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DuBois Duplex on 60'x60' lot \$29,900.00



Victim/Witness Program facing deficit

03/04/2009

CLEARFIELD - The Clearfield County's Victim Witness Program finds itself short of money again.

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Victim Witness Coordinator Judy Shirey presented the Victims of Crime Act grant information at the commissioners work session Tuesday.

Shirey said the county will receive \$174,584 over two years, a decrease of \$15,967 from the current grant level.

According to Shirey, VOCA is a federal grant that provides money for services to victims, including criminal justice support/advocacy, information and referral, crisis and follow-up counseling, therapy, assistance with victims compensation and employer/creditor intervention.

The money is allocated to three victim service agencies in the county, Passages, Community Action's Crossroads and Victim/Witness.

"The Victim/Witness Program currently receives \$43,771 per year in the present grant period," Shirey said.

"The federal government has continued to cut this funding the past few years," she said, adding that she received a letter from the government saying there is money in the federal stimulus package that will be allocated to counties for this purpose.

"It is money that was assessed on federal crimes," she said. "But they can't tell us when we will be getting it."

Shirey presented her budget to the commissioners and said she estimated high.

She is looking at a deficit of \$16,879 for 2009-10 and a deficit of \$22,998 for 2010-11.

Commissioner Mark McCracken said in past years, the county has covered the deficit from the general fund.

"This is something we have to decide every time," he said, "with salary and benefits going up and the grant going down."

Shirey said the county has seen a 35.29 percent increase in the number of compensation claims filed.

"We take those very seriously," she said, adding that an overwhelming majority of those claims are for hospital bills.

McCracken said the commissioners will decide Tuesday on the grant application and whether the county will make up the difference in the budget.

The commissioners also announced they sent a letter to the state Department of Environmental Protection expressing concerns about a permit request.

McCracken said a farm in Graham Township has requested a municipal sludge permit and many residents have voiced opposition to it and asked the commissioners to take a stand.

"We have prepared and executed a letter expressing our concerns," McCracken said. "We have received phone calls, form letters, a petition. Citizens are concerned about the issue and we continue to be on top of the issue."

"I've grown confident working with the DEP on these types of issues and seen their due diligence when it comes to issuing permits," McCracken said. "I've conveyed to these folks to let the DEP do their due diligence."

Josh Quigley, director of the EMA department, introduced a new program called 911 Cares. He said it involves community awareness in reporting emergencies.

Quigley said a volunteer and a member of 911 management will give presentations on how 911 works and give a "behind-the-scenes look."

He said the presentations will be for any organization that wants to host one and he plans to do two a month.

"We plan to start the project in the next few weeks," he said. "It's a way to bring 911 education to the forefront."

Quigley also said the application for the 911 Wireless Fund is almost complete and ready for the

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commissioners approval. He said the county is requesting \$1.4 million. The commissioners also proclaimed this week as Weather Preparedness Week.

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