

# Fight over county appointments headed for court

Republicans and Democrats are probably headed for circuit court to untangle the question of who has the right to make and hold a number of appointive jobs in Oakland County government.

Key post is a six-year term on the powerful road commission. Democrats are backing Eugene Kutny of West Bloomfield, former planning

commission chairman and 1974 candidate for county executive, while Republicans are for Fred Houghten, former county commissioner from Rochester.

Issues in each case are different, but the political background is the same. In their final month with a majority in 1976, Democratic county commissioners pushed through a batch of

appointments. Now that Republicans have a 13-12 board advantage they are putting up their own personnel.

IN THE ROAD commission case, County Commissioner John McDonald (R-Farmington), new chairman of the personnel committee, charged that Kutny failed to file his oath and bond within 10 days of getting his appointment as required by law.

More importantly, McDonald said, the road commission appointment was made Dec. 16 although the actual vacancy didn't occur until Jan. 1, when the term of Fred Harris of Farmington Hills expired.

Democrats contended there was precedent for making an appointment during the last year of the old term.

ALSO CONTESTED were one seat on the board of institutions (county hospital), one seat on the agency for the aging, two seats on the sanitary code appeals board and two on the commission which oversees the county airport.

In each case, argued McDonald, the appointment was made by a 14-13 vote and the margin of victory came when a Democratic member of the county board voted for himself.

McDonald cited an opinion from the county board's attorney, corporation counsel Robert Allen, saying the Democratic appointments were "void" for that reason. Allen's opinion said it was against public policy for a commissioner to vote for himself for a money-paying "outside" position. (This does not apply, however, to the election of the board's internal officers.

LARRY PERNICK (D-Southfield) sought without success to get the board to appropriate \$2,500 to seek a declaratory judgment about whether the Democratic appointments were legal.

Democratic colleague Alexander C. Perinoff of Southfield unleashed an impassioned verbal attack, saying he was "shocked at the depths to which the Republican Party has fallen" and predicting the GOP's extinction.

McDonald replied that it was "appalling and high-handed" for a county commissioner to be the deciding vote in appointing himself to a paying position. While it was all right for a commissioner to vote for himself, the appointment was void when the commissioner's own vote was the deciding one.

THE WRANGLING extended into the board's general government committee, where Republicans elected members of their caucus to both the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of all six board committees.

"This is piggyish, to say the least," said Pernick.

McDonald, the GOP caucus leader, said he had attempted to meet several times with the Democratic board, Bernard Lennon to discuss committee assignments, "and each time he stood me up."

General government committee Chairman Robert Page (R-Birmingham) said there was "sentiment" in the Republican caucus to give the majority party a 6-3 edge on most committees and a 7-3 edge on finance, but the caucus decided to leave the break-

down at 7-4 on finance and 6-4 on the others.

AS EXPECTED, Republicans elected Wallace Gabler of Royal Oak board chairman for 1977 and Lillian Moffitt of Bloomfield Township vice-chairwoman.

Mrs. Moffitt noted she was the first woman to hold the No. 2 position in the second largest county in Michigan.

Chairmanships and scheduled meeting times are:

• Finance—Paul Kasper (R-Bloomfield Hills), second and fourth Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

• General government—Robert Page (R-Birmingham)—first and third Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.

• Health and human resources—Dr. Joseph Montante (R-Orchard Lake), first and third Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m.

• Personnel—John McDonald (R-Farmington), second and fourth Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m.

• Planning and building—Richard Wilcox (R-Lake Orion), second and fourth Thursdays at 1:30 p.m.

• Public services—Henry W. Hook (R-Troy), every Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.

Full board meetings are the first and third Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.

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## Brodhead captures vacancy on committee

U.S. Rep. William M. Brodhead (D-17th Dist.) has been elected to fill a vacancy on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. He thus becomes the only Michigan Democratic member on the tax-writing committee. Brodhead's district includes Southfield, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Redford Township and part of northwest Detroit.

"The most vital domestic issues of the decade—tax reform, national health insurance, welfare reform and social security financing—will be decided in this committee. These issues touch the lives of every citizen and I am honored to have a part in deciding them," said Brodhead following his selection Jan. 15.

Brodhead said that he would meet with Ways and Means Chairman Al Ullman as soon as possible to discuss his subcommittee assignment. I am particularly interested in health pro-

lems," said Brodhead, "because they have such a profound effect on all of our families."

Testifying before the Social Security Subcommittee last April, Brodhead discussed the system's three basic problems from his perspective: "First, the tax to finance the system is unfairly burdensome to millions of workers. Second, the system is currently operating at a deficit and greater deficits are predicted for the future. And third, benefit levels are inadequate for many recipients."

Brodhead said he would like to see benefits increased and a portion of the system financed from general revenues rather than the regressive payroll tax.

Despite having the greatest legislative responsibility of any committee in the House, Ways and Means was until very recently the smallest committee.

## County schools get grant

The State Board of Education has approved the allocation of \$72,763 for the Oakland County

Regional Education Media Center to provide audio-visual and other instructional materials for local school districts.

The grant, okayed Jan. 5, was part of a \$300,000 appropriation to the state's 22 REMCs.

The funds were appropriated by the Michigan legislature as part of the state school aid bill, and the money is allocated on the basis of a formula that takes into consideration the number of public and non-public school students in each REMC.

Of the \$300,000 appropriated by the legislature, \$873,491 will be distributed to the 22 REMCs on a formula basis.



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