

County energy use down, but price rise is offsetting

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

Oakland County in 1977 cut its energy usage dramatically in 1977. Yet it paid more for energy than it did in 1976.

"Virtually every energy conservation success was countered and sometimes wiped by an increase in energy prices," said County Executive Daniel T. Murphy.

Energy problems took up nearly half of the time of his "State of the County" address last week.

IN 1977 the county, according to its office of public information, cut its usage of natural gas more than 24 per cent; fuel oil more than 28 per cent and electricity more than six per cent. Gasoline consumption, however, increased more than three per cent.

In spite of conservation, the county spent \$59,000 more last year than it did in 1976. In all Oakland County spent nearly \$1.5 for energy last year.

DESPITE THE soaring prices and increasing frustrations, Murphy vowed that the county would continue to cut energy consumption in 1978. Along with increasing government efficiency and productivity, energy conservation looms as one of the Murphy administration's top priorities.

The county's conservation drive began in November, 1973 in response to the Arab oil embargo. Murphy characterized this phase as a "period of experimentation and learning."

The county moved into a full conservation effort in April, 1975 when the

project was assigned to the Department of Central Services. Between that time and the beginning of 1978, Murphy said, an energy survey of all 37 county buildings was taken.

"SOME 40 major areas of heat loss were identified, documented and prioritized," Murphy said.

"A program of gradually downsizing county passenger vehicles were begun, and a number of efforts were made to improve the energy efficiency of the remainder of the fleet, which is made up of trucks and other work vehicles."

County energy experts discovered that the county's buildings, like most other buildings constructed before the new energy consciousness, were built without consideration of energy efficiency.

"It frequently appeared," Murphy said, "as if building planners had mischievously planned to frustrate any future attempts to bring rational energy management to Oakland County."

"In the courthouse complex, it was discovered that flow meters had not been installed in heating systems, making it impossible to accurately predict what would happen when the heat was lowered by even a single degree," he said.

"In many offices, we found fluorescent lights burning uselessly behind covered ceiling panels," he continued.

IN THE FUTURE, Murphy announced the county will prepare monthly energy audits. Also, energy impact statements will be prepared

for all major proposals that will require energy usage.

Murphy said the new steps would "enable management to respond quickly and decisively to any changes in the national picture, such as the steep increases in natural gas prices that are expected later this year."

Even though the Murphy administration has been pressing for energy conservation, it has made no energy expense projections for 1978. "We just haven't done it," said an administration spokesman, "but a separate utility line item is something to be considered."



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Gnau reelected chairman of road board

John R. Gnau, Jr. of Bloomfield Township was re-elected chairman of the Board of Oakland County Road Commissioners by fellow board members. He will be serving his second consecutive one-year term.

William R. Richards of Royal Oak was elected to a fourth consecutive term as vice chairman.

Gnau is a former trustee of Bloomfield Township and a former township planning commission member. He is president of Mass Marketing International, a mail-order insurance firm, and an officer or director of several other corporations. He also is a member of the finance committee of the Michigan Republican Party.

Richards is a former two-term chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and served as road commission chairman in 1973 and 1974. He is co-owner of a bar and restaurant in Royal Oak and is co-owner of Royal Oak real estate business.

The third member of the road commission board is Fred D. Houghten of Rochester. He also is a former chairman of the county board of commissioners. He currently also serves as



John R. Gnau (left) of Bloomfield Township was reelected to a second consecutive term as chairman of the Board of Oakland County Road Commissioners. William R. Richards of Royal Oak (center) was reelected vice chairman. The third member of the board is Fred D. Houghten (right) of Rochester.

Houghten is director of regional development with the Community National Bank of Pontiac and is a former director and president of the National Bank of Rochester.



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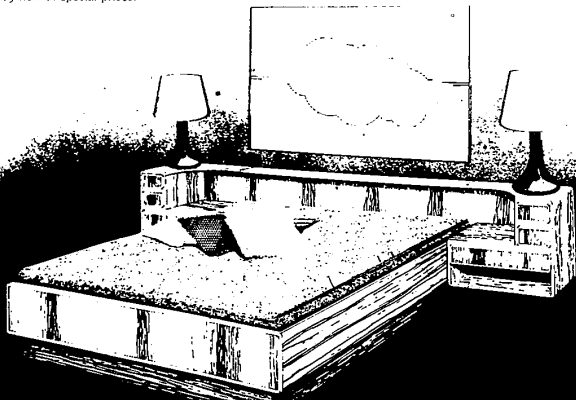
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