

Howard's name first on judicial talk list

By Tim Richard
staff writer

"Barry Howard" is the first name politicians mention when speculating on whom Gov. James J. Blanchard will appoint to the Oakland circuit court bench.

In fact, the 41-year-old West Bloomfield attorney's name has been floating around the courthouse for the better part of a year.

"The officers of the county party are supporting him," said Darlene Berent, chief staff person in Oakland County Democratic headquarters.

Howard is a former finance director — top money raiser — for the county party.

"All the attorneys I know have high respect for him," said Larry Perneck, D-Southfield, chair of the Democratic caucus on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

THE OTHER side of the aisle respects Howard, too.

"I'm an old friend of Barry's from law school days," said James Alexander, chairman of the county Republican committee. He said Howard is known for ability and integrity.

Howard, whose law office is in Farmington Hills, is a Blanchard appointee to the Western Michigan University board of trustees. He was a delegate supporting Michael Dukakis to the 1988 Democratic National Convention.

Blanchard will have an opportunity later this month to make a circuit court appointment. His first and only appointment, Judge Norman Lipplit, is resigning after a little more than three years on the bench to return to private practice.

Applicants for the position are screened by a State Bar Association

committee and the top names are sent to the governor's desk. The process is secret, but names leak out. The rumor mill also circulated Lipplit's name long before he received the appointment.

THERE ARE other possibilities for the \$92,000 post.

Fred Harris, Farmington Hills labor specialist and former member of the Oakland County Road Commission, is a name that almost always pops up. Harris, whose law office is in Southfield, has been out of the political limelight since a run for Congress in the 1970s.

William G. Wolfram may be rewarded for the thankless job he

took on last year — running for Oakland County executive on the Democratic ticket. A Franklin attorney specializing in appellate and labor work, Wolfram of Bloomfield Township is known to be interested in a judicial appointment at some level.

Other names making the talk circuit are Dennis Drury, a 52nd District judge from Troy, and David J. Kaufman, Royal Oak attorney and active Democrat. Kaufman ran for a probate judge nomination last year. A one-time judge in Detroit, Kaufman sometimes serves as a visiting judge on the Oakland bench.

THE NEW JUDGE, whoever is named, will see his term expire in

1990 and is expected to seek a full six-year term in 1990.

Lipplit in 1985 succeeded George LaPlata, who was appointed to the federal bench after winning a full term in 1984. Lipplit ran for and won the four remaining years of the term in 1986.

Oakland has 14 circuit judges. The state Legislature has approved the addition of two circuit judges in the 1990 election. Winners will take office in 1991.

Circuit court handles major civil suits, including domestic relations, and criminal matters. Circuit judges frequently are drafted for temporary service on the state Court of Appeals.

Conventions

Dems set local, state conclaves

Oakland Democrats swing into action Saturday in local conventions to pick delegates to the state convention later this month.

The county convention will begin at 10 a.m. in the Board of Commissioners auditorium at 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

It's part of an elaborate process to pick as many as 3,000 delegates to the state convention Jan. 28-29 in Detroit's Cobo Hall. That convention is expected to honor Gov. James J. Blanchard's suggestion that F. Thomas Leonard be the party's state chairman for the next two years.

Rick Wiener is leaving after six years as state chairman and is running for Democratic national chairman.

TYPICALLY, said Darlene Berent, executive director of the

county party, Democrats adopt a rule whereby all elected precinct delegates and paid-up party members may be delegates to the state convention.

Keynote at the county convention, she said, will be Carl Marlinga, Macomb County prosecutor.

After the county convention, Democrats will meet by congressional district to pick members of the rules, resolutions and credentials committee at the state convention.

The 18th District will caucus in the county auditorium. The 18th covers the bulk of Oakland County, including the Rochester area, northern and western Troy, the Birmingham-Bloomfield area, West Bloomfield and the Farmington area. The district also covers small corners of Livingston and Macomb counties.

The 17th District will caucus at 1:30 p.m. in the VFW Hall at Nine Mile and Telegraph in Southfield. The 17th covers southern Oakland, a small part of northwest Detroit, Redford Township and several western Wayne County suburbs.

The 14th District will meet at 1:30 p.m. in UAW Region 1 headquarters at 12 Mile near Hoover in Warren. It includes southeastern Troy and an eastern slice of Oakland County, southwestern Macomb County and the northeastern suburbs of Wayne County.

THE BIENNIAL winter state convention elects state party officers.

It is a holdover from the 1908-62 era when the winter convention also nominated state candidates for the April election for Supreme Court justices, a highway commissioner and superintendent of public instruction.

Meanwhile, Berent announced that L. Miller Jr. of Franklin was re-elected Oakland County Democratic chairman. Miller, president of Financial Data Systems in Detroit, has been chairman four years.

Re-elected vice chairs were Ann Edwards of Madison Heights, John Dewan of Madison Heights, Maureen Deshetler of White Lake Township and Eddie McDonald of Pontiac.

New treasurer is attorney William Wolfram of Bloomfield Township.

Others re-elected were recording secretary Barry Lepler of Huntington Woods and corresponding secretary Maryann Hampton of Waterford.

Six fire seminars to start at OCC

The Oakland Fire Training Institute, on the Southfield Campus of Oakland Community College, will conduct six seminars during the winter semester at the college. They are:

- Firefighter Health and Safety: Program Implementation and Management — Jan. 18-19, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline is Jan. 13.
- Commanding the Initial Response — Jan. 21-22, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline: Jan. 17.
- Automatic Sprinkler Plan Review — Jan. 25, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration deadline: Jan. 20.
- Tactical Operations for Company Officers I — Jan. 30-31, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline: Jan. 25.
- Instructional Techniques for Company Officers — Feb. 4-5, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration deadline: Jan. 30.
- Basic Fire Academy — March 6 through April 28, weekdays from 8

a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration deadline: Feb. 24.

Details about the classes and registration may be obtained by phoning the institute at 552-2626 or 552-2635.

The institute and the Southfield Campus of OCC are at 22322 Rutland, south of Nine Mile between Greenfield and Southfield roads.

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