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PAGE A-3

County services may soon travel via cyberspace

By BUCK SRALLA

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Oakland County records could soon be available to the general public on the information superhighway if a pending county resolution wins approval.

The resolution, written by Commissioner David Moffitt, R-Farmington Hills, would take steps toward providing basic county government information to the general public through the on-line computer network known as the Internet.

"The people have a right to this information and they

shouldn't have to drive up to Pontiac to read these documents and pay a fee for it," Moffitt said. "The fact is, this very basic information — like budgets, meeting agendas, minutes and addresses — ain't available yet, and I say, let's get on with it."

The proposal, which has been channeled to the general government committee, seeks a commitment from county officials to provide information to residents via their home computers.

One option, Moffitt said, is to provide access through Metronet, a computerized network of eight south Oak-

land County libraries that currently disseminates data through the Internet. The network is a non-profit consortium of libraries from the Bloomfield Hills, Farmington and Rochester areas.

The service would cost the county approximately \$3,500 a year to provide, Moffitt's resolution states.

Paul Funk, the county's director of information and technology, said efforts are already under way in the county to make information more readily available to the public.

However, concerns over cost and the spread of possi-

ble computer viruses by ruthless hackers slow the county's movement toward total computerized openness, Funk said.

Ultimately, the county would have to levy a small fee to recoup the costs of providing the service, he said.

"Picture somebody that wants to know something about some property that they want to buy," Funk said. "They will be able to tap into that from their home. That's exciting. I think people would be willing to pay a fee for that just to avoid the hassle of coming down to the courthouse."

The county has consulted with more than 100 area businesses as part of its research, Funk said.

Moffitt said he envisions basic information being made available to the public by the end of the year.

The county's movement toward the latest computer technology is a sign that Oakland County remains on the cutting edge of innovation in government, said Beverly Papai, treasurer of Metronet.

"I think we would be blazing a trail if we were to do this," Papai said. "The demand is just voracious."

Round two begins for pay hikes

■ Patterson plans to reintroduce proposal of 8.5% to 16% increases

Other commissioners say politics, which are present in any government discussion, will not play a deciding role

