

Public works appointment leads to court battle

By ROBERT KIPPER

OAKLAND COUNTY—After refusing to compromise their differences Monday, the county executive and the county board of public works appeared headed for court to determine who has the power to appoint a new public works director.

The compromise was proposed by County Executive Daniel Murphy.

According to Murphy the public works board not only lacked the authority to appoint a director, it lacked the authority to meet at all.

who offered to call off his proposed lawsuit challenging the recent board appointment of Donald Ringler as acting public works director.

However, Commissioner Alexander Perinoff, chairman of the public works board, said accepting Murphy's proposal would have been admitting that his board lacked the authority to appoint Ringler.

Murphy proposed that the board name either him or the head of his facilities and operation department as the public works director, or that naming a new director be postponed until

it can be clarified out of court who has the power of appointment.

THE FAILURE of the two sides to settle their differences placed the situation virtually where it was a week ago, when Murphy made the surprise announcement that he would challenge the Ringler appointment in court.

According to Murphy, the public works board not only lacked the authority to appoint a new director but it lacked the authority to meet at all. Murphy claimed that the county ex-

ecutive act called for the public works department to be abolished and gave him the power to supervise the public works department.

However, the public works board was reestablished by the county board of commissioners when the county executive act took effect in September. The board's authority hadn't been challenged openly by Murphy until last week.

The public works board is made up mostly of appointed county commissioners.

Besides clarifying who should supervise the public works department, the lawsuit promised to define the extent of other county executive powers under the new act.

HOWEVER, THE status of Murphy's court action remained as unclear this week as before.

It was still unsettled whether Robert Allen, the county civil counsel, would or could handle Murphy's suit. If he agrees to this, Allen would be in a strange position since he also represents the public works board and the county board of commissioners, whose authority to reestablish the public works board would also be challenged by the lawsuit.

Allen, who has been out of town, is expected to make a decision after his return Thursday (April 3).

Among the other things that might be clarified is just whose civil counsel Allen is, especially when various factions of county government are in disagreement.

IN THE meantime, Ringler has taken office and Murphy's tactics continued to incite conflicting reactions from county officials.

Some see Murphy's maneuver as an acceptable shortcut to clarifying the ambiguities of the county executive law. Instead of waiting for the state legislature to amend and clarify its act, a speedy court decision might accomplish the same task, they argued.

suit would be a challenge to his board's authority.

R. J. Alexander, who retired as public works director Friday, approved of Murphy's action because he said the county executive act leaves "too many things hanging."

HOWEVER, MORE traditional Murphy critics voiced opposition.

Perinoff called Murphy's action "terrible, precipitous and irresponsible."

"Where is this cooperation Murphy was going to have with the board of commissioners?"

Commissioner Mary Dearborn (R-22) of Birmingham said: "If Murphy was that confident that the board of public works wasn't legal, why didn't he say so six months ago?"

The public works department is a huge, important department that doesn't need politics," she added.

Commissioner Bernard Lennon, Democratic caucus chairman, said: "When you get one part of county government suing another part you look like a bunch of buffoons."

Winners announced

Three grand award winners of the regional Science and Engineering Fair are from the Birmingham area.

Jerry Lopatin, 16, a sophomore at Birmingham Groves High School; John B. Hoffman, 12, a 7th grader at Shepard Lutheran School; Troy, and Michael J. Wilok, 13, an 8th grader at Holy Name School, Birmingham.

Oakland University's scientific community held 10 major programs March 12-21. Science and Engineering Week.

Grand award winners and their teachers will have all expenses paid to the International Science Fair the first week in May at Oklahoma City.

All winners from the Detroit Metropolitan area will go to a winners show April 18-21 at Cobo Hall, Detroit.

The six regional fairs are co-sponsored annually by the Engineering Society of Detroit in cooperation with leading commercial and industrial firms in the Detroit area.

Club gives funds to zoo

BIRMINGHAM—Representatives of the Groves High School Ecology Club presented a check for \$500 to Dr. James Savoy, new director of the Detroit Zoo, on Wednesday.

The money was specifically designated to be used to feed brown hyenas at the zoo for a one-year period.

The decision to earmark the money for feed for the hyenas was strictly an "economic" one, according to Walter Voss, co-chairman of the Ecology Club.

Zoo officials provided the club with information that the hyenas were the most economical species to feed, Voss said. The club was interested in contributing funds to care for endangered or near-endangered species, he added.

Voss said he was not sure whether the brown hyena was an endangered species today but that "they were practically wiped out at the turn of the century."

The \$500 was contributed from the Ecology Club's treasury and has been raised mainly through monthly paper drives held by the club.

Council adds 2 to group

FRANKLIN—Bess Reed, owner of an antique shop in the village historic district, and district resident James Stewart have been added to the Franklin historic commission.

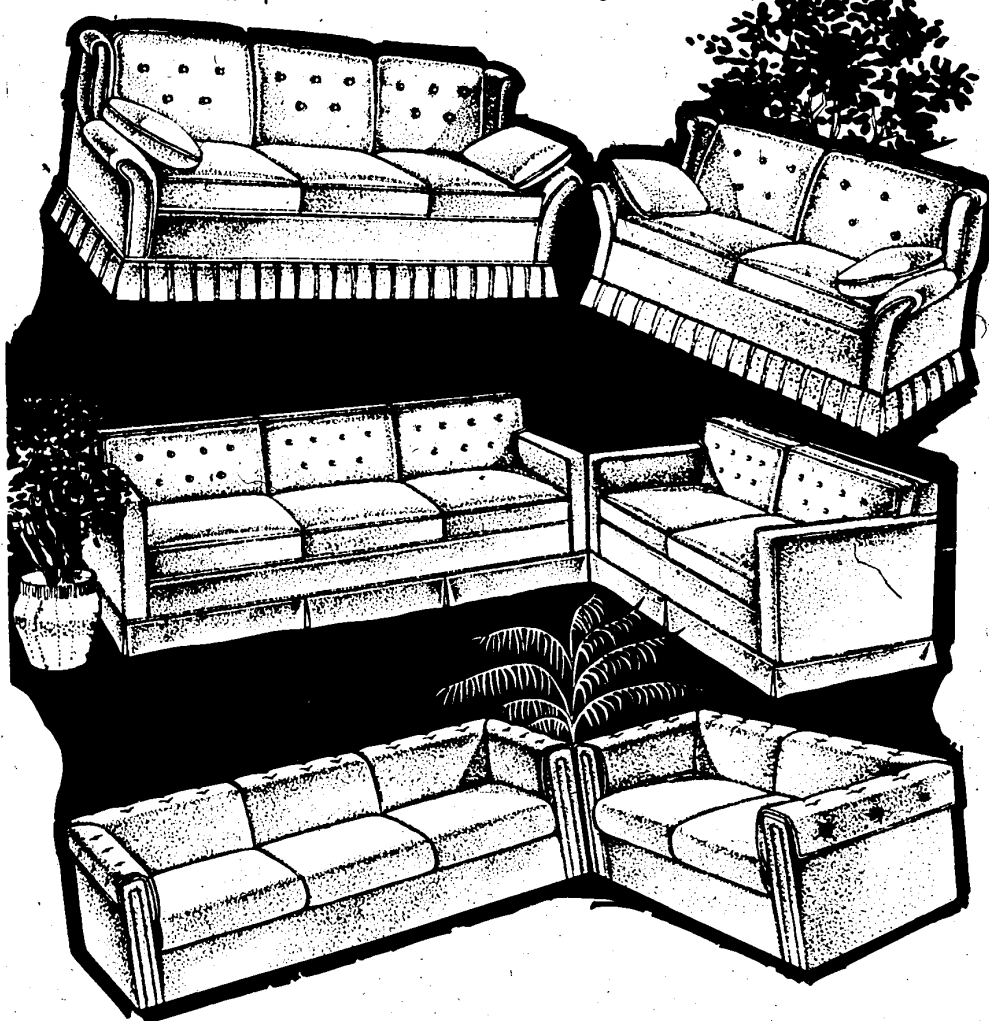
Mrs. Reed owns the Speckled Bird on Franklin Road and Stewart, who lives at 8234 Vincennes, is associated with a Detroit law firm.

The village council approved the two three-year terms and reappointed architect Edward Francis of 3192 Mountview to the historic district governing body.

Retiring from the commission are Mrs. Peter Green and C. William Garhart.

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