

Pro-incinerator group spent \$241,113 on 'yes' vote

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

A committee backed by Westinghouse Electric Corp. spent almost \$250,000 in a controversial campaign to persuade voters to back the Nov. 5 ballot proposal on financing the Oakland County Solid Waste Program, according to treasurer Steve Mitchell.

Today is the deadline for filing campaign finance statements with the Elections Division of the Oakland County Clerk's Office.

In a press statement for release today — Mitchell said the Committee for Responsible Solid Waste Management spent a total of \$241,113.

Of that total, \$205,100 was donated by Westinghouse, Mitchell said in the press statement. Westinghouse has a contract with Oakland County to build the \$180 million waste-to-energy incinerator, the conversion of the \$500 million solid waste program.

The fact that Westinghouse was the largest contributor was a source of controversy to those opposed to the incinerator. Some insisted it was improper for a company with a financial interest in the program to put money into a program that advocated an affirmative vote.

"But what Westinghouse did was legal," said Diane L. Pederson, a vo-

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— Steve Mitchell,
Committee for Responsible Solid Waste Management

cal critic from Rochester Hills. "We didn't like their campaign, but it was legal."

PEDERSON SAID she is part of a coalition — People United Against Incineration — that still plans to file a complaint about the county's role in that campaign with the Michigan Secretary of State. "But we're not targeting Westinghouse."

Other contributors listed in the press release, and the amount of their support, are:

- Waste Management of North America, \$20,000. The company has a contract with Oakland County for two other components of the solid waste program, the material recovery facility (or MRF) in Auburn Hills and a landfill in Orion Township.
- Shearson Lehman Brothers of New York, \$7,500. The firm will help

underwrite the sale of the solid waste bonds.

- Kidder-Peabody of New York, \$5,000. The firm will also help underwrite the sale of bonds.

- Dickinson, Wright, Moon and Van Dusen, \$2,500. The Detroit law firm is the local legal counsel for the solid waste program.

- Camp, Dresser & McKee, \$2,000. The firm is a consulting engineer on the project.

- Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance of Farmington Hills, \$1,000. Richard Headlee, the firm's president, chairman and chief executive,

was one of several well-known Republicans who made commercials touting the solid waste program.

- Fifteen lawyers from Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone in Detroit each contributed \$100.

The committee spent about \$100,000 on printing and postage for direct mail; \$53,000 on a telephone campaign; about \$40,000 on radio advertising; \$20,000 on television advertising; and \$1,000 on newspaper advertising. Mitchell's statement said. An undisclosed amount was spent on polling and consulting.

The money was well-spent, according to Mitchell, who lives in West Bloomfield and operates a research and communication firm in East Lansing.

"To our knowledge, this is the first time in 25 attempts nationwide that a waste-to-energy incinerator has been approved by voters in an election," Mitchell said in his statement.

"This was a tremendous victory for Dan Murphy (Oakland County Executive), Ray Rewold (chairman of the county board of commissioners), Brooks Patterson (possibly Oakland's most well-known Republican)

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and Dick Headlee," said Mitchell's statement.

"These leaders had the courage to take a strong, public stand on a very controversial issue," the statement continued. "Without their leadership and public endorsement, the proposal would not have won."

MURPHY, REWOLD, Patterson and Headlee each made commercials for a media blitz prior to the Nov. 5 election.

Mitchell said tracking polls show that blitz made the difference. Polling from Oct. 5 and 8 showed that 43 percent of voters favored the proposal. That figure was 47 percent in the week of Oct. 25 and slightly over

50 percent on election day.

More than 70 percent of Oakland's 228,223 registered voters turned out for the Nov. 5 ballot proposal — the closest in county history.

With 148,066 people voting, the solid waste proposal was approved by 257 votes, 71,020 to 70,745.

The vote was close enough that a coalition of organizations opposed to the incinerator have paid \$4,250 for a recount of 42 of the county's 557 precincts. That recount was under way Monday and is expected to continue through most of December.

In a related development Tuesday, the county board's planning and building committee gave tentative approval to selling about \$100 million worth of solid waste bonds as early as this spring.

Those bonds will be used to begin implementing recycling portions of the solid waste program, according to Smith. "The bonds will be sold in a series," he said. "No bonds will be sold for the incinerator until after the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has held a public hearing on the facility's operating permit."

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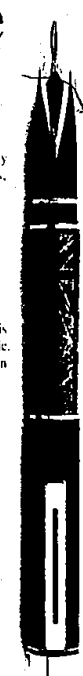
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