

Board delays hiring 7 new prosecutors

By Dave Varga
staff writer

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office won't be getting seven new staff attorneys it wants — at least for another 90 days.

Prosecutor Richard Thompson had asked the county commission to approve seven new assistant prosecutor positions to handle writing more warrants, spending more time in court and spending more time with juvenile cases, as required by new laws.

However, members of the county board's financial committee voted 6-3 last week to wait 90 days until more information was presented.

"I think we operate much better in this county if we look at the whole picture," said commissioner Marilyn Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills.

The prosecutor's office has grown steadily in recent years, with six

new attorneys in 1987 and three in 1988. There are 71 positions, although all are not currently filled. Adding seven new assistant prosecutors would cost the county just over \$357,000 a year.

IN THE resolution to delay a decision, commissioners asked to study if they could retain more prosecutors longer if they allowed them into the county pension system; to look at the costs of the office; and to estimate how, if prosecutors spend more time with juvenile cases, that would decrease duties and save money in the probate court budget area.

Several commissioners commented about the continued growth of the prosecutor's office.

Larry Pernick, D-Southfield, said former prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson has said, "Oakland County government is fat." I think he has to be talking about your office . . . I

think it's a bad practice for us to add largesse to your office."

Money for these new prosecutors would have come out of the county's contingency fund. That's wrong, according to commissioner John Olsen, R-Huntington Woods.

"We've got to keep in mind a broader picture and use the budget process for what it's supposed to be," Olsen said.

He suggested waiting six months until they look at the regular budget, saying it won't make much difference.

IT WILL matter, said Gerald Poisson, chief assistant prosecutor.

"There will be no surety of swift and certain punishment. The county overall is going to be less safe."

And his office won't be as efficient or effective as it has been, because of increased duties, he said.

"How many more does it take to be safe," Olsen answered. "My guess is, if we wait six months, nobody will notice a thing."

ONE OF those supporting adding the prosecutors immediately was commissioner John Pappageorge, R-Troy.

"We're on a moving train here. If

'How many more does it take to be safe? My guess is, if we wait six months, nobody will notice a thing.'

— John Olsen
commissioner

we think we can wait till budget time . . . we're kidding ourselves. We'll have a bigger problem in October."

Also voting against the delay were commissioners G. William Caddell,

R-Walled Lake, and Larry Crane, R-Positac.

If the finance committee later recommends the new assistant prosecutors, the matter will go before the entire county board.

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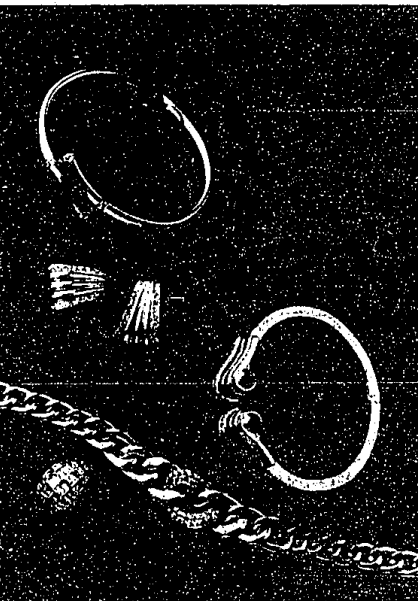
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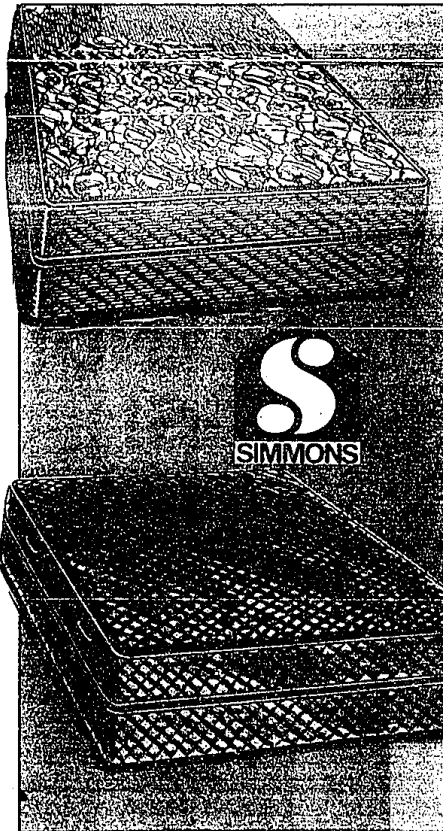


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