WBR Police Jury adopts balanced 1987 budget

Westside bureau

PORT ALLEN — Members of the West Baton Rouge Parish Police Jury adopted a balanced operating budget for 1987 Thursday night, but only after transferring about $150,000 from general fund reserves in a move to avoid carrying over a deficit from the current calendar year.

During a special meeting called specifically to adopt the 1987 budget, the jury agreed to transfer the funds — amounting to about 3 percent of the total budget — from invested reserves, said Secretary-Treasurer Ted Denstel.

Juror J.W. Pattan III said he opposed the adoption of the budget because it involved using non-recurring funds to cover recurring expenses.

He also objected to there being no provision for an inter-governmental relations protocol between the Police Jury and the parish municipalities. Pattan added Friday that he had been predicting monetary problems for the Police Jury for as long as two years and he felt his warnings had gone unheeded.

Denstel disagreed with Pattan, saying reserve funds are set aside specifically for such problems as revenue shortfalls. He also disagreed with Pattan’s assessment that up to 40 percent of the parish’s work force could be laid off because of a lack of funds.

“IT’s true there would have been a deficit without the reserves,” Denstel said. “We did take approximately $150,000 from our general fund reserves, but that money is held for such eventualities and is earning interest for us. It amounts to about 3 percent of our total budget, and that’s a small amount. We’re within 97 percent of having enough money to meet our operating expenses.

“There was discussion as to what will happen down the road, and some discussion about cutbacks, but nothing concrete as to where they will be made.

Denstel said the budget deficit was attributed to a continued decrease in state funds such as severance taxes, mineral royalties and transportation monies. Although state cuts have occurred during the past several years, Denstel said this is the first time the jury has turned to general fund reserves.

Every effort to avoid layoffs will be made by the jury, he said, and actions such as cutting the recreation and capital projects budgets have been taken to ease the financial strain.

“We will try to protect our employees as long as we can,” Denstel said. He said “we should be OK in 1987,” but added “1986 could be a different story. There could be the possibility of layoffs” or additional reserve funds will be used if needed for the budget.

“Certainly we will try to continue to provide the same level of services for as long as we can, and the jury is looking at options,” Denstel said.