

Outlook less bleak than thought for county finances

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The Sullivan County Treasurer made a multimillion dollar mistake in her calculations for the amount of money the county will need to borrow to stay solvent, but that error, now corrected, makes the picture of county finances look less bleak.

Sullivan County Treasurer Cynthia Sweeney predicted at the Dec. 18 commissioner's meeting the county would need to borrow \$8.5 million to finance the county through June 2008.

"The \$8.5 million that we will be short will happen in December 2008, not in June," Sweeney said. "In my remarks at the meeting I made a horrible mistake."

Sweeney said that in her haste to make the calculations, she multiplied the number of payrolls made by the county by 26, or half a year. She said that since county

employees are only paid every two weeks, she should have multiplied the number by 13.

"This is not to suggest that we can ease up on the saving nature of our budget," Sweeney said. "We must be vigilant about how we spend our tax dollars."

The county audit for fiscal 2007 was recently finalized stating the county had an overall deficit of \$2.2 million. The commissioners approved to attach it to the fiscal 2009 budget.

Frank Byron from the auditing firm Melanson and Heath told the commission he predicts the county will have a deficit in the current fiscal year, but he was not specific on the amount.

The commissioners have recently taken steps to reduce spending by freezing about \$800,000 in funds. The move must still be approved by the executive finance committee.

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