

'The numbers are not adding up'

Firms are still investigating Montcalm County's financial 'mess'

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STANTON — Deciphering Montcalm County's pecuniary puzzle is taking longer than expected.

During Monday's Montcalm County Board of Commissioners meeting, John Axe, an attorney with Clark Hill in Detroit, reported on the slow progress.

Last August, the county voted to contract with three firms — Clark Hill, Rehmann Robson and MFCI — for legal and accounting services to investigate the county's financial situation after a study revealed that county expenses had overshot revenues by an average of \$1.5 million per year since 2008. The county has been billed \$76,569 by the three firms as of late November and that sum will almost certainly exceed \$100,000.

On Monday, Axe referred to memos from Clark Hill, Rehmann Robson and MFCI to county com-

missioners. Those memos were not provided to The Daily News, so The Daily News requested the memos via the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA). The request is pending.

"The progress on getting this mess cleaned up is not as quick as we had hoped," Axe told commissioners. "Rehmann has had employees here all fall and they're continuing to work with your accounting department and with (Montcalm County Controller-Administrator) Bob (Clingenpeel) and with (Montcalm County Treasurer) JoAnne (Vukin) to see what can be done so that we can get a good number for opening the fiscal year we're sitting in. What they have discovered is that a year earlier, we don't have a good number. You have an audit for the year before, but unfortunately, the numbers are not adding up. We're very disappointed it's taking this long. I'm sure

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John Axe, an attorney with Clark Hill in Detroit, reports on the slow progress of a Montcalm County financial investigation. Axe is pictured next to Montcalm County Treasurer JoAnne Vukin during Monday's Montcalm County Board of Commissioners meeting.

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you're worse than disappointed and I'm sure the public is too. We appreciate your patience and the public's patience, but it's not been an easy situation.

"We're going to continue to work here until we've got this thing settled," Axe said. "You've got our commitment on that."

Following Axe's report, commissioners unanimously approved adopting a resolution to transfer \$1.3 million

from the delinquent tax revolving fund to the general fund. The \$1.3 million will come from a \$2.5 million bond that commissioners approved in October to help with the county's financial situation.

"We are actually going to have the (bond) note sale tomorrow (Tuesday)," Axe told commissioners, "Once it's sold, the notes will be delivered in January."

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