

Wildwood rolling the Dice with Millville MHA

By Jim Cook Jr.

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MILLVILLE — The Millville Housing Authority (MHA) approved a professional service contract with the Wildwood Housing Authority Wednesday evening at its monthly evening.

The executive director of the Wildwood Housing Authority retired last Friday, and instead of hiring a new executive director, they entered into a proposal of a shared-services contract with the MHA, which they approved last week.

"They will get more than an executive director; they get the team," said Paul Dice, MHA executive director. "And they will pay less than they would for a new executive director."

Dice said this was a way to save money that many housing authorities are looking into.

"With congressional funding decreasing, shared services are important," Dice said. "The HUD cut back 8 percent on their capital fund and 5 percent on operating funds. We're seeing a steady decline."

The MHA, however, is bringing in up to \$300,000 per year just in commercial rents from doctors offices, the Holly City Family Center, a church rental and other

sources of external revenue outside the public and low-income housing.

"We are continuing to grow these external sources of revenue," Dice said. "We have the operational expertise to do this."

The total cost to Wildwood's housing authority is a current bid of \$75,000 flat rate, or around \$6,250 per month for the services. A contract is still in the works and has yet to be ironed out.

"We thought that would be prudent. There will be no salary increase for us," Dice said. "We're doing what we can to secure the financial base."

Dice said the Wildwood Housing Authority will pay "considerably less than the arrangement they have now."

"They'll also have the ability to tap the resources of our information technology to affordable housing to leave enforcement and social services," Dice said. "These are all things people in our organization have learned to do so well."

Dice clarified, however, that the MHA will not handle the business of Wildwood's organization.

"We only consult and show how we do things and pass that knowledge on," Dice said.

Both Wildwood and Millville housing authorities oper-

ate under a joint insurance firm, which is the reason a contract has not been drawn up as of yet.

"We have the same underwriters, and want to make sure there are no conflicts of interest," Dice said. "We'll have an official contract soon."

According to Dice, many other municipalities in the state are using shared services.

"Vineland, Glassboro and Buena already have a similar consolidation and it's working great," Dice said.

MHA Chairman Brian Tomlin echoed Dice's comments, agreeing that moving into shared services was the right direction to pursue.

"It sounds like a great idea; it really makes sense," Tomlin said. "I think shared services is a good trend. It's exciting."