

Oakland to try televised court appearances

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County is looking to closed-circuit television as a way of cutting law enforcement costs.

Under a program recently discussed by the Consent Judgment

Jail Advisory Group suspects facing criminal charges could be arraigned in district or circuit court from the jail via two-way, closed-circuit television.

The system would save money by eliminating the need for sheriff's deputies to transport suspects from

the Oakland County jail to district or circuit courts, according to county commissioner Richard D. Kuhn Jr. of Drayton Plains.

Oakland's program would be similar to one operating in Genesee County, where arraignments, pre-trial hearings and show cause hearings

can be handled without the accused leaving his or her jail cell.

"The Genesee County program is projected to save a considerable amount of money," said Thomas Farrell, a spokesperson for the Michigan Supreme Court. "Nobody knows how much because it hasn't been operating long enough."

THE STATE'S highest court authorized the Genesee County program on an experimental basis. Last October it expanded the authorization to include Oakland County.

"We're looking at a pilot project for the 52nd District Court," said Kuhn. "We could save a considerable amount of money by eliminating the need for deputies to transport prisoners from Pontiac to Troy."

Deputies deplored the fact that duty would frequently fall to other substitutes, Kuhn said. Considering the travel time required to take prisoners to district courts in Southfield, Farmington Hills and other communities, the savings could be substantial.

District Judge Dennis C. Drury of the Troy branch of the 52nd Court, has called a meeting for Thursday to

form a task force to implement the pilot program.

Invited to the meeting are representatives of the United Cable Co. of Royal Oak, the Intergovernmental Cable Communication Authority as well as cities like Troy, Clawson and Rochester Hills that could use televised arraignments.

Costs could be minimized, Drury said, by using cables already designated for public service.

"We initially need two television links," Drury explained. "One so prisoners can be arraigned in jail. The other would be a separate, secure link between the jail and the courtroom so attorneys can consult with their clients in private."

Commissioner Donald W. Jensen, a member of the jail advisory committee, said a number of details have to be worked out. "But it sounds like a good idea," he said.

New ME is low-key, professional

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County has hired a chief forensic pathologist who will likely become the next medical examiner.

Dr. Lubjana Dragovic, a deputy medical examiner in Wayne County, will begin supervising the medical examiner's office Jan. 7.

He was selected for the job by a four-member selection committee authorized by County Executive Daniel T. Murphy. Murphy also named Dragovic as medical examiner.

Appointment to the job requires approval by the County Board of Commissioners which is expected to review Dragovic early next year.

The title of chief forensic pathologist empowers Dragovic to perform or supervise autopsies, according to personnel director C. Vincent Lutz. The title of medical examiner charges him with the authority and responsibility of investigating all unusual deaths within the county.

Dragovic, who has been a consultant to the Oakland medical examiner on several occasions, said he sees the new job as a "professional challenge."

"The office has many hard-working professionals," said Dragovic, who describes his own approach as that of a low-key, team player.

Dragovic, 30, was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, where he attended medical school prior to moving to Canada. He spent six years in residency training at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

HE HAS BEEN a fellow in forensic pathology in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland and is certified

in anatomic, neuro and forensic pathology.

Dragovic currently holds teaching positions at Wayne State University, the Veterans Administration Medical Center and Harper Hospital.

He and his wife, Jadranka, have two children and live in Grosse Pointe Farms. She is also a physician.

The Oakland Medical Examiner's position has been vacant since November 1989, when Dr. Bill G. Brooks resigned under fire. Brooks complained he had been drinking and was unable to testify at the preliminary examination of two Pontiac teenagers charged in the kidnap-murder of Glenn and Wanda Parr of Rochester Hills.

Not everybody believed the allegations, but Brooks resigned before they could be confirmed or refuted.

His immediate successor was Dr. Lynda Bledzicki who accepted the role of acting medical examiner, continuing the restructuring of the office and its reorganization.

BLEDZICKI, 39, had been with the office as chief pathologist or deputy medical examiner, said she would be interested in the job permanently providing it was changed from a contractual to a full-time position with fringe benefits and that lines of supervision be changed to assure accountability.

County commissioners balked at the request, questioning the need for a full-time medical examiner and decrying the estimated \$30,000 needed to provide fringe benefits.

Last August, at the request of the

commissioners, Dr. Bledzicki and commissioners agreed to the restructuring, but insisted the job would have to be advertised and the appointment would go to the most successful candidate.

Bledzicki took herself out of

contention and accepted the medical examiner's position in Wausau, Wis., a suburb of Milwaukee, her home town. In her resignation, Bledzicki said she wanted to return to her home. But she was also critical of commissioners for being what she considered needlessly bureaucratic.

County Executive Murphy agreed. To hasten the search for a new medical examiner he appointed the four-member selection committee.

"We are very lucky to get somebody with Dr. Dragovic's qualifications," said Dr. Hobart P. Loepp.

Director of county institutional and human services and a member of the selection committee.

DRAGOVIC HAS an understanding of the administrative workings of the medical examiner's office and its relationship to law enforcement agencies, in addition to his training and proven professional abilities, Loepp said.

The medical examiner works closely with police agencies and frequently testifies at court proceedings. He or she also supervises a staff of about 25 people including pathologists, investigators and clerical staff.

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Admission is free to the show sponsored by the Birmingham Stamp Club. The show's hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Genealogist to talk computers

Uncluded about a computer for genealogical research?

The Oakland County Genealogical Society may provide some insight with its program, "Why Buy a Computer for Genealogy?"

James N. Jackson, a past president of the society who currently works for AmericaTech Applied Technologies Inc., will discuss computer

basics for vacillating investors

The meeting begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 8, in the Rotary Room of the Baldwin Public Library, 300 W. Merrill in Birmingham.

There is no charge for the meeting, which is open to the public. Additional information is available through Jane Van Drat at 646-0223.

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