

# County open to Prospect comp help

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VILLAGE OF PROSPECT — With settlements reached for two workman's compensation claims against the village, county officials said Friday they were working with the village that's in dire financial straights.



Mayor Frances Righi had said the Oneida County Self-Insurance Plan was comparable to playing "Russian Roulette," and that the insurance plan has resulted in the village being in debt by almost \$700,000. That debt would need to be paid over a six-year period. That debt stems from two claims filed against the village's now debunked fire department, the first from 2008 when a former member claimed she injured her foot at the department's field days events. A second claim was filed against the fire department earlier this year.

Righi had said that the county Workman's Compensation Department would look into a re-payment plan for the village, with annual premiums reaching as high as around \$139,000 in the next two or three years. But no further discussions had taken place, she said.

Michael Lally, director of the county Workman's Compensation Department, said that was not the case Friday. Village officials "asked if they could stretch the payments, and the county attorney said that's possible, but they might have to change local law" in order to do so," Lally said. "At one point there was talk from Prospect about state assistance or getting assistance from the town" of Trenton.

"The county is open to engage in any possible resolution," he added. "We're not closing the door on them." Righi said the village has settled both claims, but must pay out a total \$686,000 over a six-year period.

Lally said the village's premium for 2014 would be \$31,144.10, but that premium would increase in consecutive years.

Lally pointed out that workers' compensation insurance "is a must" for municipalities operating their own fire department, and by law, the pricing plan is regulated by the state, not the county.

"I think they should've known what the coverage would be, but it is a risk," he said.

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