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January 29, 2012

The OBSERVER

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Chautauqua County is not alone in its struggles when it comes to operating a nursing home.

For that reason, legislators last week approved having the Center for Governmental Research Inc. assess the County Home in the town of Dunkirk. The agency, which is based out of Rochester, has a history of doing similar investigations for other areas in the state.

Studies done regarding county-run nursing homes nearly sound the same tune. In an August report for downstate Orange County, the center recommended the county sell its facility. "For the last several years, the Valley View Center for Nursing Care and Rehabilitation - the Orange County-operated Nursing Facility - like most of its county-operated counterparts across the state, has been struggling financially; and the need for county support, in the form of taxpayer subsidies, has increased substantially over the past decade," the report reads. "Public nursing homes face difficult financial realities unique to the public sector, including high benefit costs."

The Genesee County Home to the east received a recommendation from the center in 2010 to "remain in the nursing home business at least for the time being." The center also recommended the facility downsize the amount of beds and seek a partner for the services it is offering.

In the meantime, Cayuga County in August decided to get out of the nursing home business. "We lose money every single day," Cayuga County Nursing Home Administrator Debra English told the Citizen of Auburn.

All of these factors are certain to be a part of the report done by the center, which leads us to one major question: if the report offers a recommendation county leaders and those working at the home disagree with, what then? Does the study sit on a shelf? Do we somehow seek out another study? Or do we form a local committee?

Whatever the center's findings, we must be certain the study is a mandate for action to our leaders, not just a dust collector like so many similar documents have often become.

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