

Albany County lawmakers weigh options for new nursing home

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By: Dan Bazile

ALBANY -- They spoke one by one in front of Albany County lawmakers at the courthouse, making it clear they want the Albany County Nursing Home at all cost. Some of them are employees, while others had family members at the facility. The choice for county leaders isn't easy.

"County government was created to take care of the indigent, those who can't take care of themselves. Albany County Legislature Chairman Shawn Morse said to Newschannel 13. "If we can't do that business, my suggestion is they get rid of the county government. They'll save a lot of money,"

But having a nursing home is also costing the county money, a county that's already facing a \$35 million budget shortfall. County executive Dan McCoy said his municipality is broke and something needs to be done about the nursing home. It's the kind of situation where whatever they do, someone is going to feel the impact, whether it's the taxpayers or patients. McCoy proposed four options for the nursing home, including privatization or the construction of a new one.

Albany County Executive spokeswoman Mary Rozak said each choice comes with its own set of challenges.

"Whatever the choice is going to be, it's going to be made with everyone's best interest at heart," Rozak said.

County officials approved a resolution called a certificate of need to the state health department. It simply means they're on board for the construction of a new facility. The project could cost about \$70 million. The taxpayer portion of the yearly subsidy would also jump from about \$7 million to \$26 million, according to state health.

"Until someone shows me some different numbers, I think we need to take a long and hard look at that. Especially if this county wants to live within the governor's 2 percent tax cap," Albany County Legislator Chris Higgins said.

Higgins, the only Democrat lawmaker to vote no on the measure, also said he's not against building a new nursing home.

"I'm simply saying at this point we need to pump the brakes and evaluate all the proposals that are out there," he said.