

County commissioners had one last go-round over operating rules last Thursday. When the dust cleared, Republicans had the clout to push their rules through unamended. Bickering aside, commissioners from both parties listened attentively to County Executive Dan Murphy's state of the County address -- "Straight Talk about Oakland County."



Bernard Lennon, Democratic caucus chairman, plans his strategy.



Republican commissioners like Farmington's Patrick Nowak played low-key roles in rules battles they were sure of winning.

## Commissioners mix resolutions...

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—After one more skirmish over new operating rules, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners approved the rules and then, during a five-hour session Thursday, voted to suspend the new rules at least seven times in order to act quickly on urgent resolutions.

Commissioners moved quickly to approve 92 new county positions through the federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) to help combat unemployment in the county.

The positions, ranging from park helpers to typists to county jail detention officers, are scattered throughout county departments. The program enables the county to hire the unemployed for one year and pay an average salary of \$6,800 with federal money.

Nine new administrative positions, with salaries ranging from

\$17,800 to \$35,000 per year, were approved to implement County Executive Daniel Murphy's county reorganization plan.

Murphy has said he couldn't begin final negotiations to fill the top slots in his administration until the positions and salaries were approved by the board. Although Murphy repeated that he should have to spend \$100,000 on his plan, the resolution gave him the authority to spend twice that much in new salaries.

Commissioners rushed through a resolution authorizing the county prosecutor's office to handle commitment hearings for all mental patients who have been institutionalized for criminal matters.

The hearings, promised all mental patients because of the controversial new state mental health code, require that the state demonstrate in court why mental patients should remain confined.

The prosecutor's office is engaged in fighting the release of numerous persons still believed dangerous. Without the resolution from the county board, the prosecutor's right to fight these cases might have been challenged and several mental patients released on a legal technicality.

The county board approved \$3,000 for The Sanctuary, a counseling center for runaway youths in Pleasant Ridge. The county funding enables The Sanctuary to receive federal funds, which pay for 90 per cent of its operation.

THE LONG commission meeting, which started out in heated fashion over the new rules, turned out to be productive as commissioners approved resolutions rapidly.

Unlike the fight over adopting the new rules, which split Republicans and Democrats along straight party lines, there was bipartisan support for the many rule suspensions.

Although Democrats were angered by the new rules, and made a last futile attempt to convince the Republican majority to amend them, they weren't mad enough to stage a protest walk-out, as Democratic caucus chairman Bernard Lennon (D-18) of Farmdale suggested they might.

DEMOCRATS PROTESTED rules that improved the Republicans' ability to cut-off debate and limited each commissioner to 10 minutes discussion on each issue. These rules "muffled the minority," Democrats said.

They showed more offense, however, to rules that stressed good attendance and good behavior at board and committee meetings. Democrats said these rules were worded for misbehaving children rather than grown-up elected officials.



Democratic commissioners Niles Olson and Bernard Lennon huddle before their vain attempt to amend the rules.

## ...with 'straight talk'

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—"Straight talk," an open door, and no increase in county taxes.

That's what County Executive Daniel Murphy promised in his "state of the county" address, delivered Thursday to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Although Murphy's brief address listed a host of county problems and needs, he stressed the positive.

major problem, Murphy praised the county on its ability to move fast and procure some \$17 million in federal funds to help the unemployed.

Listing other needs such as adoption of a solid waste disposal plan and an emergency medical services system, Murphy stressed his willingness to work with the county board and his faith that meaningful strides could be made.

While listing a series of programs he supports, Murphy pledged he wouldn't compromise what he considered the greatest strength of Oakland

County government, its financial situation.

"This county has not had to turn to deficit spending, and as long as I'm county executive, it will not," Murphy said. "And we will not raise tax rates in order to avoid deficit spending."

He said that he was sure of his own abilities—"I accept this role with confidence, a confidence gained through 25 years of experience dealing with the shaping of Oakland County government"—and pledged his door would remain open to all other members of the county board as well.

He repeated again and again that "straight talk" by all sides is needed.

"The people of this country deserve straight talk from all of us and this administration will give them no less," Murphy said.

In a speech reminiscent of the straightforward Gerald Ford style, Murphy promised to communicate with the people of Oakland County "not always telling them what they want to hear, but always telling them what they need to know."

MURPHY PROPOSED that the Republican and Democratic caucuses each choose two county commissioners to meet with him regularly on an informal basis to discuss county problems—and pledged his door would remain open to all other members of the county board as well.

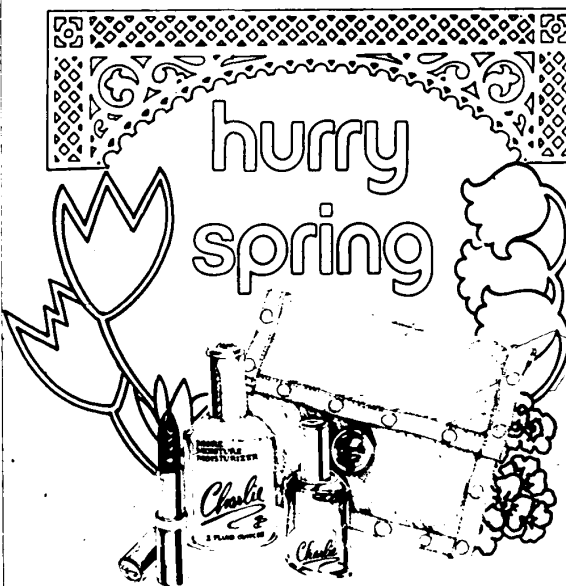
He urged the county board to adopt a solid waste plan. Three agencies have completed three studies on the subject in the past 18 years, Murphy chided the board, and they have yet to approve one dollar toward solving the problem.

Murphy asked for support of an emergency medical services system for the county, adding that local governmental units, private enterprise and the county must get together to fund this.

MURPHY'S RECOMMENDATIONS were often short on specifics.

He spoke of the need to improve the funding of county road projects, of lessening the property tax burden of those on fixed incomes and of striving for diligent law enforcement—but said little else on these subjects.

Murphy proposed erecting a county services center in the western part of the county, but wasn't prepared to discuss possible sites or costs.



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County Executive Dan Murphy asked for—and promised—straight talk to help solve county problems.