Allen agree with the Democrats reading of the law, among those out of work will be Daniel T. Murphy, chairman of the board of auditors and appointed county executive. Murphy is also the Republican candidate for the elected executive post.

The possibility of unseating Murphy, Oakland County's \$46,000-a-year top official and a 26-year veteran of courthouse management, brought questions and varied reactions—mostly political—from both sides of the board of commissioners' auditorium aisle during Thursday's meeting.

DEMOCRATS AND Republicans agreed mutually that the elimination of auditors Murphy, James Brennan and Mehan Benson would create a serious daily county management vacuum.

Nothing would outlaw the Republi-

can-dominated board from hiring Murphy as an interim manager, however, a Republican commissioner said.

Commissioner Patrick M. Nowak (R-25) conceded that the board had made Murphy "county executive" early this year with an eye to the possible campaign for elected executive in which the county voters are now in-

involved.

Hiring Murphy to fill the interim position while a candidate for election is called "improper" by Bernard Winograd, Oakland County Democratic Party executive secretary, and "immoral" by Lennon.

"It clearly would become a campaign issue," Winograd said.

A Democrat fight against reinstalling Murphy could be met by a Republican threat to establish a salary level for an elected executive which might "disappoint" any Democrat elected in November.

"Murphy's getting \$46,000, but I wouldn't expect an inexperienced man to get that much just starting in the

job," a Republican commissioner said.

Murphy faces Democrat Eugene W. Kuthy of Orchard Lake, a management consultant, in the November general election.

The threat of a Republican salary retaliation brought a sharp response from Winograd.

"They'll get their first lesson in the power of the county executive if they want to play that game," Winograd said, referring to his party's hopes of electing Kuthy, who as executive would have veto power.

Allen may have his opinion on the law prepared by the end of the week, he said.

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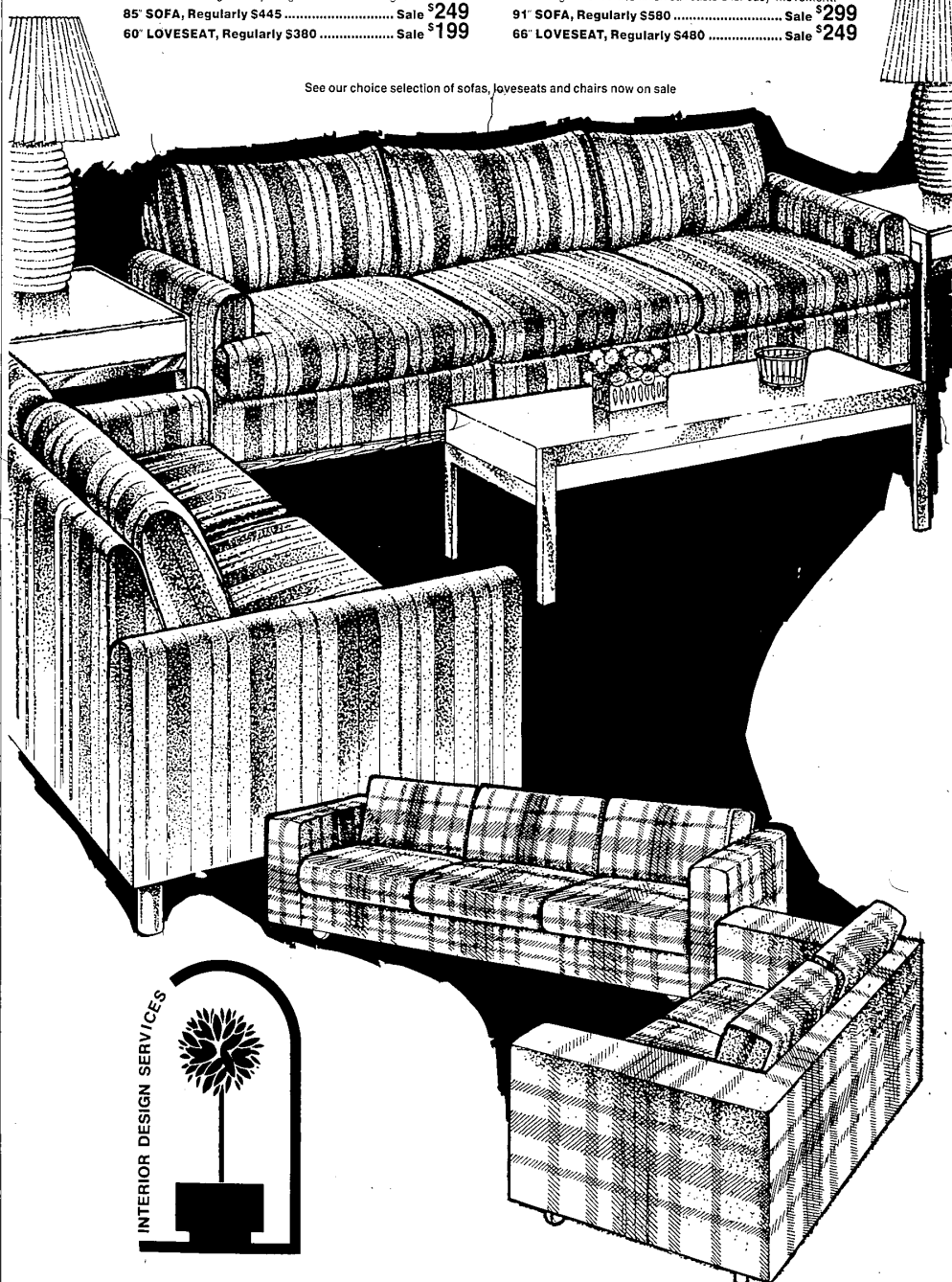
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Police schedule auction

Auction fans in the Lansing and mid-Michigan area are advised that the annual State Police sale of confiscated, unclaimed and recovered merchandise will be held Wednesday at the former Boys Vocational Training School in Lansing. Sale hours will be from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This will be the twentieth annual auction conducted by the State Police. Last year's sale also was held at the former BTS building at 400 N. Pennsylvania in Lansing.

Several thousand items will be disposed of by lot. The articles were turned in by State Police posts and the Departments of Natural Resources and Corrections.

The articles include about 90 bicycles, several motorcycles, several boats and motors, a snowmobile, lawn mowers, a dozen television sets, a clothes dryer and an electric stove among the bigger items.

Other items include radios, watches, rings, clocks, cameras, hand and power tools, sporting goods, household equipment, office supplies, car parts and accessories and clothing.

The auction is authorized by law to dispose of confiscated and unclaimed articles whose owners could not be located, items lost or abandoned at state parks, and personal effects of persons who died in state institutions without leaving heirs.

Benefactor of the sale is the state treasury which gets the proceeds of the auction after deduction of sale costs.

Auctioneers this year will be James Burns of Williamston and Glenn Casey of Marion.