

# Commission deserves praise for delivering charter under budget

Published: Wednesday, March 03, 2010

It's almost a foregone conclusion that if you give a tax-supported public agency \$100, its leaders will find a way to spend \$110.

Coming in under-budget is, indeed, a rare accomplishment.

That's why we compliment the Macomb County Charter Commission, the 26-member board that has established the groundwork for a new form of government when voters this year elect a county executive.

**Dave Willis**, treasurer of the commission that spent six months writing the voter-approved charter, presented a check for \$210,000 last week to the Board of Commissioners.

"The charter commission came in far below budget thanks to fiscally responsible leadership and a no-frills approach to conducting government business," **Willis** said in our report last week.

"The Charter Commission wanted to create a streamlined government that is cost effective, and I feel we practiced what we preached."

The new charter didn't come cheap. The commission spent \$323,000, but that's 40 percent less than budgeted.

Some commissioners even refused to accept their \$50 per meeting stipends. Under the direction of county Clerk Carmella Sabaugh, the clerk's office spent \$22,112 of its budgeted \$45,000.

The commission's executive director, the only full-time employee, was paid \$1,000 per week but since that person, Ralph Maccarone, is an attorney, the overall expense for legal fees resulted in a \$90,000 saving.

While the total amount of \$323,000 spent is nothing to scoff at, the funds, we think, will eventually be offset by streamlining county government and reducing the number of commissioners from 26 to 13.

In comparison, in Wayne County, where a charter was written in 1981, the cost amounted to more than \$5 million, when adjusted for inflation.

Certainly, the Macomb County Charter Commission, under the direction of chairman Jacob Femminino, accomplished its goal and set a standard for our soon-to-be new government.