Acadia cuts general fund, to lay off more workers

By JO CART
Advocate correspondent

CROWLEY — The Acadia Parish Police Jury balanced its budget Tuesday, agreeing to cut the general fund by 13.9 percent and to lay off more road department employees unless the state restores budget cuts.

"It's far from over yet," jury President Joe Baronet predicted at the end of the meeting.

For the past few weeks, the jury has been grappling with a loss of $615,000 in revenue for this year. Jurors first discussed cutting their own salaries, but rejected that motion 9-5. Jurors said their salaries have been cut twice in the past year for a total of 28 percent.

By another 9-5 vote, the jurors agreed to cut the general fund budget by 13.9 percent, excluding jurors' salaries.

The jury also voted to lay off 16 workers on Feb. 1 unless the state restores budget cuts. The jury has laid off 38 road workers so far.

"We are becoming a Mickey Mouse jury," Juror Larry Regan said. "We agreed to cut our salaries again, and now we are going back on our word."

Clerk of Court Andrus Barousse offered to accept a 15 percent cut.

"However, I cannot go further than this, and in my opinion it is time for us to all sit down together and talk about a long-range solution," Barousse said.

Parish officials who pledged their cooperation in dealing with the fiscal problems included District Attorney Nathan Stansbury, Wyole Creduer of the parish food stamp office, Sheriff Ken Goss and County Agent Paul Seilhan.

Registrar of Voters Martin Venable angrily told jurors that he would let them worry about delivering voter registration cards because he won't have enough money to pay for postage.

Venable later asked the jury to hold an executive session to discuss salaries in his department.

But the jury refused to meet behind closed doors after the district attorney advised Venable that the state's open-meetings law does not allow executive sessions for that purpose.

The jury also received a donation of $900 from American Legion posts from across the parish to help keep the veterans services office open.