

Highline on way to decentralization

BY LOU CORSALETTI
The Highline area may become an experiment in decentralized country government services under a recommendation by County Executive John Spellman.

In a letter to the Council, Spellman rejected spending capital funds for construction of new buildings designed as mini-courthouses. Instead, he suggested that existing buildings throughout King County be used.

The executive's decision was backed up by a study by the County Department of Community and Environmental Development and based on the reaction of citizens contacted in the study. It was substantiated by Environmental Development Commission members who worked on the report.

THE PURPOSE of the study was to resolve how best to improve responsiveness of county government to citizens by providing better services and to determine which services could be decentralized and moved to communities to make them more accessible.

The centers would be staffed with personnel who could answer questions or solve problems related to such county services as the assessor's office, parks

and recreation, youth affairs, most types of licensing, the courts and the prosecutor's office.

Spellman noted there are not enough funds available for new buildings to adequately satisfy needs in the areas specified. In addition, he said, there does not seem to be a clear demand for these types of services in all communities.

THE COUNCIL passed an ordinance last June appropriating \$600,000 from federal revenue - sharing funds to establish governmental centers.

Spellman, however, suggested an experimental project in the Highline area. Most interest came from there and the county already provides more services there than any other part of the county because of population densities, he said.

Surplus school buildings instead of new buildings would be suitable, he said.

In the letter, Spellman also recommended funding for construction of a new north precinct police station in the Hamlin Park-Firlands complex or use of a conveniently located surplus school building.

The existing police station, he said, "is in a run-down condition."