

Cherry cool to more sales tax \$ for Cobleskill

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Though Schoharie County Treasurer Bill Cherry doesn't blame Cobleskill for talking about it, he doesn't expect to see a bigger share of sales tax revenues heading this way.

Lobbying the county for a bigger chunk of the money raised by the sales tax—about \$676,000 in 2007—is one way Center for Government Research's Charles Zettek Jr. has suggested for boosting revenue.

The change would require the support of the Board of Supervisors, but Mr. Cherry said it's not something that would have its support.

"I think we have a fair system now," he said. "I don't blame the Village of Cobleskill for wanting more...If some entity was writing the county a check, I'd be fighting for it, too. But I think what we have now is more than fair."

Mr. Cherry said it was he and the late Cobleskill Supervisor Frank Reilly who first came up with the idea of sharing a piece of the sales tax pie with the towns and villages, while still protecting the county's interests, beginning in '96.

At first, he said, the plan was to share sales tax above and beyond what the county had budgeted for.

That worked fine the first year, he said, when the tax generated a \$469,000 'windfall.'

After that figure dropped back to a more typical \$115,000 in '97, he said, they realized they needed a different formula and agreed to share three percent of the revenues with the 16 towns and six villages.

A few years ago that was upped to five percent.

Mr. Cherry said he's heard 'unofficial grumbling' from the Village of Cobleskill that sales tax revenue should be awarded based on population, but he's already done the math and that would mean about an additional \$1,000 a quarter for the village.

Other villages would actually see their sales check drop.

"Out of 16 towns and six villages, the Village of Cobleskill has always gotten the lion's share," he said. "I'm not sure what else they want."

The county, Mr. Cherry pointed out, only has two sources of revenue—sales tax and property taxes; sharing more sales tax with Cobleskill would mean someone else would be picking up more of the tab—and it would very likely be Cobleskill taxpayers faced with higher county tax bills.

"Dr. Reilly and I never saw the sales tax as a funding source for the towns and village," he said, "but rather a 'little' something extra.

"If we start giving Cobleskill more, what do we say to Middleburgh or Fulton or Schoharie?"

Cobleskill's argument is that because it's the county's biggest sales tax-generating "shopping center" and has to foot the bill for the infrastructure to support that, it should receive a bigger share of those revenues.

Mr. Zettek also pointed out two weeks ago that if Cobleskill was to become the City of Cobleskill, it stands to gain \$2 million a year in sales tax revenues.

That's seen as unlikely, in part because it would need the support of both the county and the state.

As things stand now, Mr. Cherry said, the Village of Cobleskill alone gets almost \$100,000 a year in sales tax monies.

"They're wrong in feeling they've been ill-treated," he said.

"They also have to look at both sides of the equation. Their stores are no good without shoppers. If people can't afford their taxes, they're not going to have any money to spend there."

Neither Earl VanWormer, chairman of the Board of Supervisors, or Cobleskill Supervisor Roger Cohn could be reached for comment.