

LAST WEEK'S WEATHER

	Hi	Lo	Pcp
Tues.	42	29	0
Wed.	32	19	1.6
Thurs.	30	-5	.5
Fri.	28	-6	Tr
Sat.	31	-2	Tr
Sun.	0	0	Tr
Mon.	11	-9	Tr

Courier Freeman

A PARK NEWSPAPER

Children's views on holiday season. See Page 5.

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Verbal Barbs Traded

Lawmakers Shun LaBaff Plan To Keep County Jobs

BY JIM REAGEN

CANTON — Norwood legislator Ernest LaBaff's proposal to stop 22 layoffs was defeated on a 20-to-2 vote Monday night with only DeKalb Junction legislator Stanley Morrill backing the idea.

But proposals by other St. Lawrence County legislators as well as administrative actions will mean that only seven of the 22 county employees whose jobs were threatened by the 1983 budget will actually face layoffs.

LaBaff had asked the legislature to reinstate all the county employees until the middle of February at an estimated cost of \$68,000. That would give time to committees to find alternatives to the layoffs, LaBaff said.

LaBaff Proposal Blasted

But when the proposal came to a vote, LaBaff found little support for his proposal, primarily because other legislators and committees had their own plans to reduce most of the layoffs.

At the end of the meeting, only a telephone operator, four social service caseworkers and two data processing workers will actually face layoffs.

Personal Care Aides Restored, But Their Status Remains Unclear

BY JIM REAGEN

CANTON — Norwood Legislator Ernest LaBaff won one battle Monday night, but what it means remained unclear after the meeting.

LaBaff won unanimous approval of a resolution calling for six personal care aides being transferred from the Social Services Department to the Home Health Agency to remain as full time employees.

But Health Committee members Donald Burns and Betty Bradley, and Finance Committee member Allen Rishe pointed out that the 1983 budget already calls for the six employees being transferred to remain as full time staff members.

"I'd like to win one," LaBaff responded. "It'll make me feel better."

But even though no one objected to the resolution because legislators said it had no effect on the budget, Health Committee Chairman Rosemary Sanford earlier in the meeting repeatedly refused to say what the status of the six employees would be.

Even after the resolution passed unanimously, Mrs. Sanford again refused to say whether any changes in the status of personal care aides would occur.

Her refusal to discuss their status drew stiff opposition from several legislators, led by LaBaff, who tried to get a firm commitment on their future.

He was joined by Oswegatchie Legislator Donald Livingston who said it seemed to be unfair to the employees to leave them in the dark when the transfer takes place Jan. 1.

'What's The Reason?'

"If there hasn't been a decision made, why hasn't a decision been made?" Livingston asked. "What's the reason? Isn't it about time to make a decision?"

"I would think that the grass roots people would have something in the back of their minds," he added.

Social Services Committee Chairman Lloyd Moore joined LaBaff and Livingston in criticizing the refusal to specify the six aides' future status.

Moore reminded the legislators that the decision to transfer them had not

been unanimous because both he and Gouverneur Legislator Robert Haydin had opposed the transfer until their status was explained.

"They have a right to know whether they're going to have a job," Livingston said. "We call all kinds of special committee meetings" for other matters, yet the health committee has not called a meeting for the personal care aides.

LaBaff's resolution passed unanimously that the staffers be transferred without any change in their status passed unanimously.

But after the meeting, Mrs. Sanford said the Health Committee could still recommend changes.

Village Supports Drunk, Drugged Driving Awareness Week

The Village of Potsdam will be joining other municipalities throughout the country in support of National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week, taking place this week.

Mayor James W. Penneck issued the proclamation of support for the awareness week which was established by a joint resolution of Congress authorizing the president to call upon the people of the United States to observe the week with appropriate activities.

"Drunk and drugged drivers on our nation's roadways cause death and injury to innocent victims as well as to themselves," Penneck said. "This national tragedy is finally receiving priority attention."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 250,000 Americans have lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes in the last decade, and more than half of all fatal crashes involve a drunk or drugged driver.

"I urge all citizens to participate in awareness week events, to focus on the problems, and to seek opportunities that will make traveling on our roads a safe experience," Penneck said.

Legislators were critical of LaBaff's proposal, saying it would increase taxes. They also opposed it saying that other committees had spent the past two weeks working to find alternatives, without any assistance from LaBaff.

Legislature Chairman Augustus Marscher pointed out that a clerk in the motor vehicle department whose position was abolished will not be laid off because she will be picked up as a clerk in the Food Stamp Unit. LaBaff had asked that her position be reinstated.

Gone Huntin'

"Ernie, if you came to a lot of meetings, you'd know what was going on," Marscher said.

LaBaff said he "pleaded guilty" to missing meetings because he has been out hunting. But he said he did not "diminish the white tail deer population" during the deer season.

But LaBaff urged the legislature to keep the employees on, saying such layoffs "are helping to destroy the basic fiber of American life."

"We cannot keep on putting people on the street," LaBaff said. "We cannot just continue to cut, slash and lay off."

To the applause of about 125 county employees who packed the Supreme Court Chambers, LaBaff reminded the legislators that many of them are also on the public payroll in their full time jobs.

They "get paid by the taxpayers," LaBaff said of the legislators. "But I've never seen one of you turn back a raise."

\$40,000 To Play Golf

"That includes you, Mr. Greco," he said to Star Lake Legislator Ralph Greco.

"\$40,000 for playing golf is pretty good, Ralph," LaBaff said to Greco, who works as an aide to Congressman David O'B. Martin (R-Canton) in addition to drawing a salary as a legislator.

LaBaff's remark brought Greco to his feet. The Star Lake Legislator reminded the audience that he and LaBaff had worked together to get unemployment insurance for strikers.

Greco told the group that for 15 consecutive years, St. Lawrence County has "laid claim to the dubious distinction" of spending the highest percentage of its budget on welfare of four Northern counties, yet consistently has the lowest unemployment rate.

Greco said the county's staffing of its department is the highest of ten similar sized counties.

"When I was president of the union, we had a stake in efficiency," Greco said. "But efficiency isn't putting as many people to work as possible" even when they aren't needed.

In a veiled reference to LaBaff, Greco said some legislators repeatedly say that attrition can reduce the workforce, yet many of these same legislators always want to fill every position a department head requests.

LaBaff objected to the comparison between the unemployment rate and the county's welfare spending, saying that the 9.2 percent rate does not include everyone out of work.

"I only know one thing," LaBaff said. "If you keep laying off people, they're going to go on welfare."

Not A Philadelphia Lawyer

Legislators criticized LaBaff's resolution, pointing out it did not show where the money would come from to keep the employees on.

They also questioned why it did not reflect changes already made during the board meeting.

"I'm not a Philadelphia lawyer," LaBaff said. But he said he has talked to his constituents and all the ones he has talked to want the county to keep its staff working.

"None of them are saying 'hold the line,'" he said.

Potsdam legislator Betty Bradley said that she also represents Potsdam, but her conversations with residents show they want taxes as low as possible.

"I don't know if he's talking to a different part of town," she said.

Ogdensburg legislator Allen Rishe said his constituents want the county to stop raising taxes.

"We have an obligation to the taxpayers," he said, explaining that Ogdensburg city residents keep asking why the county raises taxes almost every year, yet the city council hasn't raised taxes in more than 10 years.

Ogdensburg Legislator Donald Burns, who chairs the data processing committee, and Canton legislator Daniel Fay defended cutting two data processors, saying that they had researched the issue, and the move was necessary.

FIRE ON 11B — Quick work by Potsdam volunteer firefighters helped minimize damage from a trailer fire at the home of Otha Moniere and family on Route 11B, just outside the village limits on Friday. The blaze reportedly started when the stove pipe from a wood stove

reportedly set the back wall on fire. Firemen reported only minor damage to the structure. Mrs. Moniere suffered a cut hand during the incident which occurred at approximately 6:30 p.m. (Jim Murphy photo)

Courier Available

The Potsdam Courier and Freeman is now available at the following locations on Tuesday evening:

In Madrid, at Miller's, Don's Quick Stop and Holmes Store; in Colton at Frank's and Fisher's; in South Colton at Boyce's and Porter's.

HE'S HERE! — Surprise registers on the face of this youngster as Santa makes a visit to downtown Potsdam last Saturday. (Jim Murphy photo)



CANDLES AND GREENS — The warmth of the Potsdam sandstone mantel, the tapestry in the background, the green pine boughs and lighted candles highlight the fireplace in the Potsdam Museum. The museum held its open house on Sunday to begin its holiday exhibit, "The Joys of Christmas Past." (Betsy Baker photo)

Local Merchants Report Banner Shopping Season

BY JIM MURPHY

Unemployment is up, the economy is down, but people seem to be buying more than ever before as local merchants report a banner Christmas shopping season so far.

The spirit of Christmas giving — and buying — seems to have prevailed this year in the Village of Potsdam, as businesses report an up to 30 percent increase in holiday shopping over a year ago.

'Beep and Buzz'

While the amount that people are buying this holiday season may be surprising, what they are buying isn't as the fads of the last few years have become the mainstays of today.

Anything that goes beep, buzz, or can work a million times faster than the person operating it has been gobbled up as the space-age world of high technology seems to have found a place under the traditional Christmas tree.

A few years ago, people first bought video computer games for the games they could escape in. This year, buyers of home computers — one of the hottest selling items this season — are interested in home finance, learning a language, and educating their children. Of course late at night there's still that Pac Man cartridge.

According to Fred Lamon, manager of Radio Shack in Potsdam, the electronic games of the last few years were merely "the foot in the door" to today's computer revolution. Lamon stated that for every electronic game he sells, 20 home computers are bought.

Lamon stated that home computer systems have become cheaper, more sophisticated and more widely understood by the public.

He added that Radio Shack's business is already up about 30 percent over last year and the season isn't even near its peak.

"In another week or so shopping usually stops and what I like to call mania sets in," Lamon said.

Another merchant doing very well this Christmas season is Snell's T.V. and Appliance. Jim Snell reports that his business has been doing "just tremendous" so far — between 20 and 30 percent better than last year.

Snell reports that just about all that he sells is moving very well, especially accessories to the computer systems like game cartridges, which he also rents along with movie disks.

Other popular items for Snell are microwave ovens, with sales spurred by a general five percent drop in price from last year.

Snell stated that while people don't seem to be concerned about spending money, how they spend it is more important to them. "There more concerned about quality and service than ever before," he said.

Practical Items

Computers and appliances aren't the only things popular this Christmas season. Paul Culver, manager at Ames Department Store here called business "surprisingly good with the economy and all."

He reports sales at his store up about eight percent over last year, but added that he thinks that people are being more practical about what they buy. While toy sales are "sluggish", the purchasing of clothes and other practical items are way up.

Lee Matott, manager of Weston's Bookstore, said that people may be looking longer, but they are still buying more than ever. He reports his

business to be "extremely busy" and added that there weren't any noticeable "dead spots" in his merchandise.

Specialties

Other specialty stores also seem to be unaffected by the economy. Wally Siebel of Northern Music stated that his business in the first four days of December was 20 percent higher than the same period last year. The most popular items selling at his store are home and portable music devices like Sony walkmans and portable stereos.

Eugene Earle, proprietor of Earle Jewelers, stated that his business was about the same as last year, adding that in his business people don't generally buy until the last minute.

The buying trend seems to have touched just about every business in the community, with even a business like Kinney's Drug Store, which offers health and beauty aids along with gifts, reporting an increase in business of nearly 10 percent.

BAGEL WREATH — One of this season's most unusual decorations has to be this bagel wreath, displayed in the window of The Bagelry in Potsdam. Shown above held by Bagelry employee Darlene St. Pier, the wreath was made by Garnar and Tana Walsh of Potsdam out of 38 individually shellacked bagels. (Betsy Baker photo)



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