

## Legislators weigh Golden Hill options

Panel prepares for possible sale of Ulster home

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Joseph Stefko, public finance director for the Center for Governmental Research, outlines possible means of keeping Golden Hill in county hands. One method: collect an additional \$8 million in tax revenue.

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KINGSTON — Ulster legislators made last-ditch efforts Wednesday to save the county nursing home while preparing for life without a public infirmary.

"If we sit here and fight about it (the Golden Hill Health Care Center), we face the eventual closure of this facility," said County Attorney Bea Havranek.

County Executive Mike Hein has proposed having a local development corporation sell Golden Hill's 280 bed licenses to a private provider. The LDC would issue \$8 million in bonds in 2012, \$5.6 million of which would be the cover the infirmary's projected budget shortfall.

The Center for Governmental Research presented legislators with alternative ways of keeping Golden Hill in county hands. The most direct way would be to collect an additional \$8 million in tax revenue; this, however, would increase the tax levy by 10.1 percent. County Legislature Minority Leader Jeannette Provenzano said the average parcel would pay an additional \$95 in taxes.

Any other money-saving methods would have to be "pieces of a larger puzzle," according to Joseph Stefko, CGR's public finance director.

The county could save \$2 million in salary by eliminating the 75 vacant positions outside of Golden Hill. Another \$1.4 million could be saved by deferring vehicle, furniture and office supply purchases.

Earlier in the day, a Legislature committee came to an agreement on how members of the local development corporation should be selected.

Three of the seven members would be chosen by legislators. Hein would select three members, one of whom couldn't work for Ulster County.

Those six would agree upon the final member, who also must be independent of government.

The committee also wants to set aside money for severance payments to infirmary employees who would lose their jobs once the facility goes private.

Sue Zimet, D-New Paltz, wants to stipulate that the nursing beds could only be sold to a not-for-profit that would maintain a union for employees. Hein's office cautioned against restricting the LDC.

"You're conditioning (the LDC) so tightly that they can't respond to the market," said Marshall Beckman, deputy county executive.

Legislators will vote Tuesday on scheduling a public hearing on the privatization of Golden Hill. They're set to vote Dec. 5 on transferring the infirmary's operating license to the LDC.

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