

OU closed meeting case drags on

No trial date is in sight in the 10-month-old case of Oakland University's alleged violations of the state Open Meetings Act. "We had a pretrial conference Tuesday on the procedural aspects," said James Howlett of Bloomfield Hills, attorney for the university.

"The university is filing a motion for a partial summary judgment. No dates have been set for either the attorney general's response or for a hearing on our motion." "The person from the attorney general's office is starting a three-week trial and couldn't file an answer to our motion until after that," Howlett said.

DEBORAH DEVINE, who is handling the case for the state, couldn't be reached for comment after the hearing. Since the case was started last November, she has transferred to another state agency but still is assigned to the OU case.

Hearing the case is Oakland Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert, a former Birmingham district judge and a 1978 Republican nominee for the State Supreme Court.

The suit for damages revolves around the OU board's closed-door procedures in interviewing candidates for the presidency.

The state alleges the OU board split into small groups to interview presidential candidates, rotating candidates from one room to another. The meetings reportedly were held in a hotel near Metropolitan Airport instead of the usual location on campus near Rochester.

The Open Meetings Act allows a board to review applications in closed session where the candidate requests confidentiality, but provides that interviews must be held in open meetings.

Attorney Howlett maintains trustees did not hold closed meetings because there never was a quorum of four for any of the interviews.

JUDGE GILBERT declined to stop the installation of Joseph Champagne as president. Champagne was picked by the board in mid-December.

The student newspaper, the Oakland

Sail, charged in an editorial that the board of trustees "waited until the week of final exams when most professors and students would be too busy to voice their opinion about the decision."

The case has political significance. The OU board chairman is Richard Headlee, chairman of Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of Farmington Hills, prime sponsor of the 1978 tax limitation amendment that bears his name, organizer and chief spokesman for Michigan Citizens Supporting the President and a possible state Republican candidate in 1982.

Another member is Ken Morris, a retired UAW official from Troy and prominent Democrat. Other prominent business and political leaders serve on the board.

Attorney General Frank Kelley's office sees OU as a major target in winning a precedent-setting ruling on the Open Meetings Act, which took effect in 1977.

Voc high reopens as RO strike ends

Students in the Southeast Oakland Vocational High School were due back in their Royal Oak classrooms Wednesday, a day before a court showdown in a teachers strike.

The strike is apparently over. "The teachers reported Tuesday, and the students will report Wednesday," said Gene Thieleke, assistant superintendent of the Royal Oak School District.

Students from Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Southfield and Troy are among the 1,500 who attend SEOVOC, as the vocational high school is called. SEOVOC is financed by the Oakland Intermediate School District and operated under contract by the Royal Oak School District.

A TWO-WEEK strike by the 550-member Royal Oak Education Association against the Royal Oak district closed down SEOVOC, which is attended by pupils from 12 southeast Oakland districts. Forty ROEA members teach in the vocational school.

William G. Keane, superintendent of the intermediate district, Monday asked Oakland Circuit Judge George LaPlata for an in-

junction to force the Royal Oak district to reopen the vocational school. A spokesman for the intermediate district said the intermediate board voted last week to seek the injunction.

LaPlata was scheduled to hold a show-cause hearing this morning.

At 5 a.m. Tuesday, however, the faculty union and Royal Oak district reached a tentative agreement on a new one-year contract.

THIELEKE SAID the agreement provides a 9.5 percent pay increase.

A fact-finder from the Michigan Employment Relations Commission recommended terms of the settlement. "The board of education accepted the fact-finder's recommendations totally," Thieleke said.

No ratification vote by either the union or the Royal Oak board had been scheduled as of deadline time, although it appeared the dispute had been settled.

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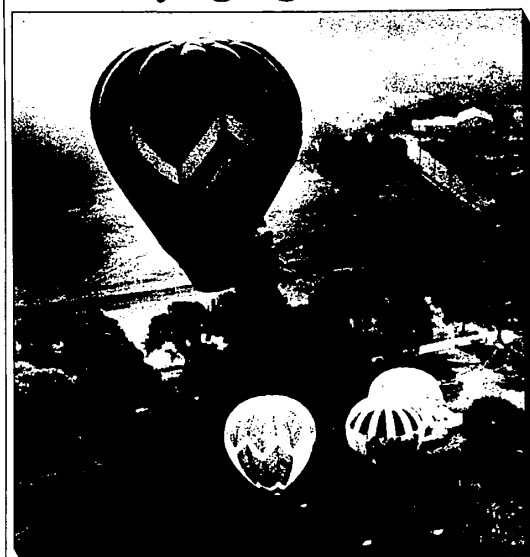
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