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Some Nonprofits Ask For Less

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County convinces groups to trim budget requests

By Robert Annis

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Hamilton County asked several area nonprofit organizations to share its pain as the government's belt-tightening through the recession continues.

The county is facing a \$5.7 million deficit for 2009 and a \$3.3 million deficit for 2010. The shortages are because of a \$5 million loss in interest income this year and next year's anticipated lower property tax revenue because of the tax caps passed by the state legislature in 2008.

County Commissioner Steve Holt said there was no real debate June 22 about not funding nine local nonprofit agencies, calling it a quality-of-life is-

WHO'S ASKING FOR WHAT?

This chart shows Hamilton County government funding allocations in 2008 and 2009 to nonprofit organizations and those organizations' funding requests for 2010.

Organization	2008 funding	2009 funding	2010 request
Legacy Fund	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000-a
Hamilton County Alliance	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$125,000-b
BehaviorCorp.	\$1,543,430	\$1,655,000	\$1,662,951
Hamilton County Leadership Academy	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000-c
Humane Society	\$487,116	\$487,116	\$476,066
Prevail	\$150,000	\$175,000	\$175,000
Janus Developmental Services	\$550,000	\$550,000	\$600,000-d
PrimeLife Enrichment	\$200,000	\$220,000	\$220,000
4-H	\$93,120	\$95,900	\$95,900

a - \$50,000 of request tabled indefinitely.

b - Reduced request to \$75,000.

c - Reduced request to \$10,000.

d - Reduced request to \$550,000.

sue.

"It makes sense for the county to be involved to the best of our ability," Holt

said June 25. "It's an investment for now and the future. If you look at the things Janus and Prevail do, that's an

investment in our community. Do you quit investing when you have less money available, or do you cut from somewhere else? Do you invest less money in economic development? That seems counterintuitive. But these are the choices you have to make."

Of the nine agencies asking for funding, only one agency, the Humane Society for Hamilton County, originally asked for less money in 2010 — more than \$10,000 less — than it received in 2009. Holt said the county's earlier investment in the Low-Cost Spay Neuter Clinic led to fewer animals needing to be housed at the Humane Society and the lower funding number.

Three agencies — Prevail, PrimeLife Enrichment Center and Hamilton County 4-H — kept their budgets at the 2009 funding level, while three other agencies agreed to reduce their funding requests during the meeting.

According to Chief Deputy Auditor

See Nonprofits, Page 5

NOBLESVILLE

Nonprofits from Page 4

Kim Rauch, the Hamilton County Alliance lowered its request from \$125,000 to its 2009 funding of \$75,000; Janus Developmental Services lowered its request by \$50,000 to its 2009 funding of \$550,000; and the Hamilton County Leadership Academy cut its request by half to \$10,000.

Jeff Burt, Hamilton County Alliance president, said the lack of new housing starts in the county has particularly hurt his agency, which is the county's economic development office. The \$50 per property platted that it receives once represented more than a third of his agency's budget. Today, it's about 5-6 percent, he said. Although he'd hoped the county could make up some of the shortfall, he understood why the commissioners held the line on increases.

Two agencies did seek funding increases. BehaviorCorp., the county's mental-health services provider, sought a nearly \$8,000 increase from its 2009 amount of \$1,655,000, but Rauch said the amount is driven by a state funding formula, not the whims of the agency. The Legacy Fund, the county's philan-

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thropic arm of the Central Indiana Community Foundation, requested a \$50,000 increase to spin off a teen drug and alcohol program into a stand-alone nonprofit group. The commissioners tabled \$50,000 of the \$100,000 request indefinitely.

This is the second year in a row where the county has held the line on funding for most area nonprofit organizations. Last year, the commissioners cut about \$140,000 from budget requests.

Holt didn't say where the county might have to cut spending, saying it is a question for the County Council, which handles the county's purse strings.

★ Call Star reporter Robert Annis at (317) 444-5572.