

## Revenue to decline

## Tight county budget may avoid layoffs

Tuscola county may squeak through 1981 without laying off any of its employees.

But doing so may require closing of Tuscola county's only park and depriving the county Road Commission of additional funds for snow plowing and road maintenance among various economy measures.

The county Board of Commissioners gave tentative approval Tuesday to its 1981 general fund budget, which calls for expenditures of \$3,930,347, a scant \$47,708 more than it will probably spend this year.

What makes the picture so cloudy is that general fund revenue in 1981 will decline to \$3,670,222, including what is left over from this year, down from 1980 revenue of \$4,117,048.

The county will survive next year, according to Commissioner Ken Kennedy, chairman of the board's finance committee, by using \$260,125 it has saved in federal revenue sharing funds.

That will leave a balance of only \$4,493, which equals about half of a county payroll. "That isn't much if you're running a business," he commented. "As I told the board, this is a very, very serious situation."

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the budget at a public hearing this coming Tuesday at 10 a.m. in the board meeting room in the courthouse in Caro.

After the hearing, the seven commissioners will make any last-minute changes before approving

the financial document.

There are two reasons for the county's severe financial situation, according to Kennedy.

One is that Tuscola must operate on 4.2 mills, the lowest levy of any county in the state. Property taxes provide about half of the county's income. Voters in August and November rejected a proposed half-mill increase in the levy (combined with a half-mill for bridges).

THE OTHER BIG CONTRIBUTING factor is the reduction in state revenues to the county.

Kennedy didn't have the budget breakdown with him at home when contacted by the Chronicle Tuesday evening, so couldn't say how much Tuscola will be losing from Lansing.

In 1979, out of total revenues to the county of \$2.7 million, revenue from the state totaled \$86,930, so what happens in Lansing has a significant impact on county operations.

Perhaps hardest hit will be the county Medical Care Facility, which had requested an increase in its county appropriation from the \$100,000 it received this year to \$285,418 next year to make up the loss of Medicaid revenues from the state. The budget given tentative approval Tuesday repeats the \$100,000 appropriation in 1981.

Community Mental Health Services, which is supposed to get 90 percent of its funding from the state but won't, wanted an increase from the county from \$38,000 received this year to \$48,000

next year. It will get \$38,000.

The Health Department wanted an increase from the county from its present \$205,000 to \$225,000, to make up for loss of revenue from Lansing. It will again get \$205,000. Kennedy added that the health board, of which he is a member, meets Friday to decide on salaries and wages of department employees for 1981.

COURTHOUSE EMPLOYEES will receive a 7.65 percent increase in their salaries in 1981, as provided for in their union contract. Department heads, the board decided Oct. 28, will receive a 7 percent pay boost.

However, with the county exhausting its surplus revenues next year, Kennedy suggested the board may have to freeze department heads' salaries in 1982 at the 1981 level.

He said the board "will explore" the possibility of asking the Fraternal Order of Police, which represents sheriff's department employees, to forgo pay increases during the first six months of their new contract, yet to be negotiated, which will take effect July 1 of next year.

The proposed budget does not include funding for operation of the county park at Quincasssee, which will save the county \$3,910 over what it spent this year.

Most of the increases contained in the budget are to cover salary increases.

Some other increases are unavoidable. Employee hospital insurance will cost \$115,000 next year, an increase of \$13,000, because of

the boost in premiums. Insurance for county buildings, etc., and bonds will cost an additional \$12,000. Social Security contributions are going up \$16,200.

The cost of funding child care for wards of the probate court is budgeted at \$183,260, up from the \$169,400 the county will probably spend this year, but that is a cost the county has no control over.

The one substantial savings in the budget is for drains at large, which cost the county \$170,957 this year. Next year, with the Moore Drain expense out of the way, it should only have to pay \$66,379 for drains.

THE COUNTY'S ONLY salvation in 1981 is the \$300,000 it should receive in federal revenue sharing funds, which isn't included as part of the county's general fund revenues of \$3.67 million.

But of the funds received from that source this year, \$135,000 went to the Road Commission for snow plowing and road maintenance, \$75,000 was earmarked for the Health Department home nursing program and \$15,000 went to county libraries.

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## Good-bye to Cass City

## Texas, Oklahoma promised land for job seekers

By Mike Eliasohn

Archie Weller is going back home to Ponca City, Okla.

Richard Lester is going to Texas, where he has never been before.

They are leaving the Cass City area because they do not have jobs and there are none to be found in this area.

Weller, who with his wife Linda, auctioned off most of their belongings Saturday already has a job in Ponca City.

Lester is going to Texas to look for work.

He will be part of a growing trend. According to Charles Cramer, manager of the Caro branch office of the Michigan Employment Security Commission, about 100 persons registered there have gone to Texas in the last two months and "the next thing you know, they find work."

Most of those persons, mostly men, who went to Texas, Cramer said, went to Houston, and most got jobs working on oil drilling rigs, either on land or offshore.

Some who had been working as linemen here found employment doing the same work in Texas.

The unemployment rate in Tuscola county, according to Cramer, dropped from 15.6 percent in September, to 14.8 percent in October, the latest month for which statistics are available, but is starting to go up again.

His office was handling 3,500 claims a week in November. Now it's up to 4,600, due partially to laid-off construction workers filing claims.

He added that since Oct. 1 of last year, 3,300 persons who had claims at the Caro office had exhausted their unemployment benefits, which last a maximum of 39 weeks. Unless they finally found a job, presumably their next stop was the Department of Social Services (welfare).

Other than a few openings for skilled professionals, including a doctor and plant manager, Cramer said, "we don't have a thing."

"Unless something drastic happens, which I don't see happening," Cramer said the forecast is that auto plants will increase layoffs in January.

RICHARD LESTER doesn't want to wait until his unemployment benefits run out before he finds another job.

His wife Jean, who worked for Walbro in Cass City for about three years, was laid off last spring.

He had worked for Walbro for three years in Caro and Cass City but quit in a disagreement in August. Because he quit his job, he had to wait 13 weeks before he could start receiving unemployment benefits, which as of last week only had 11 more weeks to run.

"There isn't much around," he said of his fruitless job hunting efforts. He had looked for either a factory or mechanic's job.

"I don't think it's going to be better by spring. It doesn't look that hopeful."

Besides a desire to keep food on the table, Lester, 23, has another incentive for

I WILL BE at the Pinney State Bank Friday, Dec. 19, to collect township taxes. Elkland Township Treasurer.

going to Texas. "I can't stand cold weather." Moving to a warmer climate is something he has been thinking about for three or four years. "I always thought I'd like the Sun Belt."

He and his wife were married in May of last year. They have a son, Joshua, 7 months.

As of last week, he and his wife hadn't decided whether they would all go to Texas or he would go ahead to look for work.

Their house north of Cass City was for sale and if it isn't sold by the time they leave, he plans to rent it out. FOR ARCHIE WELLER, 48, the move to Ponca City, near the Kansas border, came quickly.

He was laid off almost a year ago from Sebewaing Industries, a manufacturer of auto parts, where he had worked a year as an electrician. He had worked for about three years before then at Eaton Foundry in Vassar and before that, for seven years for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Saginaw.

He left Oklahoma in 1958, where he had farmed, and lived in Illinois for 10 years before coming to Michigan. He met his wife, Linda, in Illinois. They were married in 1971. Her parents live in Caro.

Their children are Benny, 16 and Belinda, 12, from his first marriage, and Amy, 3, and Yvonne, 7 months.

After he lost his job, Weller went looking for another one all over Michigan



RICHARD LESTER



CHRISTMAS GREETING -- Cindy Opanasenko of Cass City was one of approximately 125 students from Highland Pines School in Caro to be greeted by Santa Claus Monday at the ninth annual Christmas party at the Cass Theatre for handicapped youngsters. Bauer Candy Co. provided the Christmas candy and General Telephone paid for lunch at The Station dining room, reopened for the occasion.

## Gagetown, Owendale may get sewer funds

Gagetown and Owendale may receive federal funding for their proposed sanitary sewer and sewage treatment systems by early next year.

If they get the money, and that's still not certain, construction may not start for a year after that.

A major step in the approval process came with approval by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of "finding of no significant environmental impact" statements for the proposed projects in both villages.

The statements, prepared largely by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), contained updated cost estimates for the projects.

The cost, based on 1982 construction cost estimates, is \$1.71 million in Gagetown and \$1.461 million in Owendale.

Of the total in Gagetown, \$1.45 million is eligible for funding, of which the federal government pays 75 percent (\$1,093 million); the state, 5 percent, (\$72,890), and local residents, 20 percent, (\$543,760).

Certain costs are not included in the funding formula, and must be paid entirely by village residents. The "ineligible portion" is \$252,200, making their total share \$795,960.

To pay that off, according to the report, it is proposed homeowners will have to pay an average of \$170 a year over 20 years (\$14.17 a month). In addition, there will be a \$1,000 fee to connect each building's plumbing to the sewer. Building owners will be able to pay the fee off all at once or over as many as 20 years at \$95 per year.

The local user costs are based on receipt of a 40-year Farmers Home Administration loan at 5 percent interest to pay the local share.

Engineer Rick Knop of Edmonds Engineering, Inc., of Bay City, which is doing the planning for both the Gagetown and Owendale projects, stressed that pay-off schedule is only a proposal.

It will be up to the village council and its bonding attorneys to develop a final plan. It also depends on whether the FHA loan is obtained or money has to be borrowed from non-governmental financial sources at higher interest rates.

For Owendale, the eligible portion of the total cost is \$1,195 million, of which the federal government would pay \$896,250 (75 percent); state, \$59,750, and village residents, \$239,000.

The ineligible portion is \$266,000, making the total local cost \$505,000.

Proposed is that the average residential user will pay \$215 a year (\$17.92 a month) for 20 years, plus a connection fee. Bonds to finance the local share would also be sold to the FHA.

## POLLUTION

In both villages, raw or semi-treated sewage flows

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## No contests in village elections

Village elections in Kings-ton and Owendale March 9 will lack suspense.

Tuesday was the filing deadline for the three trustee positions up for election in both communities.

In Kingston, the only persons filing were the three incumbents, Marlene Powell, Jane Anne Laiko and Robert Miller, all Democrats.

In Owendale, the only persons filing were two incumbents, Willis Farnum and Jim Wissner, both Republicans. The third spot on the village council will go to whoever receives the most write-in votes.

Not running for re-election is Albert Hoffman.

Kingston and Owendale are the only villages in the area with elections next year.

## At Regional Center

## Job loss not as bad as expected

The off-again, on-again layoffs at the Caro Regional Center are partially off again.

Announcement was made last week that as of Jan. 3, 170 employees would be out of work there as the result of the latest state austerity measures.

Because of bumping rights of employees with more seniority, more than 200 employees were to be notified Friday that they would be laid off.

That was last week.

Tuesday of this week, center Director Dr. Martin Roll said, "according to the information I have today," a "significant number" of the 170 would not lose their jobs after all.

"It's very disconcerting (to employees) issuing notices and then rescinding them," he commented.

There were two changes for the latest turn-around from Lansing, the director explained.

One was that Tuesday he received up to date budget figures for the institution he directs, so he was busy trying to find out how many employees could be supported with the money available.

He expected to have the answer Wednesday.

The other reason for the change is the possible effect of a state proposal for work eight hours without pay out of every two-week, 80-hour, pay period, in exchange for which they will

receive an additional vacation day or be eventually reimbursed.

So far, 325 employees have volunteered to participate, contingent on the state using the funds it saves to keep additional employees on the payroll.

The regional center has already made cutbacks, Roll pointed out, via some layoffs and not replacing employees who left. From a peak of 850 positions, the payroll has declined to a current staff of 732.

Implied in much of his conversation was that although many of the proposed layoffs are being rescinded this week, based on past practice of the bureaucrats in Lansing, circumstances could change again.



OFF TO OKLAHOMA -- Standing in his almost empty barn is Archie Weller, who will leave Dec. 28 with his family for a new job in Oklahoma, after having been unemployed almost a year.