

# Skirmishes inherent in new OU meeting policy

BY JUDITH DONER BERNE  
STAFF WRITER

It wasn't pretty, but proponents of open meetings put it into the win column anyway.

Following some stilted discussions permitted by some awkward silences, the Oakland University Board of Trustees Thursday unanimously voted to open its own committee meetings and those across campus. But meetings may be closed by the committee head who must account for that closure.

"That was the quietest unanimous vote I've ever seen," said OU board chairman James Sharp Jr.

"We did have a win," said Jane

Briggs-Bunting, who attended the meeting although she is on sabbatical from her post as head of the OU Journalism program and advisor to the Oakland Post student newspaper.

But she warned: "We won the war, but there are a lot of skirmishes ahead — just like Iraq."

## 'Dragged' into it

"They (the OU board) were dragged muttering and complaining into realizing what a university is all about," she added.

The board acted on the recommendation of a campus-wide committee which met twice in open sessions to debate the issue, first raised by the Oakland Post

with regard to board committee meetings.

The Michigan Open Meetings Act allows public bodies, such as the OU board, to hold closed committee meetings of less than a quorum of the board, on the theory that only a quorum can take action. It was the OU board which extended the issue to all regular internal meetings at the university. They aren't subject to the state act.

Currently, most of these 120 or more committees hold closed meetings.

However, Briggs-Bunting said she and the Oakland Post will stick to their original focus, the board's three standing commit-

tees. "We expect to question every closure except those that fall under the eight exemptions listed in the Open Meetings Act," she said. "There's a lawsuit waiting."

Ron Horowitz, acting vice president for academic affairs, chaired the meetings committee and presented the following policy to the board:

"It is important that the business of a public university, such as Oakland University, be conducted in the open. Accordingly, it is the policy of Oakland University that meetings of all university committees should be conducted as open meetings."

"However the board recognizes

that in certain instances an open meeting would not be in the best interests of the institution, and in such circumstances no open meeting would be required."

OU President Sandra Packard would report on the effects of the policy after a year, Horowitz suggested.

## Silence speaks

Silence greeted board president Sharp's initial call for discussion. "It's a good indication of what would happen at open meetings," quipped trustee Larry Chunovich, a West Bloomfield resident.

"I would, as a member of the personnel and finance committee, recommend that all meetings be closed," said trustee David Handman, of Bloomfield Hills. "All (matters) are personal."

"Does this policy take an affirmative action to close a meeting?" questioned trustee Andrea Fischer, a Birmingham resident,

who served on Horowitz's committee.

"Yes," Horowitz responded. "You could decide as a continuing thing that this committee's meetings would be closed," Fischer said, addressing Handman's concerns.

Board vice-chairman Stephen Sharp, of Bloomfield Hills, was the most affirmative. "The only way the people can see the truth is that it (a meeting) is open."

Following the vote, President Packard suggested taking the time to applaud the process "of very careful and thoughtful deliberation" that was employed. "That is what a university is all about. We have modeled that today."

Friday, Briggs-Bunting applauded the university community for "coming together like it never has before. We had resolutions from every body on campus."

# County traffic group gets new director

An Oakland University administrator, Frank Cardimen of Rochester Hills, is the new head of the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County. He is only the second director in the organization's 26-year history.

Cardimen replaces Bruce Mad-

sen, who leaves the non-profit TIA which he helped to establish.

Cardimen, who was director of corporation and foundation programs for Oakland University, was selected by the TIA Executive Committee to head up the organization, first established by

corporate executives and public officials to meet the county's then growing accident problems.

"I'm extremely pleased to be selected to take over an organization which has a 26-year record of outstanding accomplishments

and has achieved a reputation as a national traffic management model," Cardimen said.

At OU, Cardimen first taught in the School of Business Administration before adding his administrative duties.

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