

Grand jury gets funds; courthouse plan held

By Philip A. Sherman
staff writer

A resolution for \$50,000 to fund Oakland County's grand jury was

passed, but another resolution requesting an additional \$251,000 for the courthouse pre-design didn't even make it onto the agenda during Thursday's meeting of the Oakland

County Board of Commissioners finance committee.

County prosecutor Richard Thompson asked the committee to pass his budget resolution for the 17-

member citizen's grand jury, which will begin Sept. 1. He was confident his resolution would be accepted by the committee and passed July 20 by the full board because it already had been through the public services committee and has "widespread support from the community," the sheriff and the Oakland County Chamber of Commerce.

Thompson's funding request had to go through the committee because seating a grand jury is not a planned, and therefore not a budgeted, item.

"THE JURY was not on my budget when it (budget) was approved. It's an extraordinary part of the criminal justice system that can only be called into existence by the court," Thompson said.

Since the county has not seated a grand jury since 1972, Thompson said his office used figures from a Macomb County grand jury as the basis for its request. That jury, seated from January through September 1986, cost \$30,840.

As proposed, the Oakland County grand jury line items include:

- \$7,958 for juror's fees and mileage.
- \$7,000 for professional services.
- \$2,860 for reporter and stenographer services.
- \$10,400 for transcripts on appeals.
- \$1,170 for witness fees and mileage.
- \$15,600 for special prosecuting attorneys.
- \$5,014 for building space and cost allocation.

Thompson added he will seek additional funding if the grand jury runs longer than six months.

AT THE OPENING of the meeting, chairman G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake, asked the committee to amend the agenda and add a resolution that, if approved, would have

authorized an additional \$251,150 for Minoru Yamasaki Associates for the company's work on the courthouse pre-design.

Commissioner Lawrence Pernick, D-Southfield, objected to Caddell's attempt to add the item, saying he had just been made aware of Yamasaki's request and needed to study the resolution. Paperwork on the resolution was handed out at the beginning of the meeting; representatives from Yamasaki also were in the audience, ready to make a presentation.

Pernick was joined by several other commissioners who were wary of authorizing that much money on such brief notice. The resolution was kept off the agenda and not discussed, pending study by the committee.

A contract previously was awarded for \$218,240 to Yamasaki for the courthouse master plan.

Area superintendents aren't counting money from ruling

By Philip A. Sherman
staff writer

At least four area school superintendents expect an appeal of the recent Michigan Court of Appeals ruling that would turn over \$360 million to local school districts.

The ruling stems from a suit filed by Oakland County that challenged the constitutionality of a 1980 law that reclassified some state spending rules in apparent contradiction to the Headlee amendment, passed in 1978.

Headlee required the state to return 41.6 percent of the tax money it collects to local schools and governments. The suit was filed because the 1980 law said money for mental health and schools already was folded into the 41.6 percent returned.

money was not in that 41.6 percent, and in fact the state illegally had withheld the funds from local governments.

"I think that's a very appropriate decision," said Roger Garvelink, Birmingham schools superintendent. "I thought all along the state had misinterpreted Headlee."

Garvelink expects the ruling to be appealed by the state, however. "That means we're several years away from resolution on this," he added.

John Schultz, Rochester schools superintendent, agreed. "I would be surprised if it were not appealed. We're talking about a large amount of money that we've been pursuing for a long time," he said.

"It's an example of how local schools are suffering because of the lack of state support," said David Spencer, superintendent of Troy

schools. "But I would be surprised if it isn't appealed. I happen to agree with the decision the court made."

Michael Flanagan, interim superintendent for Farmington schools, said "it seems like everything related to that, from day one, has not worked out in our favor," when asked if he thought the state would appeal.

"WE'RE DELIGHTED with any interpretation that's going to get this back within the spirit of the Headlee amendment," Flanagan added.

State budget director Shelby Solomon said last week he doesn't know where the state would get the money to return to local governments. He did say, however, that even if the state didn't appeal, the money probably would not come from new taxes.

New county snow trucks on order

The Oakland County Board of Road Commissioners has authorized the purchase of 21 new trucks for servicing county roads this coming winter.

The commission, chaired by Rich-

ard Vogt, estimates the cost of the trucks at \$1.6 million. The winter equipment on the trucks will be removable so they can be used for summer road maintenance.

The county has 1,400 miles of

paved roads and 1,000 miles of gravel roads to maintain. When 1989 opens later this year, the commission says it will need a total of 131 trucks for 93 salt runs.

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