County commission ponders mental health takeover

The proposed county takeover of mental health sorvices is expected to come under close scrutiny as Oakland County commissioners prepare to vote on the controversial plan.

controversial plan.

"At this point, there are a lot of unanswered questions," said Commissioner Shelley Taub, R-Bloomfield Hills, last week after an informational meeting on the so-called full management mental health system.

health system.

No decisions were made at last week's meeting. Instead, the contract under which Oakland would assume full management of mental health services was referred to committee.

government committee to begin review of the contract March 8. Other committees are also expected to review the sproposal before the entire beard votes on it, probably in mid-April.

At issue is whether Oakland will change its system of managing mental health services for an estimated 30,000 residents classified as mentally ill or developmentally disabled. Some of those residents currently get services — ranging from recational rehabilitation to full-time residential care — under a variety of state or county-run programs.

But others with mental prob-lems get fewer, if any, services. Waiting lists are long, and grow-

ommittee.

The tentative timetable calls - Advocates of the full manager ment system insist Oakland can

ance for the Mentally III.

Over the past 14 years — since state officials first advocated the change — most Michigan counties have opted for it, said Cooper.

The worked well, with more people getting better service.

Onkland and Macomb are the only two that have not opted for full management, Cooper said. They have continued under the old system under which management decisions are shared by state and local officials.

AMI endorsed Oakland's adop-

tion of the full management system in part because the current system is inadequate for the needs of the mentally ill, Lippitt said. Last year a report commissioned by AMI described Oakland's mental health system as fragmented and grossly inadequate.

The report's author, Leonard Stein, recommended full manage-ment as a step toward correcting serious deficiencies. Skeptics of full management, however, say there are many unanswered questions.

Among them is Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington

Hills. "I'm worried that once Oak-land assumes control over montal health services," the state will re-

health services," the state will reduce its support, leaving taxpayers to make up the difference.
"I'm willing to keep an open mind," said Wolf. "But before we switch, I want to know all the ramifications."

Road workers sign new contract

Emplayees of the Road Commission for Oakland County will receive a 3 percent raise, for each of the next three years.

Brent O. Bair, managing director of the road commission, recently announced the signing with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (Local 92).

"Dean Mersino, president of roads in the winter, patch

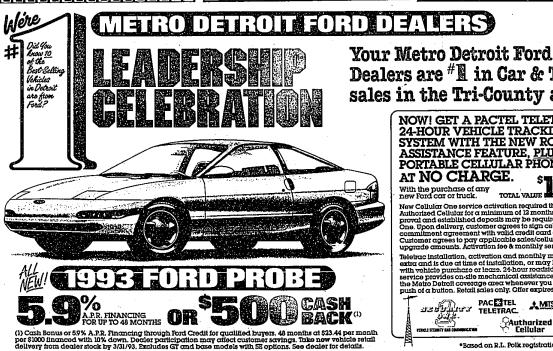
potholes in the spring, grade gravel roads and maintain the entire county road network."

In addition to the pay like, the new contract calls for op-tional new medical insurance cost containment opportunities and administrative clarification of several portions of the previ-ous contract.









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