

Sheriff pushes for paper transport bill

By KRISTEN SENZ
Senior Writer

Sullivan County taxpayers are subsidizing law firms and other entities who don't pay the full cost of the document delivery service the Sullivan County Sheriff's Department provides, Sheriff Mike Prozzo said Thursday.

Prozzo is a strong supporter of proposed legislation that would increase the fees law firms and other clients pay to have documents, such as court summonses, delivered. On average, each delivery costs the

county almost \$50, but the current user fee for most documents is \$10 or \$15, depending on the document, Prozzo said.

"We're really subsidizing private enterprise with taxpayer money, and I've been yelling about this for years now," said Prozzo, who was updating Sullivan County Commissioners on the status of the legislation during the commission meeting Wednesday.

In-hand document delivery can be expensive, especially when a sheriff's deputy has to drive out to Plainfield, Prozzo said. Senate Bill 346 would

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increase fees for civil processing from \$10 to \$15 in some cases and would establish a new service fee for defendants in any civil order of arrest, which usually occurs when someone is ordered to pay as part of a judgment in a civil lawsuit, but fails to do so.

Prozzo said if the bill becomes law, it could bring in an additional \$25,000 in revenue to the county annually. Prozzo said he doesn't believe the sheriff's department should be making money delivering paperwork, "but we shouldn't be losing money,

either."

"If I were in business, I would have been out of business a long time ago," he said.

Out of 600 "clients" for which the sheriff's department serves paperwork, 400 are law firms and 150 are management companies, according to Prozzo.

In addition to the service fees, the state reimburses the sheriff's department at a rate of 45 cents per mile of travel to deliver the paperwork, but that doesn't come close to paying for deputy's employment time or other costs associated with the delivery, he said.

Along with Prozzo, Betsy Miller from the New Hampshire Association of

Counties and Grafton County Sheriff Douglas Dutile testified at a recent Senate hearing on the bill. Sullivan County Commissioners indicated their support for the bill Thursday and directed Sullivan County Manager Greg Chanis to write a letter in support of the measure to local legislators when the bill moves to the House of Representatives later this session.