

County finance committee approves pay hikes

Patterson 'miffed' that directors excluded from increase

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Oakland Executive L. Brooks Patterson — like other elected county officials — is scheduled to get a pay hike next year.

But that didn't stop Patterson from visibly demonstrating his annoyance with the county board's Finance and Personnel Committee for refusing to grant salary parity to so-called "second tier" managers.

At its meeting Thursday, as it was winding down budget hearings, the finance committee approved pay hikes for elected officials — including those taking office Jan. 1, — and all of the county's nonunion workforce, about 60 percent of the 4,313 work force.

The pay hikes must be approved by the entire county board, probably at the Dec. 12 meeting as commissioners wrap up the budget for 1997.

"It was a long meeting," said chair Sue Ann Douglas, R-Rochester. "But we got a lot done."

Among the accomplishments, Douglas said, are:

- Approving the 1997 budget at \$442,113,621.
- Comparisons with the 1996 budget — \$492,118,610 — are not appropriate, according to budget director Robert J. Daddow, because the county is changing its fiscal year.

Fiscal 1997 will end Sept. 30 instead of Dec. 31 because the county is adopting the financial cycle used by state and federal agencies, Daddow said. Oakland previously used the calendar year.

The 1998 budget is tentatively set at \$538,772,822. The increase, Daddow said, is primarily attributable to higher

expenses Oakland will incur because of MOCR (Macomb-Oakland Regional Center) for mental health services.

- Approved pay increases of 3.5 percent for department heads and nonunion employees.

The increase is comparable to pay hikes granted to unionized employees under their respective contracts, said Douglas.

- Approved 3.5 percent pay hikes for elected officials. County commissioners received a 7 percent increase, but Douglas said the increase was comparable because it was calculated for two years (1995 and 1996) when other county employees received pay hikes, and commissioners did not.

Patterson was visibly miffed when commissioners refused to approve parity for seven positions — the circuit court administrator, the manager of the Parks and Recreation Commission and five directors on the executive's staff.

"I assumed Mr. Patterson was miffed," said commissioner Douglas. "He walked out and slammed the door... loudly."

The committee approved 3.5 percent increases for the positions in question. But it did not approve the slightly higher increases requested by Patterson.

"Was he (Patterson) angry?"

Definitely," said Daddow. "It's a matter of principle."

The executive inherited a situation under which some directorships were paid more than others, the budget manager said. Those lower-paid directorships were loosely called "second tier" positions.

The executive has repeatedly tried to make the salaries comparable, said Daddow. "But commissioners have repeatedly refused."

Douglas said commissioners are willing to consider pay equity for the positions in question, "but not at this time."

That's the problem, said Daddow. "Commissioners are always saying 'not now.'"

To say he was miffed is an understatement, Patterson said Friday, "like saying the Hindenburg had a not-so-good landing. "I'm angry because of the directors commissioners show toward my staff."

The executive said his "second tier" directors had worked hard and had, in fact, saved tax dollars through their efforts.

"It would have cost about \$35,000 to grant equity. Commissioners are saying, in effect, they're not worth it."

"I assumed Mr. Patterson was miffed. He walked out and slammed the door... loudly."

Sue Ann Douglas
Oakland County
Commissioner

In other action Thursday, the finance committee considered but decided against reducing the pay for prosecutor.

"This would have been the perfect time to bring the prosecutor's salary in line with other elected officials like the sheriff, clerk, treasurer and drain commissioner," said Commissioner Charles E. Palmer, R-Clawson, who suggested cutting the prosecutor's salary.

"I've wanted to do that for some time," he said, because the prosecutor doesn't have any more responsibilities than other elected officials. "But nobody picked up on my suggestion."

The idea was dropped after other commissioners ignored the suggestion and went on to the next item of business.

The Oakland County Commission has recommended a 3.5% pay increase for county elected officials. This is what the projected pay hike would look like:

TITLE	TERM	1996 PAY	1997 PAY
COUNTY EXECUTIVE	4 years	\$117,792	\$121,915
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY	4 years	\$101,817	\$105,381
SHERIFF	4 years	\$90,645	\$93,818
CLERK/REGISTER	4 years	\$90,645	\$93,818
TREASURER	4 years	\$90,645	\$93,818
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COUNTY COMMISSIONER	2 years	\$23,468	\$25,111

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