

With Merger In The Works

County Planning Budget Requests \$90,250

BY HAL STOKES
The St. Lawrence County Planning Board wants over \$20,000 more to run the planning office next year than it took this year.

The board is asking the county legislature for a \$90,250 budget for 1979. That request is up by \$20,283 from the 1978 planning budget of \$69,967.

The board voted unanimously Thursday night to present the budget request to the legislature. It was to go to County Administrative Assistant William Collins Friday, in accordance with the timetable that has been set up for work on developing the county budget for next year. Preliminary budgets were due from department heads Friday.

The major reason for the increase in the proposed budget is to allow for the hiring of one additional staff person for the planning office. That person, to be known as a development coordinator, would be able to handle planning work in much the same way as the director. The position would be salaried at \$17,000 a year.

In actuality, this budget proposal may be completely altered because of the ongoing attempts to include the planning department in a merger of four county offices. County Planner Richard Grover agreed, following Thursday night's meeting, that this budget proposal might not bear much resemblance to what will eventually be worked out. But the board, aware of that fact, nevertheless had to get something out on the table for the legislature to work with.

The main thrust of the budget is that the planning office needs more staff in order to play an effective role in the county. Despite any changes that might come about from a merger of the four county departments, the board is still agreeing that additional staff is necessary.

Lower Than Grover's Request
The budget request of \$90,250 was actually pared down by the board from a proposal submitted by County Planner Grover. He had suggested a budget of \$113,050 that had included two additional

staff positions. But those two positions, one for an associate planner salaried at \$12,800 per year and one for a planner at \$10,000 per year, were cut with the notion that the budget would be more palatable to the legislature.

County Legislator Robert Thompson, a member of the planning board, said following the meeting that he could support the present budget request. He noted that he would have found it difficult to support the entire \$113,050 request.

"We need additional technical help if the planning board is going to be effective, but I agree that this is too much of a jump" said board member Philip Woodward during discussion of the Grover proposal. "I'd rather see us cut it back a little bit and give it good solid support."

That appeared to be the consensus of the board, although board member Dr. Herman Shulman brought up another point for the board to consider. He said that without qualified technical help, it would be difficult for the planning office to write grant proposals that could bring in additional funding from federal or state governments. He suggested that there would be a spiraling effect, since loss of grant money would mean reductions in staff and reductions in staff would mean further loss of grant money.

County Planner Grover confirmed that theory by remarking that the biggest budget the Planning Office ever had was mostly funded with grant money. "The unwritten rule was that the county supports just the director and clerical staff," Grover told the board. "Then, as we got a grant, we added another staff person."

But this year's budget proposal is an exception to that practice, since the county will have to pick up most of the tab. The only outside funding that is assured is the department's federal HUD 701 grant amounting to \$17,064. That means that the county would have to finance the remaining \$73,186.

The budget submitted by Grover also outlines seven areas in which the planning office would focus its efforts in

the coming year. They are in solid waste management, the proposed Fort Drum expansion, coastal, zone management, project review functions, alternative energy systems, housing, and constant review of the land-use plan.

Proposed Merger
Still, the planning office's budget will undoubtedly be affected by plans to merge four county departments. The departments suggested for a merger are the planning office, the county economic development office, the Environmental Management Council, and the human resources office.

Grover told the board that representatives of the four departments would be attempting to put all their budgets together to see where duplications could be eliminated.

Grover claimed to be in favor of such a merger, if it could be worked out. In fact, he prepared a resolution asking the planning board to endorse the concept of a merger and authorizing him to work toward that end.

But the board amended the resolution slightly, with the result that they did not go on record as actually endorsing a merger, as much as endorsing coordination of the four departments.

Philip Woodward, who proposed the amendment, spoke against a merger of the departments. But, because of the way the amended resolution read, it did not directly oppose a merger. Instead, it simply did not endorse the concept of a merger. However, it did endorse the idea of cooperation between the four departments. Voting on that amendment was split. Board members Shulman, Walt Reimer, John Tanski, Woodward, and Lauris Kelly voted in favor of it. Both county legislators on the board, Thompson and Augustus Marscher voted against it. Board Chairman Harlon Seaman and member R. Benson abstained from voting on the amendment.

Although the vote expressed the official position of the board on the merger

concept, there was considerably more discussion on the idea, much of it negative toward the proposed organization planned by Administrative Assistant Collins. Grover drew a sketch of the proposed set-up of the departments. That set-up was presented by Collins at a meeting of the four department heads Wednesday.

Dr. Shulman said commented on the Collins proposal. "It doesn't look like a merger plan, it looks more like a patch on a tire."

The Collins proposal was also criticized by the four department heads at the Wednesday meeting, Grover told the Board, because of the hierarchies that it established. (see separate story this week.)

Collins is hoping to get the merger plan before the county legislature at their Aug. 14 meeting.

The major changes in the proposed planning budget for this year, besides the addition of the development coordinator post, are: an increase from \$20,000 to \$21,000 in Grover's salary, an increase from \$9,455 to \$10,500 for a secretary, an increase of from \$7,817 to \$8,800 for an account clerk, an increase of \$250 for building supplies and expenses, an increase of \$1,100 in the telephone budget, an increase of \$400 in office supplies and expenses, an increase of \$250 for equipment repair and maintenance and an increase of \$1,350 in copying expenses.

A decrease in the spending proposal appears in the salary for Associate planner, from \$13,695 to \$12,800.

Course Set

State University College at Potsdam will offer a course on personnel management from Aug. 13 through 19 on the Star Lake campus.

For more information, call 315-268-3197 or write the Office of Continuing Education, State University College, Potsdam, N.Y., 13676.

County Considers Hiring Forester

CANTON—The St. Lawrence County Legislature will face a decision on Aug. 14 of whether or not to hire a county forester. The planning and conservation committee put the position on the legislative agenda.

The position, which they hope will be filled by November, would be classified as grade 27, which carries an \$11,095 salary. Chairman of the Planning and Conservation committee Robert Thompson noted that the salary is somewhat higher than the \$9,000 to \$10,000 originally proposed, but he added that the agreed-upon salary was more competitive.

According to the committee, the county forester will perform "responsible supervisory and technical forest management work in the operation of the county's reforestation program."

The forester would also perform forest inventory work, draw maps, and identify county forest lands. His responsibilities would include negotiating contracts and supervising

timber sales, reviewing tax sale land for possible incorporation by the county into county forestland holdings, and searching deeds and records.

Lastly, the forester would also administer a budget of about \$100,000, according to the committee.

Applicants for the position must have graduated from an accredited college with an Associate's Degree in forestry or forest technology, with two years experience in forestry-related work. Or, they may be graduates of the New York State Ranger School, with two years of experience in forestry-related work. Or, they may have any equivalent combination of training and experience.



TO SAVE A LIFE—Jodi Colby, R.N., director of Inservice Training at Canton-Potsdam Hospital, and Gary Hoose, the hospital's physical therapist, practice cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques on a training dummy at a recent course in Watertown. The two were among candidates in an 18-hour instructors' course. Other candidates from Potsdam were Harold Trimm, Richard DeGuldice, James Corbett, Richard Van Leuven, Joseph Trivisono Jr., and Linda Trivisono. George Kahn of Potsdam was an instructor-trainer, along with David Hodge of the Star Lake Rescue and Clifton-Fine Hospital, and Sue Ryan, R.N., of Mercy Hospital in Watertown.

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