

County robs convention bureau to pay SEMCOG

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County took from Per-
ter to pay Paul.

The transaction sparked heated
words, took four votes and, in the
opinion of county Democrats,
spoke volumes about Oakland
County's view of regional coop-
eration.

"This is a very short-sighted
approach," commissioner Law-
rence Pernick, D-Southfield, said
Thursday at the regular meeting
of the Oakland County Board of
Commissioners.

Republicans, including com-
missioners Thomas Law of West
Bloomfield and Donald Jensen of
Birmingham, said the decision

COUNTY BOARD

was simply a matter of economics.
Dwindling revenues are forcing
the board to make tougher choices,
more so than it was forced to
do in the past.

Pernick was in the minority as
the board voted to pay part of its
\$319,108 dues to the Southeast
Michigan Council of Govern-
ments with \$39,663 in funds pre-
viously earmarked for the Metro-
politan Detroit Convention and
Visitors Bureau. That leaves the
convention bureau with a little
under \$10,000 from Oakland
County.

Like his colleagues, Pernick

wanted to pay the SEMCOG
dues. But he objected to taking
money away from the convention
bureau to do it. He'd prefer find-
ing the money elsewhere in the
budget, possibly the contingency
fund. He wanted Oakland to sup-
port SEMCOG and the conven-
tion bureau.

Pernick said the reason com-
missioners are willing to take
money from the convention bu-
reau is a deep-seated resentment
toward Detroit and regional ef-
forts. "If you took the name 'De-
troit' out of the bureau's name,
we'd find the money elsewhere,"
he privately told reporters.

His Democratic colleague, com-
missioner Hubert Price Jr. of

Pontiac, called the move "idiot-
ic," especially in light of the
convention bureau's help in bringing
the World Cup soccer games to
the Pontiac Silver Dome in 1994.

The World Cup games will
bring an estimated \$125 million
in tourists' dollars to Southeast
Michigan, Price said. Why with-
hold support from an agency so
obviously successful in bringing
convention business into the en-
tire area?

Republicans countered by not-
ing that other agencies, including
Oakland's Economic Develop-
ment Division, were equally in-
volved — and equally successful
— in bringing the World Cup
games to the area.

Given the county's economic
shortfall, they argue, commis-
sioners must make difficult choices.
"Our pockets aren't empty,"
said commissioner Shelley G.
Taub, R-Bloomfield Hills, "but
they're getting that way. The
county must pick and choose
where to put its money."

Asked if she was disenchanted
with the convention bureau or
Detroit, Taub said, "I'm disen-
chanted with a lot of things in De-
troit. But that's not why I voted
the way I did."

Commissioner Sue Ann Dou-
glas, R-Rochester, said she saw the
vote as a strong endorsement for
SEMCOG. "SEMCOG is very im-
portant to Oakland County. So

it's very important we pay those
dues."

Furthermore, Douglas said pri-
vately, there may yet be other
votes on Oakland's support for
the convention bureau.

There were four motions on
paying the SEMCOG dues, in-
cluding one to refer the matter to
the finance committee.

In committee, Pernick and oth-
ers hoped they might make
stronger arguments for supporting
SEMCOG and the convention bu-
reau. Several Republicans, in-
cluding Douglas and commis-
sioner Donn Wolf of Farmington
Hills, supported that measure. It
lost, however, 13 to 11.

Two area nurses win Nightingale awards from OU

Four outstanding nurses in
southeastern Michigan will be
honored at the fifth annual
Nightingale Awards for Nursing
Recognition Dinner to be held

May 12 on the campus of Oakland
University.

Two are local: Pamela Gray of
Oakland Township and Carol
Mastalerz of Troy. Others are Vir-

ginia Hill Rice of Grosse Pointe
and Mary Lou Wesley of Meta-
more.

Each will receive \$1,000 and a
special bronze statue of Florence
Nightingale.

A record attendance of 500 is
expected at the dinner which be-
gins at 6:30 p.m. and is preceded

by a silent action starting at 5:30
p.m.

Speaker will be Robert W.
Assmusen, executive vice presi-
dent and chief operating officer of
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michi-
gan.

Tickets for the event, to be held
on the birthday of Florence
Nightingale at the conclusion of

National Nurses Week, are avail-
able from the Oakland University
School of Nursing by calling (313)
370-4081. Individual tickets are
(\$35) and tables of (10) may also
be reserved.

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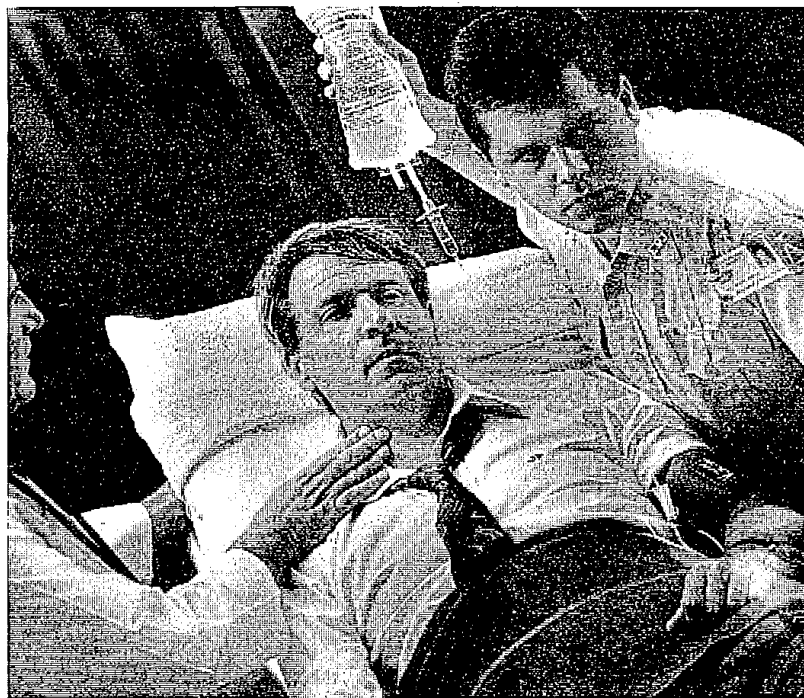
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