

Seneca supervisors OK fund transfer shortfall

By MIKE MASLANIK/Finger Lakes Times | Posted: Wednesday, September 26, 2007 12:00 am

OVID - Seneca County supervisors Tuesday unanimously approved transferring funds from two county accounts to cover a projected sheriff's department shortfall of up to \$475,000 stemming from delays in the opening of the new jail in Romulus.

Acting on recommendations from County Treasurer Nick Sciotti, the Finance Committee transferred \$228,122 from the Medicaid account and \$246,878 from the contingency account; Sciotti said the transfers should be enough to cover the shortfall.

The new county jail opened in June, four months behind schedule. The delay caused salary problems and disrupted boarding agreements in which the county gets money for housing inmates from other areas.

"“Luckily, we have the money to make up for that shortfall," said board Chairman Ed Barto.

Money from the Medicaid account came from excess funds the county collected over the cap, Sciotti said.

In related news, county attorney Steven Getman announced that the county is suing Pennsylvania-based UTE, the general contractor in charge of construction, in excess of \$100,000 for alleged delays in getting the jail online. The county is also named in a suit by PSI, a subcontractor, against UTE.

In other action, the board:

— COURTHOUSE INFRASTRUCTURE - Unanimously approved a bid by Elmer Davis Inc., of Rochester, to replace the roof of Seneca County Courthouse for no more than \$196,000. Workers did not replace the more than 20-year-old roof when the county rehabilitated the courthouse in the early 1990s.

The board also accepted state bids to replace several sections of carpeting.

— PARSONS HOUSE - Heard that the Parsons House will be demolished on Saturday at 7 a.m. Secor said that the county has prepared the area for the occasion, since the demolition will most likely attract media attention.

Though the house will be gone, memories of the quintuple murder will be harder to erase, she said.

"“This was such a horrible case here in Seneca County that all of us remember like it was yesterday," Secor said.

— COUNTY ENGINEER - Unanimously voted to hire Jason McCormick as county engineer at a salary of \$72,453 per year.

— THREE BEARS COURTHOUSE - Heard from Getman that the county is negotiating terms of a lease that would place the historic landmark in control of Friends of the Three Bears Inc., a non-profit group dedicated to preserving and restoring the buildings.

“We're very happy,” said Dan Motill, president of the five-year-old group. “That's a vote of confidence in us by the Board of Supervisors.”

The exact terms of the lease won't be finalized for around six months, Motill said, but it's shaping up to be a 99-year lease that would be re-negotiated every 30 years.

The agreement would give the organization greater freedom to raise money and work on the buildings without constantly seeking approval from the board.

— GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENT - Released a statement Wednesday morning criticizing the appointment of Daniel French, Syracuse-based lawyer for the Cayuga Nation, to the state's Commission on Public Integrity by Gov. Eliot Spitzer.

“Mr. French has served with distinction as a U.S. attorney,” said David Dresser, Ovid supervisor and chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee. “Nevertheless, he does represent clients who boldly violate sales tax laws under the banner of sovereignty.”

Barto said that it “just doesn't look right” that French will sit on a panel charged with overseeing the governor's office while he is also speaking with the governor on behalf of the Cayugas.

mmaslanik@fltimes.com