

County may seek amendment

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—County commissioners, eager to consolidate the like-functioning offices of drain commissioner and public works director, will likely seek to amend state law to permit consolidation under an appointed public works commissioner.

Commissioner Bernard Lennon (D-18), of Ferndale, said he will introduce a resolution at the March 8 board meeting calling for the state legislature to approve such an amendment.

State statute currently gives counties the option of consolidating the two offices but only under an elected head. While a majority of county commissioners have long advocated streamlining the two offices by consolidation, they have been reluctant to do so under elected head.

THE MOVE to join the two offices, discussed for some time, has speeded

up due to the announcement that the county public works director, R. J. Alexander, is retiring March 28.

Alexander's departure gives county commissioners the opportunity to eliminate the public works director job rather than fill it with a permanent replacement.

Last week, Commissioner James Dunleavy (R-2), of Highland Township, made the first move toward consolidation. He introduced a resolution calling to a public hearing on the matter, to be followed by consolidation.

While few on the county board quarrel with the intent of Dunleavy's resolution to merge the sometimes overlapping functions of the two offices—namely, the county is allowed to have an appointed head in charge of the new combined public works office.

LENNON, WHO speaks for the 12 Democrats on the board, said his party opposes any consolidation plan under an elected head. A number of Republicans, allied with County Exec-

utive Daniel Murphy, likewise oppose an elected public works commissioner.

Since two-thirds approval from the county board is needed for consolidation, the measure must find strong bipartisan support to be successful.

The retiring public works director, agrees that the new position should be an appointed one.

"Administrative jobs shouldn't be elected," Alexander said. "Policy makers should be elected and administrators appointed."

THOSE WHO want an appointed head feel that voters shouldn't be expected to best judge the qualifications of a man who would perform a highly technical job.

"There's nothing political about this job," Commissioner Lennon said. "There's no philosophy in building drains or sewer lines."

The current drain commissioner, George Kuhn is one of the few who supports making the new position an elected one.

A longtime advocate of abolishing the drain commissioner job and consolidating it with public works, Kuhn has admitted he is interested in seeking the new combined position at the polls.

SUPPORTERS OF consolidation argue that a single unit would do away with certain overlapping functions and make one office accountable for all public works activities.

At present, the drain commissioner's office constructs and supervises storm drains while the public works office is in charge of sewers and solid waste disposal.

The county public works board met this week and decided to postpone any decision about seeking a replacement for Alexander until its March 10 meeting.

Because of the support for consolidation, it is expected that the board will name only a temporary director to take over from Alexander.

Alexander has recommended that his chief deputy, Donald Ringler, be named as his successor.

Saltzman elected district chairman

GRAND RAPIDS—Republicans from the 19th Congressional District (West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham) voted with the majority on all issues but one at the GOP STATE convention and picked Arthur Saltzman of Franklin Village as their district chairman for the next two years.

The convention turned down a resolution supporting the federal Consolidated Railway Corporation's reorganization plan that would result in abandonment of 37 per cent of all track lines in the state. The vote was 42-18 in favor.

THE WESTERN Oakland County delegation gave 49-15 opposition to a question on state financial assistance to electric utilities. It was also defeated by the convention as a whole.

Receiving 71-0 support from the 19th was a question on delaying implementation of auto safety and emission control standards for five years. It passed the convention overwhelmingly.

Party registration in Michigan primaries was opposed 74-4 by the 19th

District delegation and by a 10-1 margin by the 1,100 other delegates.

Public financing of campaigns for four statewide posts—governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state and attorney general—was opposed 64-3 by the 19th and by a 16-1 margin of the entire convention.

SALTZMAN, WHO works in Ford Motor Co.'s industrial relations department, succeeds John Cartwright of West Bloomfield Township as district chairman. Cartwright, a Ford attorney, led the district since 1967 when Jack McDonald was first elected to Congress.

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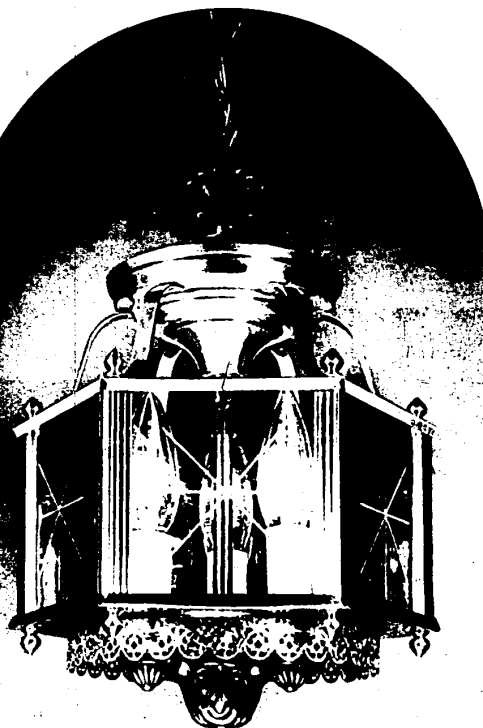
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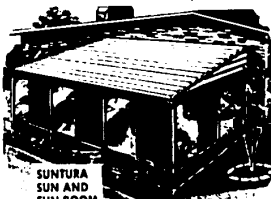
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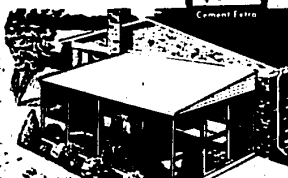
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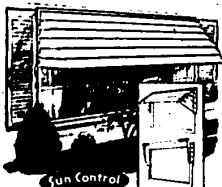


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