

# State has its way on corrections

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

At the renewed request of state officials, Oakland County may soon be looking for additional ways to keep convicted felons out of prison.

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners recently agreed in principle to negotiate a new community corrections program designed to find alternative ways of sentencing people convicted in circuit court.

At the state's insistence, Oakland officials have been trying to negotiate such an agreement for almost two years without success. By a 21-1 vote at the Sept. 23 reg-

## COUNTY

ular county board meeting, commissioners agreed to accept state money to hire a community corrections manager (and staff) to re-negotiate on a new program, probably early next year.

"If I don't like the agreement they (state and county officials) come up with, I won't vote for that new agreement," said commissioner Marilyn E. Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, who voted in favor at this point.

Gosling's vote is considered important by proponents of the community corrections program be-

cause she was one of the commissioners who voted against it last year.

Gosling said she voted against it because she was concerned that potentially dangerous criminals might be released into the community prematurely. "I'm still concerned, so I'm watching this development carefully."

Republican commissioner Kevin A. Millner, whose 6th District includes part of West Bloomfield, was the only board member to vote against the proposal. "The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of prisoners Oakland sends to the state prison system. Oakland already does that.

"I don't see how we can do more of that, without costing taxpayers prematurely," he said.

The chief opponent of any new community corrections program is prosecutor Richard Thompson, who voiced his concerns to the county board through his chief assistant, Gerald D. Poisson.

Prior to Thursday's vote, Poisson reiterated the concern that any community corrections program would not comply with state law requiring adequate safeguards to protect the public. Oakland currently provides numerous alternatives to prison time, Poisson said.

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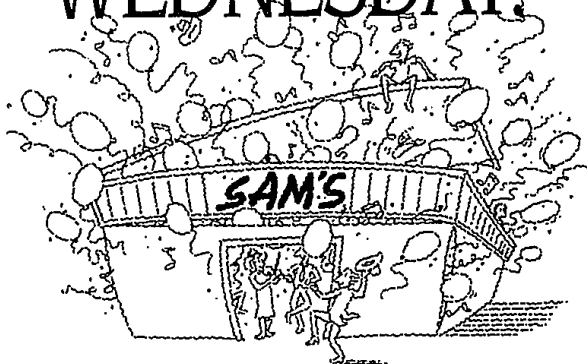
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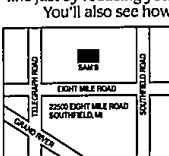
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