Montcalm County hears report from new auditor

Commissioners plan to promote accountant to CFO

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STANTON — The Montcalm County Finance & Personnel Committee heard some hopeful news Monday from the county’s new auditor.


In 2016, commissioners hired Gabridge after deciding not to renew the county’s contract with Abraham & Gaffney due to alleged errors and irregularities with work performed by Abraham & Gaffney and the county’s former controller-administrator Chris Hyzer. Last month, commissioners took the severed contract a step further by hiring Clark Hill of Detroit to investigate and possibly bring a lawsuit against Abraham & Gaffney.

On Monday, Verlin reported that while the county’s total net position has decreased by $1.6 million in the past year, the county’s general fund now has a “substantial increase” of $3 million, which puts the fund in a “reasonably healthy, stable condition.” Gabridge officials will present an official audit report to the county in mid-March based on the county’s status as of Sept. 30, 2016.

“We will be issuing an unmodified opinion,” Verlin told commissioners. “The financial statements are going to respect the financial situation of the county. Unmodified doesn’t sound all that exciting, but it is a

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By a couple of things,” Verlin answered, “First, that the county followed its deficit elimination plan. Secondary, the general fund showed an increase in fund balance. This will be a year where the county shows a strong increase in its general fund balance to the tune of about $3 million, and that will look good to Treasury.”

Montcalm County Controller-Administrator Robert Clingengpeel, left and Montcalm County Board of Commissioners Chairman Patrick Q. Carr listen to an audit report Monday.

PROMOTION AND NEW HIRE

Montcalm County Controller-Administrator Robert Clingengpeel credited accountant Brenda Tarter and Treasurer JoAnne Yukun for much of the county’s financial progress. Clingengpeel has been thinking of ways to restructure his office and with that in mind, he recommended promoting Tarter to become the county’s chief financial officer, a new position.

“I think she has certainly shown her abilities in this area and I think it’s probably something that should have been done a while ago,” he said.

Clingengpeel also recommended hiring a full-time finance clerk to be shared between the controller’s office and the treasurer’s office.

“We definitely need somebody who has a good handle and grasp on finance,” he said. “The premium would be on somebody with experience. I certainly wouldn’t discourage someone who works for the county from applying, but I think we need to open it up to everybody.”

Yukun agreed a shared finance clerk is needed between the two offices, “so we are never in a position like we were before, where the left hand didn’t know what the right hand is doing.”

“We would have a much greater handle on our finance side and I would be more involved in accounting the general ledger back to the bank statements,” Yukun said. “I would just like to see my office more involved so I feel better about understanding why we have the amount in the bank that we have, and that’s it’s OK.”

The committee recommended both hiring proposals to the full board, which will next meet at 6 p.m. Feb. 27.

The driver of a silver Ford F-250 pickup truck, Wayne Christiansen of Stanton, sustained injuries in a two-vehicle head-on crash Tuesday morning on Sidney Road.