

# Murphy takes control of Children's Village

By Kathy Parshall  
staff writer

Oakland County Probate Judges aren't giving up their fight to keep control of Children's Village and Camp Oakland.

Upset that the County Board of Commissioners has voted to turn the facilities for troubled kids over to County Executive Daniel Murphy, the four judges are considering asking for a higher court delay of the transfer.

If a stay is granted by Michigan Court of Appeals, Children's Village would remain in probate court hands until the appeals court resolves arguments brought by Murphy and the judges.

"We're certainly leaning toward trying to get a stay," said Judge Eugene Moore, whose father, Judge Arthur Moore, started Children's Village.

"We just feel some commissioners did not understand the issue involved — whether we have a unified juvenile justice system through the courts or a fragmented one under the executive," he said following the 15-10 vote.

AFTER TWO years of trying to gain control of Children's Village, Murphy Thursday was given authority by the county commissioners to run it.

Board members also voted to reopen B Building at the overcrowded facility and add nine staff members to operate it.

The transfer grew out of a December court decision by Circuit Judge Hilda

**'This whole process has left a very bad taste in my mouth.'**

**—county commissioner Richard Kuhn  
R-Waterford**

Gage in a suit brought by Murphy. Judge Gage ruled that legal authority to supervise, direct and control Camp Oakland and Children's Village remains with Probate Court.

But she also stated that the Board of Commissioners has power to transfer the control and administration of child care facilities from Probate Court to the executive.

Both the executive and judges have appealed sections of Gage's ruling to the Michigan Court of Appeals.

INSTEAD OF waiting for the appeals court decision, Republican commissioners two weeks ago introduced a transfer resolution in the Health and Human Resources Committee.

Because it wasn't on the meeting agenda, the resolution was a surprise to all but a couple of commissioners. Despite pleas from two Democrats to push through the proposal, the Republican majority pushed through the proposal.

The issue was also scheduled for a Feb. 14 public hearing before the commission vote.

Fueling the controversy were re-

ports of 10 suicide attempts by eight Children's Village residents within the past 15 weeks.

OBJECTING TO the transfer were the probate judges, who argued they are best able to oversee rehabilitation of juvenile offenders because they see them and their families in court.

"Kids are what probate court is all about. We can't pass the buck," Moore told commissioners during the two-hour public hearing, attended by 75 people.

"This is not a vote on who will run the cafeteria, police courthouse corridors or bring prisoners to court. Perhaps this is the most important decision you'll ever make."

Among those backing the judges was Barbara Cash, a Southfield attorney. She had studied the possibility of transfer when she was chairman of the Juvenile Law Committee of the Oakland Bar Association. The committee recommended that Children's Village authority remain with the probate judges.

"Children are unique. Children are very, very expensive," said Cash. "It is very difficult to take a high level facility

for children and call it just another institution."

PRESSING FOR action were three former Children's Village residents who related stories of abuse and lack of treatment while there.

While Lake resident Steven Roland, whose 14-year-old son spent two years in the facility, said he had "great concerns about his safety and ability to return to society as an individual functioning properly after leaving Children's Village."

"What I've seen of the system is not what's best for the child," Roland said. He added the county lacks a program for his emotionally impaired teen but won't send the youth to a facility in another county.

DEMOCRAT COMMISSIONERS unanimously opposed the transfer, pressing the county executive to outline what he would do differently with the facility.

"The only difference is that we're going to stop looking at the budget. He (Murphy) is going to come down here and tell you what he wants," said Betty Fortino, D-Pontiac.

Siding with Democrats were some Republicans, who objected to the "steamrolling" way the issue was handled. They urged more discussion before commissioners voted.

"This whole process has left a very bad taste in my mouth," Commissioner Richard Kuhn, R-Waterford, said during a heated Republican caucus.

"My confidence in the Republican

caucus will be severely eroded if you go ahead and play this game."

REPUBLICAN caucus chairman Roy Revold of Rochester said he believes waiting on the issue would only have increased pressure on the board.

"And we were afraid the judges would get a stay. They still can, but I don't think they will, now that they know how the commissioners feel," Revold said.

Despite the opposition, the transfer was approved 15 to 10. All supporting the executive were Republicans.

Opposed were seven Democrats: Dennis Aaron of Oak Park, James Doyon of Madison Heights (whose district includes Troy), Betty Fortino of Pontiac, Ruel McPherson of Hazel Park, Walter Moore of Pontiac, Larry Per-

nick of Southfield and Hubert Price of Pontiac. Three Republicans also were opposed: Kuhn of Waterford, Thomas Law of West Bloomfield and John McDonald of Farmington.

Absent were Robert Paga, R-Birmingham, and Alexander Perinoff, D-Southfield.

MURPHY ASSURED commissioners that he intends only to administer Children's Village. Programs will still be initiated by probate court and spending approved by the board, he said.

"I am not there to determine what is good for kids. I am there to administer," Murphy said.

"Things are not going to change much. The probate judges are going to be there doing things they should on behalf of kids."

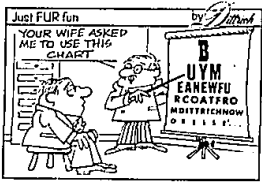
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