Assumption Parish officials discuss cutting services

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NAPOLÉONVILLE The Assumption Parish Police Jury is "broke and getting broke" and will no longer be able to provide services to the parish if additional revenues are not approved by voters. Juror Jim Simmons said Wednesday night.

Simmons made his impassioned plea during a discussion of the possibility of parish in the state without a dedicated property tax election in April.

All parish residents pay taxes to provide road lights in their areas.

The jury-did agree to pay for road lights at two boat launches in the parish.

The jury has lost about $600,000 in anticipated revenues from both the state and federal governments, Harrison said.

The state is shoveling dirt in our state," Simmons said, explaining that the jury was told in December that it would lose about $325,000 from the state road fund.

The jury agreed with his meeting room, said if the library board passes its property tax proposal, the jury will not be able to raise the additional funds needed to support the library system.

"Our problem is finances," Simmons said, adding that he would favor a 1-cent sales tax which would dedicate 25 percent of revenues generated to support the library system.

Juror Joe Harris Jr. said a sales tax would provide the jury with needed funds quickly and would not place the burden of a property tax "on the few taxpayers," he said.

However, Allaman later said he could support a sales tax proposal after a show of hands indicated that the majority of the standing-room-only audience would support a sales tax.

Pipsair said she would be willing to "keep the doors open" and discuss the sales tax proposition with the jury.

The jury agreed to meet with the library board to discuss the sales tax proposition.

Jurors must make a decision at their next meeting in order to get the tax proposal on the April 4 ballot.

Jurors stressed the importance of informing the public of the jury's financial woes and their attempt to trim the budget.

In a related matter, jurors approved drastic cuts that will result in saving about $325,000.

Jurors agreed to discontinue trash pick-up effective Feb. 28, close the Police Jury office and parish barn two days each month, cut $200,000 from the road and bridge budget and disconnect all road lights paid for by the general fund.

Parish Manager Jimmy Clement said he will have to cut services and hand out additional pink slips in order to cut his already reduced budget.

Eleven employees were laid off last month in order to meet a mandated 25 percent cut ordered by the jury. Clement said he will present a proposal of how to drop his $780,000 budget to $500,000 at the jury's next meeting.

Jury President Paul Cancienne said a previous proposal to disconnect all road lights paid for by the general fund were not at the beginning and end of a road met with too much controversy. He said jurors have haggled over the problem of which lights to be turned off for more than three months.

Some of the road lights might be able to be saved by placing them in a lighting district, Cancienne said. Some parish residents pay taxes to provide road lights in their areas.

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