

Mood is upbeat as commissioners take oath of office

BY PAT MURPHY STAFF WRITER
 pmurphy@oc.hometown.net

A new jail, sewer projects, the \$100 million expansion of the Court House and the county's \$5 million infrastructure fund.

These and other weighty matters were put on hold Tuesday as Oakland County Board of Commissioners conducted its first meeting of the year — an organizational session generally devoted to electing leaders, adopting rules and other procedural matters.

"Tonight we get sworn in," joked William R. Patterson, a new Republican commissioner from Oxford. "After that, we get sworn at."

All 25 commissioners — including seven newcomers — were to take the oath of office in full view of families, friends and supporters. The new commissioners, besides Patterson, are: Michelle Friedman-Appel, D-Huntington Woods; Ron Colasanti, R-Highland Township; David N. Galloway, R-White Lake; Tim W. Melton, D-Auburn Hills; Brenda Causey-Mitchell, D-Pontiac; Terry L. Sever, R-Farmington Hills; and George W. Suarez, D-Madison Heights.

"Our first meeting of the year is generally ceremonial," said Commissioner John P. McCulloch, R-Royal Oak, who was expected to be elected to his fourth consecutive year as chair of the county board. "But there are a couple of business items to be considered."

One item proposed by Commissioner Frank H. Millard Jr., R-Clarkston, calls for naming the Sheriff's Office including the jail, after the late John F. Nichols.

"It would be an appropriate tribute to the service and leadership he gave to this community," Millard said prior to the meeting, referring to Nichols, who died Dec. 18 after 14 years in office.

13 crowd sheriff's race

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If Oakland is to have a new sheriff Monday, as announced, the committee selecting a successor to the late John F. Nichols will have to work efficiently.

Thirteen candidates applied for the job of Oakland County Sheriff as of 5 p.m. Tuesday, the deadline imposed by the Vacancy Committee which has announced it will begin interviews at 9:30 a.m. Monday. Two other candidates applied, but they were questionable because they did not appear to meet residency requirements.

"It's comforting to know we have such a diverse field of qualified candidates," said Prosecutor David Goreyca, who with County Clerk G. William Caddell and Chief Probate Judge Eugene Arthur Moore make up the committee that will pick a successor to Nichols, who died Dec. 18.

Goreyca said the committee intends to act promptly. "We won't be hasty, but we expect to name a new sheriff Monday and swear him into office that afternoon. There are too many pressing concerns for needless delay."

The other candidates are:

- State Sen. Michael J. Bouchard, R-Birmingham, 42, a criminal justice/police administration graduate of Michigan State University.
- Undersheriff Henry Buffa, 51, of Rochester Hills, who retired from the Detroit Police Department before joining the Oakland department in 1988. He was named undersheriff in 1993 and has been acting sheriff since Nichols died.
- Gerard Leo Carlin, 43, Oakland Township, a former sheriff's captain and commander of the sheriff's substation in Rochester Hills who resigned in 1993.
- Matthew E. Hogan III, 48, of

White Lake Township, who is the retired commander of the Michigan State Police Post in Brighton.

- Harold Wesley Irons, 66, a tool and die shop owner in Waterford Township, who has no police background.
- Barnett Jones, 46, of Lake Orion, who joined the department in 1982 and rose to the rank of captain. He has a masters degree from Eastern Michigan University.
- Michael G. McCabe, 43, Rochester Hills, who joined the department in 1977. He has a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and is currently a captain and the department's deputy chief of staff.
- James F. McCarthy, 61, of Waterford, a former assistant prosecutor in Wayne and Oakland counties now in private practice.
- Frank Millard, 48, of Clarkston. A former police officer who graduated from the Detroit College of Law. He is currently a county commissioner and a member of the Oakland County Jail Task Force.
- Phillip J. O'Brien, of Orchard Lake, who was with the Detroit Police Department before becoming a certified public accountant and then a lawyer. He has been a special deputy within the sheriff's Mounted Division.
- Paul Ormiston, Clarkston police chief.
- David Pement of Orchard Lake, currently a sheriff's sergeant in charge of security in the Friend of the Court's office as well as the district courts.

Carl W. Solden, retired Waterford police officer.

The candidates who apparently do not meet residency requirements are Paul R. Pash, a former police officer in Warren, and David E. Patterson, a federal agent living in Brighton.

State law requires that a person be a registered voter within the jurisdiction, explained Caddell. "If we wait Monday, they won't qualify," he said.

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