

\$28.8M county budget on table

By KRISTEN SENZ
Senior Writer

The proposed \$28.8 million Sullivan County budget for fiscal year 2011 represents a 6.51 percent, or \$843,073, increase in the amount to be raised through taxation over the current year, according to county officials.

County Administrator Greg Chanis handed his recommended budget over to Sullivan County commissioners this week, explaining that much of the increase is due to changes in state Medicaid reimbursements and funding for human services.

"It's really unfortunate that the state has decided to do this to us," Chanis said in an interview. "It's something that the county has no control over."

Over the past year, the New Hampshire Department of

Health and Human Services reduced the daily reimbursement rate for Medicaid patients from \$152 per day to \$141 per day, Chanis said. Because many of the county nursing home residents are Medicaid patients, the change means an estimated net loss in revenue to Sullivan County of about \$440,000. A change in the amount the county must pay for human services added \$165,000 in expenses, Chanis said.

Additionally, the county is looking at a 17.5 percent increase in health insurance costs for employees in the next fiscal year. Chanis said that as county commissioners review the proposed budget, they could decide to change health insurance plans or the amount employees must contribute as a way to cut costs.

The proposed budget also includes 3 percent raises for all

See **BUDGET** - Page A2

BUDGET FROM PAGE A1

county employees at a cost of \$280,000. Commissioners could decide to eliminate raises for non-union employees, Chanis said, which would save about \$150,000.

The county has budgeted \$1 million each year for the past two years to offset a deficit that accumulated in earlier years

because of anticipated revenue at the county nursing home that never materialized. Thanks to more realistic budgeting last year, revenue and expenses at the nursing home more closely matched budget projections for the current year, which ends June 30. Still, county taxpayers continue to subsidi-

zize the operation of the nursing home, to the tune of about \$1.7 million this year.

Although the county won't need to budget \$1 million for deficit reduction in fiscal year 2011, taxpayers next year will fund the first bond payment for the new community corrections center, construction of which is scheduled for completion in July. The bond payment and staffing costs for the center equal about \$1 million.

Staffing costs within the Sullivan County Department of Corrections are expected to increase next year when grant funding runs out, but bond payments will decrease over the 10-year life of the loan, county financial documents show.

Sullivan County commissioners are scheduled to begin reviewing department budgets on Monday and will continue throughout much of April. Once the commission adopts its version of the budget, review by the Sullivan County Delegation will begin. The delegation is made up of all the state representatives in the county.

•••
Kristen Senz can be reached at (603) 543-3100, ext. 108, or by e-mail at ksenz@eagletimes.com.