

Oakland board cuts night meetings back to 4 a year

Despite objections from some Democratic and Republican members, the Oakland County Board of Commissioners will limit its evening meetings to four per year. The board, in a 25-1 vote, chose to schedule evening meetings on a quarterly instead of on a monthly basis.

Last September, commissioners held one meeting per month at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and the other at the regular 9:30 a.m.

"WE HAD three night meetings last year — all attended by a large number of interested people who were here for a particular issue," said Commissioner Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park.

"That's what good government is all about — to make yourself available to people."

Commissioners made the switch from all daytime meetings last September in an effort to draw more persons.

Some 500 residents showed up at one of those evening meetings. Less than a dozen typically attend the regular daytime meetings.

AARON'S MOVE to schedule half of the board's twice-monthly meetings in the evening failed.

Aaron took issue with his fellow commissioners who opposed night meetings because they must attend other meetings in the evening.

"The issue is whether we serve the electorate or at our pleasure," Aaron said.

"Our first obligation is to this board of commissioners and to the people who elect us, not to the people back home whose meetings we attend as a means of educating them and getting ourselves re-elected."

COMMISSIONER John E. Olsen, R-Hunt-

ington Woods, who was a leader in the push for night meetings, agreed.

"I don't think we should vote for more night meetings just because our experiment was successful," Olsen said.

"People should have the opportunity to attend whether they take advantage of it or not."

Previously, Olsen had expressed disappointment in the composition of the audience at some night meetings. He said that a lot of "special interest groups" — residents who were only concerned about a particular issue — attended.

Commissioner James Lanni, R-Royal Oak, argued that the board should be selective about which meetings are held in the evening.

"I agree we should have night meetings, but only when we have issues of particular interest to the public, such as the budget."

'Good Old Payoff'

Board splits on retirement seat

A Republican Oakland County commissioner broke party ranks to support a woman candidate for the county's Retirement Commission.

Commissioner John E. Olsen, R-Huntington Woods, went along with Democrats who unsuccessfully supported Gilda Jacobs, an administrative assistant to former state Sen. Doug Ross, for appointment to the seven-member panel.

But the Republican-dominated board, in a 16-10 vote, named former county Commissioner Dennis L. Murphy to the panel. Murphy succeeds the late Rev. James Mathews, who was the only minority member on the commission.

"I HAVE KNOWN Mrs. Jacobs for many years, and I can assure you she is a competent individual who can serve well in this

capacity," said Olsen, chairman of the Republican caucus.

Commissioner Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park, argued the retirement panel should include at least one minority or woman member.

"It's about time we change this blue-ribbon panel," Aaron said. "A vote for Mrs. Jacobs says to the people of this county that minority representation is a plank and platform of the Republican party."

"I thought — based upon what I heard from the (Republican) caucus leader — the majority party would be returning to the founding principles of the GOP," Aaron added. "I thought it was a new beginning."

By rejecting Jacobs, the board is "just going back to the old charade we've had for a number of years — that appointments are based upon the qualifications and the merits

you have in your political party," Aaron said.

"You are saying once again to the voters that the GOP in this county simply means the Good Old Payoff."

COMMISSIONER John P. Calandro, R-Northville, argued that Murphy was more qualified for the post than Jacobs. Murphy is a vice-president of Bank of the Commonwealth and former chairman of the Oakland County Board's finance committee.

"This commission has the responsibility of managing almost \$19 million of retirement monies," Calandro said.

"Certainly if we're looking at qualifications, there's no question that Murphy has the experience, the understanding and the prerequisites for serving on this board."

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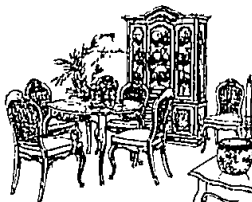
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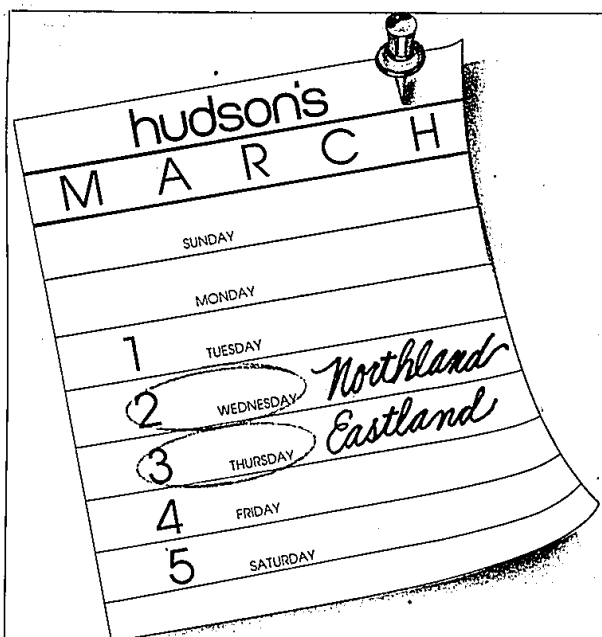
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