

# Dissension convention in county

## Budget resolution passes; Rep. Franklin ignores motions, appoints own committee

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Sullivan County will begin the new fiscal year today without a budget, but a resolution passed during the county convention Friday will allow the county to pay its bills at least through the end of the month.

**Newport** The executive finance committee did not have a budget to present at the convention because not all of the members were attending the committee meetings.

"The finance committee has had a hard time meeting and making a quorum," finance committee chairwoman Brenda Ferland, I-Charlestown, said. "The finance committee has not completed their work and they have asked for a little more time."

Ferland made a motion to enact a temporary resolution to give the county the ability to conduct busi-

ness until a budget is finalized and passed.

"I, with some reluctance, support her," said Rep. John Cloutier, D-Claremont. "If we're not ready, a continuing resolution would be a good idea. I think we need to do the responsible thing for the taxpayer."

Sullivan County Delegation chairman and finance committee member Rep. Peter Franklin, D-Newport, said he was surprised to hear about the request.

Franklin said he found the motion objectionable and "rather long and complicated." He asked that the motion be tabled while it was reviewed by Sullivan County Attorney Marc Hathaway.

By a vote of 7-3, the motion was tabled and the meeting began to heat up when Franklin began to press Dodi Violette, an account clerk who does the bookkeeping for the county, about the status of the current budget.

"I have three batches of bills I have not sent out," Violette said.

She also told Franklin that only \$38,000 remained of the \$2.5 million that was borrowed to pay county bills.

Franklin demanded to know exactly where all of the money had been spent, and County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio said he did not have all of that information on hand.

Rep. Beverly Rodeschin, R-

Newport, intervened in an attempt to get Franklin back on track and discuss the new budget.

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**Brenda Ferland**

I-Charlestown

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a budget for next year," Rodeschin said to Franklin. "You're asking about this year. You should be asking the commissioners."

Rodeschin concluded with a remark that elicited laughter from those in attendance.

"I made my comments, but you don't need to answer. It would take too long," Rodeschin said.

Hathaway returned after reviewing the resolution and spoke in favor of passage.

"The need for a continuing resolution or action by the convention is critical if the county is going to do business after July 1," Hathaway said.

During this time Sullivan County Commissioner Ben Nelson had his hand raised waiting to be recognized by Franklin.

Rep. James Phinizy, D-Acworth, suggested a recess so the finance committee could meet and told Franklin that Nelson had his hand raised.

"I saw him. This is a county convention," was Franklin's response and he recessed the convention without recognizing Nelson.

The finance committee returned and the resolution to keep the county in business was passed giving the authority to borrow up to \$2 million.

"We feel \$2 million is equivalent to one month's operations," Ferland said. "We hope to have a budget within a couple of weeks."

Rodeschin attempted to make a motion to accept the commissioner's budget of \$27.6 million, but was rejected twice by Franklin. Rodeschin challenged Franklin, but none of the other delegates spoke up.

Ferland then made a motion to recess the convention until Friday, July 13, but Franklin refused to recognize the motion and no vote was taken.

On her third attempt, Franklin accepted Rodeschin's motion to accept the budget.

"Why don't we just get it over with and accept the county commissioner's budget so we can have the summer to relax?" Rodeschin asked.

Ferland responded by saying that the finance committee needed another chance to do its job.

"I think it's only fair," Ferland said.

Commissioner Jeff Barrette said he was very comfortable with the presented budget and urged the delegation to support the commissioners and pass it as presented.

After an hour recess for lunch, Nelson again sat with his hand in the air while the delegation discussed changing several items in the budget including employee raises and a reduction in the projected census at the nursing home.

Rodeschin moved the question on accepting the budget, but Franklin refused to allow it.

"I will not accept that motion," Franklin said.

Phinizy agreed with Rodeschin.

"We need to either vote this up or vote this down," Phinizy said. "At some time we need to get off the dime."

Phinizy then moved the question, which was refused by Franklin.

Barrette again spoke in favor of the budget stating, "We have done what you asked us to do. If ever there was a time to support the commissioners, now is the time."

Rep. Carla Skinder, D-Cornish, moved the question for the third time and Franklin finally allowed a vote. The budget was defeated in a vote of four in favor and nine opposed.

Rodeschin moved to adjourn, but Franklin refused her motion. Rodeschin, Skinder, Gil de Rubio, Barrette and Ferland then all left the meeting.

After they left, Franklin made a motion to require the commissioners to get written authorization before money could be transferred between county departments or within individual departments.

That motion failed, but a committee was appointed by Franklin to discuss the transfer of funds with the commissioners. The meeting was recessed until 9 a.m., July 13, when the finance committee is expected to have its version of the budget to present to the convention.

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