

# THE DAILY TRIBUNE

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## Our opinion

# Automation would benefit the Board

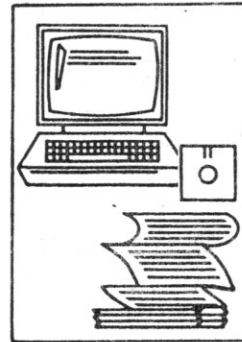
If Commissioner David L. Moffitt, R-Farmington Hills, has his way the Oakland County Board of Commissioners will be better able to move the mountains of paper it generates and receives — using computers, of course.

Moffitt recently introduced a resolution calling for a better method of reviewing operational programs and county finances in an effort to make better decisions.

As it is now, much of the information available to commissioners is stored in huge, hardbound volumes. Unfortunately, manually searching these for a long-forgotten resolution or board position on a particular subject is no guarantee that the information sought will be uncovered.

Commissioner Moffitt hopes to change that by using “information processing technology” designed to give public officials faster and more efficient access to materials needed.

If his colleagues go along with his idea, the board will have the ability to go to a computer terminal and access all previous board resolutions by title or resolution number and perhaps even by specific word search or subject matter.



In other words, if a newly elected commissioner wants to find out what position the board has taken on pollution control, for example, he or she can electronically search for that

information by pressing a few keys on a computer terminal.

In addition to instant access to important information, the plan would also provide the means for better decisions precisely because commissioners wouldn't run the risk of repeating the mistakes of their predecessors.

There wasn't enough time for the commissioners to act on Moffitt's plan during the 1989 term, but the item has been carried forward into 1990.

As a lawyer, Moffitt is familiar with how computer databases in his profession have greatly expanded the parameters of legal research. He hopes to provide a small measure of that capability to the Board of Commissioners.

We think it's a good idea.

We do, however, have some reservations about costs which we believe must be addressed before moving ahead with the plan.

While price tags on computer software for information retrieval systems has been shrinking, without precise cost information we cannot give more than a qualified endorsement of this proposal.

We're happy to note that Moffitt has maintained a careful eye on the economic realities of his idea and has taken the cost aspect into consideration.

He proposes the appointment of an ad hoc study committee to analyze the board's automation needs and priorities and make appropriate budget recommendations.

That seems to us to be the most reasonable and thoughtful approach to an innovative plan.