Assumption jurors vote to lay off 11 workers

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NAPOLEONVILLE — The loss of $255,000 in state road funds forced the Assumption Parish Police Jury Wednesday to take emergency measures to pay its bills and meet payroll.

The jury voted to lay off 11 employees at a savings of more than $120,000.

Parish Manager Jimmy Clement said pink slips will be handed out Friday to eight workers in the road and bridge department and three employees in the refuse section.

He said he based his decision on who to let go after judging which employees were qualified to perform "multi-job skills." He has explained that workers with many abilities would be retained over those employees with limited skills.

The jury authorized Secretary-Treasurer Steve Fertitta to make "inter-fund borrowing" as a temporary solution to the latest budget problem.

The jury passed its $4.8 million budget, which carries an estimated $600,000 deficit, last month. Jurors made several budget cuts to reduce the original projected deficit of $900,000.

The jury will "run into cash shortfalls" and may not be able to meet payroll if the inter-fund transfers are not made, Fertitta said.

He said this latest loss of revenues is expected to be one of the prime topics of discussion at the upcoming Police Jury Association meeting.

Jurors stressed the importance of notifying the public of the reasons why the jury is facing financial woes.

Juror Joe Harrison has said the constituents must realize that the jury has lost state and federal revenue sharing and is experiencing a reduction in tax revenues.

In another budget cutting move, the jury agreed to eliminate some highway lights that have been paid for through the jury's general fund.

Some jurors asked to postpone action on the elimination of $10,000 in lights, but new jury President Paul Cancienne stressed the importance of making the cut as soon as possible.

Cancienne said the jury "will be broke" if action on budget cuts is repeatedly postponed.

Jurors have discussed for several months the possibility of removing road lights paid for by the jury. Jurors composed a list of lights to be removed last month, but postponed action on the cuts.

Juror Kenneth Peltier said some of the lights cut in his district will be able to be saved by placing them in a road-lighting district.

The jury's troubled financial situation forced jurors to postpone approval of the construction of a bulkhead in Ward 6 in the Brusly-St. Vincent area.

Juror Norman Melancon said the bulkhead is needed to prevent further erosion. However, jurors decided to form a committee to study the project.

"With the money being so tight... we all have to sacrifice," Cancienne said.

In other action, the jury took the first step needed to spend the $120,000 Gov. Edwin Edwards has earmarked for local projects.

The special local projects are being financed with funds from the governor's 8g public works fund. The projects include repairs to Pierre Part Bay, an erosion control program along La. 1 and La. 308, cleaning of Little Bay and Tee Lac and a park in Ward 5.

The funds must be spent by July, Fertitta said.

In other matters, the jury:

• Reappointed Gilbert Dupaty to serve as vice president. Newly elected president Cancienne replaces Harrison, who replaced Cancienne in January 1986.

• Listened to a presentation on improvements needed at a Dorseyville Park from an area resident who explained that a group is now being formed to attempt to start a Babe Ruth League at the park.

• Agreed to continue the policy of daily trash pickups. However, Clement asked residents to telephone the jury office to find out when the trash truck will be in their area.

• Discussed the drainage problem in Magnolia Subdivision.