



Torn From The Front Page: 'Can-do' attitude from county officials is nothing less than taxpayers deserve

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Genesee County's budget realities are painful for all involved.

With tax revenue falling dramatically the Genesee County board of commissioners had to make deep cuts across the board. Over the next 12 months, the county will cut loose 118 positions, this on top of reductions that have already occurred.

Complaints and teeth gnashing are to be expected. But taxpayers also should expect professionalism and not only a can-do attitude from county officials, as Commissioner Omar Sims suggested, but a "will-do" attitude.

That's what we're seeing from the sheriff and prosecutor, whose offices are feeling the pinch, and at a lousy time given the number of homicides in Flint recently hit 50.

Sheriff Robert Pickell saw 13 positions scratched in his department. Prosecutor David Leyton lost 12. Neither is happy about it, but both have said publically that their departments will meet the challenge.

Theirs is the kind of attitude taxpayers deserve.

No one likes the fact that the county has had to slash services, scale back hours, increase some fees and let workers go. But outside of an overnight shift in the economy that brings jobs back and restores property values to their previous worth, there's nothing that can be done about.

As the old saying goes: You can't blood from a turnip.

Not that some people at the county haven't tried.

Leyton said the county board is not funding his office at a "serviceable" level, as required by the state Constitution. Though he wouldn't say whether he would go to court over the funding, we are pleased to hear him say no cases will be allowed to fall through the cracks. The folks in his office will work harder to pick up the slack.

Workers in all departments will have to work harder and work smarter. This is the time to get creative and try new things to save money and improve efficiency. It's the time to pull together.

Lawsuits over funding, such as what Register of Deeds Rose Bogardus has been threatening since last year, aren't the answer. The county simply doesn't have the money to fund any of its departments at past levels. Legal fees, and Bogardus's are mounting, are a waste of precious tax dollars.

Pickell, too, has taken the high road. Instead of criticizing the county board, he noted that his department could have been harder hit. The sheriff's department has about 260 workers, making it one fo the county;s largest departments.

Pickell said the despite the cuts, his department will still be able to put the necessary resources into tackling the area's biggest problems, gangs and drugs.

Again, this is the kind of attitude the public expects and deserves from its leaders. Still, it's reassuring to hear it expressed aloud.

Public safety is a major concern, both in the city of Flint and elsewhere. If our sheriff and prosecutor were to make it sound as if they can't get their jobs done, criminals would be even further emboldened to commit crimes.

We hope the county is successful in finding more funds to put into law enforcement. Regardless, this can-do attitude must continue. Many people in Genesee County are struggling financially. They are doing whatever they can to keep their homes and stay afloat. They deserve leaders who, instead of telling them what can't be done, tell them what can and then roll up their sleeves and get to work doing it.

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