

Fiscal crisis

Patterson: Oakland faces \$11 million deficit

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

News of Oakland County's pending \$11 million budget deficit has prompted criticism, skepticism and at least one suggestion for averting lay-offs.

"Republicans are fiscally irresponsible, just like they were in Washington (during the Reagan-Bush years)," said Commissioner Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield. "We should be able to address at least part of that deficit by demanding accountability within the criminal justice system."

Another commissioner, a Republican who asked not to be identified, said news of the deficit may be a ploy. "About 400 county employees are eligible for early retirement," the commissioner said. "This might be an attempt to encourage them to leave."

Southfield businessman James Ralph said the county executive L. Brooks Patterson could save money by assuring competition by making sure the bidding process on county projects is open to minority companies.

"I don't know how a county like Oakland, the third richest in the county, could be facing a budget deficit," said Ralph, who is president of the Oakland County Business Consortium in Southfield. But bids from minority businessmen would assure competition.

Patterson raised the specter of a county shortfall Tuesday at a luncheon meeting of the consortium at Northland. Patterson said disappointing returns on investments were largely responsible for Oakland's facing a budget shortfall.

The deficit could be as large as

\$11 million by the end of this year, the executive said, and as much as \$22 million in 1994.

Patterson was expected to go into more detail today at a meeting of the county board's finance committee when he is scheduled to discuss "the significant operating shortfall the county is facing."

Commissioner Larry Crake, chairman of the board, Wednesday told newsmen he was aware of the pending shortfall. "But I don't want to make any comment until after Mr. Patterson addresses the finance committee."

Commissioner Sue Ann Douglas, R-Rochester, said news of a possible deficit is particularly distressing since the legislature has moved to eliminate property taxes as a source of school revenue.

"Because of S.B. 1, the state

has to make up billions of dollars," said Douglas. "We (commissioners) have to be watchful because the state may try to make up that money by taking funds away from counties."

Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, said he wants to learn more about any budget problems from Patterson himself. "I think we'll learn a lot today from Brooks."

"But we won't raise taxes," he vowed. "We'll cut expenses even if it means cutting services."

Commissioner Pernick, chairman of the board's Democratic caucus, said the possibility of a deficit should not be a surprise. Patterson and other Republicans have repeatedly accused Democrats of being irresponsible spenders, he said.

AROUND OAKLAND

Couples workshop on intimacy

An Oakland University Continuum Center workshop called "Pathways to Intimacy" will occur 7-10 p.m. Thursdays, Aug. 19, 26 and Sept. 2, at the Rochester Community House, 816 Ludlow.

Fee is \$79 per couple. Register by Tuesday. Call 370-3033.

The program examines barriers that can prevent closeness, and the power struggles between men and women, even in relationships that are good. Partners will learn how intimacy can flourish when they receive and accept each other's social, emotional and physical needs.

are set up by the Bluewater Michigan Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society.

The train will carry passengers from Livonia to Holland on Saturday and from Livonia to Flint and Saginaw on Sunday. Each trip will feature sightseeing in the destination city and tours of the train.

For either excursion, round-trip tickets are \$79 for ages 16 and

over, and \$64 for children ages 6 to 15. Children 5 and under ride free, provided that they do not occupy a separate seat.

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Steam locomotive rides slated

This has been a summer of comebacks. Think about it: Dinosaurs. Eastwood. Tina Turner. And now, a 1940s steam locomotive.

Nickel Plate Road 2-8-4 fast freight locomotive Number 765 will pull excursion trains on round trips around southeastern Michigan in mid-August. Trips

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