

OCC 'job conflict' probe fizzles

Board chairman Reynolds says she'll keep her foundation job

By Teri Benes
Staff writer

A state probe into a potential conflict of interest by Oakland Community College board Chairman Suzanne Reynolds appears to have stalled.

Reynolds maintains she will forfeit neither of her positions as a trustee and salaried staffer for the OCC Foundation.

A spokesman for state Sen. Rudy Nichols said last week that his office won't pursue attempts to force Reynolds to step down from one job or the other.

Earlier this year Nichols, R-Waterford, had requested the state attorney general's opinion which held that state law prevents a trustee from receiving

any direct compensation from college work. Reynolds is paid \$7,475 a year by the foundation.

"IF THE attorney general is not going to pursue it, then we won't either," said Nichols' aide, Bill Cargo. "But I think it's a clear conflict of interest because you're not supposed to benefit from your involvement in the community college."

According to Cargo, Reynolds raised only a "minimal" amount of funds for the college since the directorship was started in 1981.

Since 1982, the college contributed \$21,000 a year toward the foundation, without which he said the "foundation wouldn't exist. The foundation didn't

raise enough money to offset the money the college provided."

Though Reynolds admitted fund-raising has been tough going, she disputes the claim that college money directly pays her salary as foundation director. She earlier criticized the attorney general's research into the opinion as "lucky" and has prepared her own rebuttal to it.

According to Cargo, her salary continues to be paid from a grant from the American Foundation. Originally a \$50,000 contribution, it was tapped over the years for other purposes such as school studies, including one feasibility study that cost \$40,000. Today the fund is worth about \$45,000.

"Some people say it takes five to seven years to start up a foundation," she said.

THOUGH contributions may have been small so far — she couldn't detail the exact amount last week — she was busy in her fund-raising job. Working at least 15 hours a week, Reynolds says she formed an all-volunteer association and a "Friends of OCC Foundation" group which she said are essential to any college fund-raising activity.

Last year the foundation began issuing scholarships. One for \$150 was directed to four campuses. A \$300 scholarship was donated in memory of President Joe Hill, who died in office in 1978.

Assistant Attorney General Gerald Young said no decision has been made yet on the Reynolds' case, "but we are keeping track of it."

"(In general) we write many, many opinions that aren't always followed up with a lawsuit. We're looking at the situation, keeping track of it through the Department of Education."

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(O&E)

State House OKs 2 'divestment' bills

Nearly everyone agreed South Africa's apartheid policies are abhorrent.

But in a hard debate, the state House of Representatives split 54-53 over whether selling pension fund investments in companies which do business there will change the country's racial policies.

In the middle was Rep. W. V. Brotherton, R-Farmington, who voted against a bill to divest the state's general pension fund of such stocks. But he voted in favor of a bill requiring divestiture of the Legislature's own pension fund.

Both bills — sponsored by Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor — were passed and sent to the Senate, where they await an uncertain fate.

THE GENERAL pension fund divestment bill (House Bill 4770) was passed 67-39.

It had support from eight area representatives: Democrats Justine Barnes of Westland, John Bennett of Redford, Maxine Berman of Southfield, William Keith of Garden City and James Kostecka of Canton; and Republicans Lyn Banks of Livonia,

David Honigman of West Bloomfield, and Gerald Law of Plymouth.

Opposed were five Republicans: Brotherton, Mat Dunaskis of Lake Orion, Gregory Gruse of Madison Heights, Judith Miller of Birmingham and Gordon Sparks of Troy.

THE LEGISLATIVE pension fund bill (HB 4771) passed 71-36 with the same lineup of votes except for Brotherton's switch.

Sparks joined two other members in a statement abhorring South Africa's policies but adding:

"Pension funds are held in trust for the benefit of public employees at retirement. It is both improper and costly to use these funds to merely make a political statement. The substantial investment losses will have to be picked up by the taxpayer, who has no voice in the statement."

Miller called her no vote "a difficult one for me. I have had a long-time commitment to racial justice. . . . Today's vote was a symbolic one which will do little to solve the problem of apartheid the expense of the Michigan taxpayer."

State death toll down; seat-belt law lauded

Traffic accidents in Michigan killed 47 fewer vehicle occupants in the first five months of the state's safety-belt use law compared with the same period in 1984, according to Michigan State Police. This occurred despite a moderate increase in November fatalities.

Where safety belts were available to occupants, 91 people died in traffic accidents in November compared with 87 deaths in November 1984.

State Police noted that a rash of multiple-fatality collisions and an extra weekend in November 1985 accounted in part for the higher toll. Three multiple-fatality crashes claimed 15 lives in one November weekend.

"GIVEN THE extraordinary circumstances of this past November, along with the fact that the number of automobile accidents are up substantially from 1984, it's clear that safety belts are preventing deaths and serious injury," said Capt. Kenneth Casperson, commanding officer of the traffic services division.

"November's increase doesn't reflect the overall downward trend of fatalities on Michigan's high-

ways since the safety-belt use law went into effect," he added.

"The safety-belt use law is saving lives in Michigan," said Thomas O'Neil, executive secretary of the Michigan Coalition for Safety Belt Use. "Of course, we would like to see continuous monthly reductions, but we feel that the list of fatalities in November would have been even longer were it not for safety belts."

THE MICHIGAN Coalition for Safety Belt Use, a non-profit organization based in Lansing, is an alliance of health and medical associations, safety and insurance groups, law-enforcement organizations, state agencies, and private organizations dedicated to promoting the use of safety belts as a means of saving lives on Michigan highways.

In addition to Michigan, 15 other states have passed safety-belt use laws. These include: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Texas.

Gas rate approved

Consumers Power Co. said economic development in Michigan received a significant boost from the Michigan Public Service Commission (PSC).

The PSC approved a new incentive rate for industrial natural gas customers. It is designed to attract new businesses to Michigan and encourage existing firms to expand their operations.

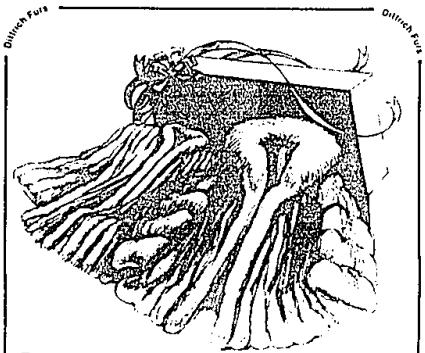
"We appreciate the commission's response to our request for a review of the new rate's potential for the state and Consumers Power," said Charles F. Brown, vice president of marketing for the utility.

"This incentive rate makes Michigan an even more attractive option for new and existing customers," added Brown.

Under the new rate:

• Existing industrial gas customers with small equipment designed to use at least 10 million cubic feet annually will save approximately 9 percent on their increased load.

• New customers installing similar equipment and using at least 10 million cubic feet annually will also save approximately 9 percent on their total load.



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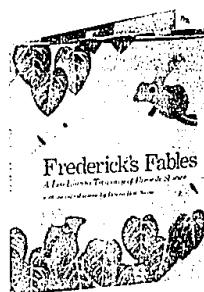
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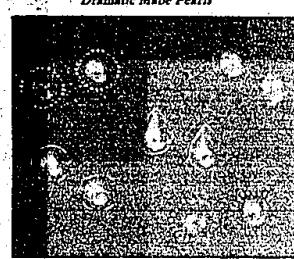
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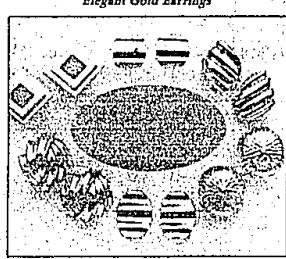
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