

# Patterson sends letters firing department heads

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

The Oakland County executive's office is experiencing something new: a genuine personnel shake-up.

In letters sent out last week, executive-elect L. Brooks Patterson notified at least six department heads they will not have jobs after Jan. 1, when he officially takes over. Furthermore, other heads may roll.

The move — or perhaps the method — caught a number of appointees by surprise, even though as one of his first public acts Patterson promised to "clean house."

Among those expressing astonishment is outgoing executive Daniel T. Murphy, the person who hired the people Patterson is firing.

"I wouldn't handle it the way he's doing it," Murphy said

## COUNTY

Thursday, as the courthouse complex was buzzing about what amounts to the highest level mass firing in county history. "But this is Brooks' show. The people elected him and he's the one putting his team together."

"He'll make some mistakes. I certainly made mine."

### Wait and see

Asked if he thought Patterson was making a mistake by getting rid of so many of his appointees, Murphy said, "I can't say. They're qualified people, but he wants his own people in there. We'll have to see who he appoints."

The outgoing executive was careful not to criticize Patterson. As Oakland's only chief administrator since the county went to

the executive form of government in 1974, he knows how a new broom sweeps.

Others — including some of those getting the ax — are aware of it, too. But many expected a six-month grace period.

"They felt anger at the ax falling so swiftly. The also said the dismissals were needlessly cold and callous. Most were notified by letters delivered by the newly appointed transition team while Patterson was on vacation."

"I deserve better than that," said Russell Martin, the outgoing director of management and budget. Martin was appointed to that job four years ago after serving five years as deputy director. His salary is \$85,970 annually.

"I've been seen as cocky, even arrogant," Martin said ruefully. "But it's a tough job and I've done it well."

Martin said he and other outgoing

department heads deserved at least a phone call from the new executive if not a personal visit.

"I guess I was ready to leave," he said. "I think I'm going to shoot for an executive position somewhere."

While Martin, like others, was miffed at the seemingly callous way he got news of departure, he figuratively fumed over the return of the \$940 contribution he made to Patterson's campaign.

### Refunds too

Appointees who got exit letters from Patterson also got refunds on campaign contributions.

"It was almost insulting," said Martin.

"There simply isn't a graceful

or painless way of notifying somebody they will no longer have a job," said Douglas J. Williams, who last week was named deputy county executive. He's also a key member of Patterson's transition team.

"The new executive is looking for competent people who are also very loyal to him," said Williams.

"It's not necessarily that anybody was not competent, it's just that Mr. Patterson wanted his own people."

"That's nothing new," he said. "Any new executive makes his own appointments. Maybe it's just that we have not seen anything like that around here."

## Womencenter gives AIDS update

The Womencenter at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus presents "AIDS and HIV: An Update for the '90s," 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17.

The discussion will be hosted by Mary Jo Szuba. Szuba will speak about information she gained while attending the Eighth International Conference on AIDS in Amsterdam this past summer.

AIDS has become a global concern for men and women alike.

The World Health Organization estimates that by the year 2000 most new infections will occur in women. The Nov. 17 workshop is designed to explore the critical impact of this disease on women's health.

This event is free and open to the public. For more information call 471-7602. The Orchard Ridge Campus is located at 27055 Orchard Lake Road, south of I-696, in Farmington Hills.

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