

Cattaraugus OKs Railroad

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LITTLE VALLEY — Cattaraugus County legislators voted to keep the county's tiny shortline railroad operation on the tracks for another year Wednesday by authorizing the Industrial Development Agency to contract with the state for receipt of \$191,000.

Again as they have done in the past concerning the railroad, the minority member Democratic legislature members led the careful questioning of Robert O. Dingman, president of the New York and Lake Erie Railroad.

Olean Democrat Brian O'Connell suggested adding "fiscal accountability," for the money to operation requirements, by channeling it through additional agencies, adding the county auditor and treasurer's offices, before Dingman receives payments.

Anne Marie Costello, D-Kill Buck, said the state Department of Transportation keeper of the money which is coming from the Federal Branch Line Assistance program, does not want to encounter "any more headaches" by dealing with Dingman directly, that is why IDA is named administrator of funds. DOT granted Dingman his first year initial subsidy for railroad operations.

Dingman has requested the \$191,000 for this second year of operations, saying after that time period, he expects the railroad to be self-sufficient.

Majority Leader Don B. Winship, R-South Dayton, explained just what procedure will be necessary for Dingman to be paid each month incorporating a system of checks and balances on

railroad operations.

The money will not be given to Dingman "in a lump sum," he said. While DOT will be the depository for funds, the money will be expended only on the receipt of monthly vouchers from Dingman. Those forms will first filter through a joint committee of IDA representatives from Cattaraugus and Erie counties.

"Timely reports will enable the vouchers to be sent," Carol Milks, Cattaraugus IDA director said.

Winship and others expressed concern over Dingman's previous reputation for being "somewhat negligent over paperwork," and subsequent criticism by DOT.

Dingman said the remarks "make me

bristle." He said he had experienced difficulty in finding time to file monthly reports to DOT promptly and that under future operations there will be a greater need for "more administrative support," from railroad backers.

Winship said he wanted to emphasize that Cattaraugus County has not invested any of the public's money in the railroad operations. It has, however, allocated \$80,000 and \$79,000 to the IDA to purchase potentially abandoned track lines of the former Erie-Lackawanna railroad.

Kenneth McClune, D-Salamanca, requested a financial status report from Dingman, who told him he is already filing quarterly reports with the IDA.

Legislators were told they could obtain that information from Ms. Milks.

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