

Review of OCC baby-sitting paybacks asked

By Teri Barnes
staff writer

An Oakland Community College trustee wants the college board to consider rescinding its practice of providing elected trustees with child-care reimbursements.

In one documented case, board vice chair Sandra Ritter of Waterford collected \$376 for baby-sitting expenses incurred while she was away on OCC business. The expenses were tallied during nine out-of-town trips she took between November 1984 and June 1985.

"In 1980 we added to the trustees' travel allowance a baby-sitting fee. I'd like to review it to see if it's still appropriate," said trustee David W. Hackett of Rochester Hills.

Ritter listed the baby-sitting charge to a college expense report totaling more than \$8,000 during the eight-month period. Two trips were made in Michigan with the balance occurring at college conventions and education seminars out-of-state.

IN A REPORT of trustee expenses prepared by acting president Anthony Jarson, Ritter's expense report was the highest among the seven trustees. It surpassed even board chair Suzanne Reynolds, who charged \$1,017 in travel expenses to the college between July 1984 and February 1985.

Hackett raised the issue at the trustees' board meeting Thursday night at the college's Highland Lakes campus. Ritter previously had announced she would be out of town and absent from that regular board meeting.

The issue was not scheduled for discussion that night, and was set aside until the Nov. 3 board meeting after Jarson offered to research the question.

HACKETT LATER explained that he raised the question after considering a recent attorney general's opinion issued on another matter.

Attorney General Frank Kelley ruled that Reynolds was in conflict by being an elected trustee and also serving as a representative director of the OCC Foundation, a private agency support-

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ed in part by college funds. So far, Reynolds has not stepped down from either post. Instead, she holds that Kelley's ruling was factually incorrect and therefore doesn't apply to her. She submitted a protest to Kelley's office.

"We got the attorney general's report concerning the conflict of interest on the part of our chairman and her dual role," said Hackett, "and it just seems that this area is not spelled out as OK to do in enabling legislation, either."

HACKETT SAID he recalled that the board approved using college money for trustees' baby-sitting expenses in October 1978. Today, he said, only three of the board trustees have young children and could be considered eligible for the reimbursement — Ritter, Reynolds and trustee Edward Pappas of Farmington Hills.

Said Pappas at the board meeting: "I've never even heard of this."

According to the prepared expense

report, Ritter's travels apparently were connected with positions she holds with two national groups: the American Community College Trustees Association (ACCT) and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). The OCC trustee serves as a director-at-large with the ACCT and as a vice chair of a joint AACJC and ACCT Commission on Federal Relations.

IN A SEPARATE matter, Hackett also called for the removal of cigarette vending machines from all campus buildings, but failed to generate support that night.

"As an educational institution, I feel we're remiss in our responsibilities by getting revenues from the sale of cigarettes," Hackett told the board. He

cited mounting evidence on the hazards of smoking and concern over "public safety, public health." The college collects a small percentage of revenue from vending machine sales.

Hackett's motion was supported by trustee Douglas Wakefield of Southfield. He later withdrew his support when it appeared the rest of the board preferred to table the matter.

Trustees, instead, directed the administration to post public notices of a follow-up discussion and possible action at the board's next public meeting. Hackett said he had asked that the issue appear on last Thursday's agenda, but conceded that it probably failed to appear because he didn't put the request in writing.

"I'm not prepared to vote on this tonight," said trustee Margaret McTavish of Birmingham. "I also have a hard time making a decision like this for other people."

"I'm not saying don't smoke," Hackett responded. "I'm just saying you

won't be able to find it on our campuses."

Trustee Pappas, a former smoker, argued that cigarette smoking is not illegal and that he would oppose the motion. "There are good arguments that it's bad for you, but then so is caffeine in coffee and soft drinks."

A SERVICES representative for ARA, the college's vending-machine supplier, said there are about 12 cigarette machines on all the five campuses and that generally they are not very profitable.

"I don't think we sell a lot from these machines because the prices are awfully high," Jarson said.

The service rep, Carlene VanVoorhies, said the cigarettes sell for \$1.25 a pack, a price that is expected to increase by some 15 cents soon because of tax increases.

"We don't sell a lot of them because the prices are high, so (keeping the machines) would just be a matter of convenience," she said.

Detroit-Chicago rail link probed

A Michigan legislative committee will hear public comments on the feasibility of high-speed rail passenger service in the 280-mile corridor from Detroit to Chicago.

State Rep. Richard Fitzpatrick, D-Battle Creek, who chairs the ad hoc committee, will start the hearing at 2:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 1, in the 13th floor auditorium of the City-County Building, Woodward at Jefferson, Detroit.

The committee, appointed last April, is composed of lawmakers along the Detroit-Chicago corridor, including Rep. James Kosteva, D-Canton, and members from Detroit, Augusta, Portage and Berrien County.

"There has been increasing interest in the development of this corridor at a time when there are relatively no federal or state funds available for such a project," said Fitzpatrick.

"The Michigan Department of Transportation has completed a number of studies that suggest strong potential for privately-funded development of this corridor. A number of multinationals development firms have expressed serious interest in this project."

The proposed route would parallel the I-94 freeway, starting at the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit with stops at Metropolitan Airport, Ann Arbor and other points on the route.

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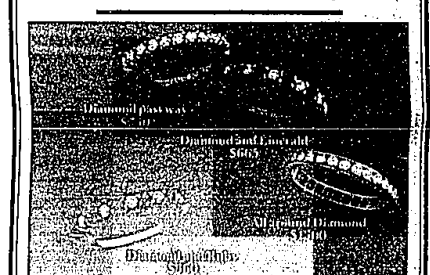
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