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Sunday, July 22, 2007

Leadership needed

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The quiet in county government the past week has at least one positive to it: the county delegation of state representatives is no longer causing anymore turmoil.

Having whacked \$300,000 from the proposed budget of the county commissioners, without any good reason that we can see, and then passing the new spending plan 7-6, the delegation has packed up and gone home, leaving the commissioners and county manager to figure things out. It is worth pointing out, again, that most of this mess is the work of the chairman, Peter Franklin, D-Newport, who thankfully said he would resign his post. Several reps., including Brenda Ferland, I-Charlestown, Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport, Jay Phinizy, D-Acworth, and Carla Skinder, D-Cornish, did everything they could to avoid this train wreck. But those with an obvious political agenda have succeeding in creating a nearly impossible situation from a financial management standpoint. Just as bad was the decision to cut money from a plan to study a new prison and money for recreational activities at the nursing home. Those cuts have no honest justification and can only be called reckless.

The commissioners have not done much better. They tossed out the private company that was doing a fine job managing the nursing home, both from a standpoint of finances and quality care, without a well-thought out plan to replace it. They've brought in a consulting firm for a lot more money while they figure out who to hire next.

When the county budget was passed on July 13, county manager Ed Gil de Rubio said hospitals have stopped referring patients to Sullivan County Health Care since Genesis was given its walking papers. As everyone knows, the home's financial health is dependent upon beds being filled.

What this all points to is a complete lack of leadership from those charged with leadership roles. Leadership has many definitions, among them working with others, considering all views, accepting the recommendations of those more knowledgeable and most importantly coming up with solutions. We've seen none of that in recent months and the county finances, unless things change, are destined to be a complete disaster this fiscal year.

After a few years of sound management and strong fiscal health, the county appears heading back to large deficits.

We guess some people just can't stand success.

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