LEE COUNTY

# Unions could be big hurdle

## Officials say holiday plan would save money

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DIXON – Members of a Lee County committee agreed Monday that if they cut the number of paid holidays, they'd get more work out of employees and save some money.

But they also acknowledged there's one major hurdle to achieving their goal – union contracts.

Lee County employees get more paid holidays than those in other government agencies: 15 paid holidays during even-numbered years and 14 during odd-numbered years.

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■ Panel won't push anti-nepotism policy for now, **A3**

The Administrative Services Committee has recommended following the federal government's holiday schedule, which would mean 10 holidays a year. It hasn't sought a vote from the full County Board.

Whiteside County and Dixon city employees get 13 holidays, Sterling workers get 10.

Among states in the region, Illinois is on the high side with 13. State employees in Iowa receive nine holidays.

The county's judicial employees get a dozen paid holidays a year, following an Illinois Supreme Court mandate.

At Monday's Administrative Services Committee meeting, Rick Ketchum, D-Amboy, chairman of the Finance Committee, wanted to know what Administrative Services members hoped to achieve by reducing holidays.

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# County official concerned about holiday takeaway

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They would get more work from employees, but the savings would be minimal, unless the county decided to have unpaid holidays, Ketchum said.

Cutting the number of paid holidays would save money in the Sheriff's Department because deputies get overtime when they work holidays, and eliminating Election Day as a holiday would save on overtime for the county clerk's office, which runs elections, he noted.

John Ferrone, R-Dixon, chairman of Administrative Services, said that in reality, the county would save money all around if it cut holidays. He said that was because the county would be paying employees to work, rather than get a paid day off.

Other officials said the county would have to negotiate changes to holidays with the unions.

Ferrone agreed, but he said the county needed to have a plan before negotiations begin later this year.

Mike McBride, the county's information technology coordinator, said the judicial employees only have two fewer holidays on non-election years than do the other workers. The committee, he noted, was talking about a decrease of five holidays for nonjudicial workers.

"If you take away, you have to be careful," he said.

Committee members agreed to continue discussing the issues.