

Bob Kipper writes Board decorum arrives

OAKLAND COUNTY—See the 27 county commissioners, sitting neatly in assigned seats, concentrating only on the business at hand.

They must not chat among themselves, laugh, gossip, roam about the auditorium at will, make faces at one another or in any way upset the decorum of the board meeting.

They can't talk to members of the public who attend the meeting because the public can't, after all, be allowed to co-mingle with elected officials, not during a board meeting.

If commissioners want to introduce legislation, there will be no rabble-rousing or speech-making. They will submit their proposal in writing to the county clerk, who will in turn read the proposal to the board.

Commissioners must never speak longer than 10 minutes without special permission and shouldn't discuss personalities; it's not nice. When voting takes place they must be in their seats like good commissioners.

If they're naughty and don't attend committee meetings, the chairman of the board will assume their seats and voting privileges. Those who do attend committee meetings can't leave without permission from the committee chairman.

AND THE PRESS corps
No longer will they be free to rampage board and committee meetings, tempting commissioners to distraction, upsetting the solemnity of a board meeting with their whispered questions and the sound of their pens scratching on note pads.

Why, if you let members of the press run free they get themselves—and commissioners—into all sorts of trouble. Best confine them, like commissioners, to assigned seats. Look, hear, wave but never touch or question the commissioners when a meeting is in progress.

YES, STARTING this year, things may be different at the twice-monthly county board meetings. Threatened are the unruly days when commissioners could cast their votes from any place in the auditorium, when the public and commissioners could converse openly, when unauthorized notes could pass wantonly among commissioners.

Decorum has arrived.
At least it threatens to.

WEBSTER'S POCKET dictionary defines decorum as "Propriety and

decency of words, dress and conduct."

That seems to be the watchword of the package of new operating rules proposed by the Republican caucus of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. It was also in the interest of maintaining decorum that led the new board chairman to admonish the members of the county press corp for their behavior recently.

If approved, the new rules will bring in all these changes. The proposed rules, however, fail to cover all aspects of commissioner and reporter behavior, leaving certain matters heaven forbid, to their own judgment.

For instance, can commissioners continue to slouch in their seats if they desire and place their feet up over the chair in front of them? Can coffee be gulped during meetings or should it now be sipped? Once the official meeting is gavelled to a close, are reporters free to tackle commissioners with their pen-up questions?

A BETTER question Isn't decorum beside the point?

One expects decorum in a church or a library. One asks for more from a government body. It can be orderly and well-mannered but it must be effective and representative. Sometimes

government works best with a little spontaneity, noise and confusion.

I doubt if anyone cares if elected officials or reporters conduct themselves always like ladies and gentlemen as long as they lend honestly to the job at hand. No one should regret a stormy, disorganized meeting if it accomplishes something. What is regrettable is stalling legislation or choking off debate in the interest of manners.

While some Democratic commissioners oppose the new rules because they see them as an attempt by the majority party to better control things, there seems to be more offense taken to the language of the rules.

It seems condescending to some commissioners and reporters to be told how to act.

One commissioner called the new rules "kid's stuff" and demeaning for duly-elected officials.

Commissioner Bernard Lennon of Ferndale, however, put it best.

He said much of the language in the new rules sounded more like a Boy Scout handbook than a plan for grown men and women to follow.

Dr. Gordon named Country Day head

Dr. Clayton H. Gordon of Birmingham, a board member since 1971, has been elected chairman of the board of trustees of Detroit Country Day School (DCDS).

Dr. Gordon originated the DCDS Tennis Club and serves as its president. He also was responsible for creating an emergency medical service plan for Country Day.

He is presently a senior attending surgeon at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak and St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac and has a private practice in Birmingham.

Dr. Gordon received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan in 1946 and graduated from the U of M Medical School in 1950. He served his residency at University Hospital and was senior clinical instructor in surgery from 1956-57.

Dr. Gordon served in the U. S. Navy Reserve (USNR) in 1944-45 and in 1953-55 he was a lieutenant in the USNR Medical Corps, attached to the Atlantic Fleet.

HE IS AN honorary trustee and past president of the board of trustees of the South Oakland Branch of the Michigan Cancer Foundation, founder of the Detroit Institute of Arts, a member of the Oakland County and State Medical Societies, the Academy of Surgery of Detroit, American Board of Surgery, American College of Surgeons and T. A. Collier Surgical Society.

Dr. Gordon is also past vice president of Friends of Oakland University Library, belongs to Alpha Tau Omega, fraternities and NEN medical fraternities.

He and his wife, Grace, live in Birmingham and have a daughter Susan and two sons, Peter and John, both of whom are graduates of DCDS.

Dr. Gordon's late father, Dr. John H. Gordon, was a practicing physician and surgeon for many years in the Birmingham and Pontiac areas.



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