

Where Is Colton's \$1M?

Comptroller Says Approval/Disapproval Due By May 1

By LARRY ROBINSON
COLTON - The New York state Comptroller's office will make a decision by May 1 or earlier on whether the town of Colton will receive a \$1 million grant promised by the administration of former Gov. George Pataki back in 2006.

On Dec. 21, 2006, then Colton Town Supervisor Hank Ford received a letter from Department of Environmental Conservation Bureau of Contract and Grant Development representative Lorie King notifying the township that the community had been awarded a grant in the amount of \$1 million.

The *Daily Courier-Observer* was given a file copy of that original document by DEC officials recently after filing a

formal request for the letter under the New York state Freedom of Information Law.

Although the letter was written some 15 months ago, Colton's elected town board has been at a loss to explain to members of the public in recent weeks regarding exactly when the grant will be arriving, if at all.

The town government has already spent over \$20,000 of local taxpayer money on engineering studies related to the tentative \$1 million windfall.

Town officials in Colton say they have already made plans to use the money to repair sidewalks and improve the Swift Field athletic field in the hamlet of South Colton.

"Dear Supervisor Ford, on behalf of Governor Pataki, the

Department of Environmental Conservation is pleased to be able to provide State Assistance Funding to the town of Colton for services and expenses associated with improvements to your parks and street scapes," read the letter from King dated Dec. 21, 2006.

Jennifer Freeman, a spokeswoman for the state comptroller's office in Albany said her agency received the final paper work related to the proposed grant from DEC officials on Feb. 1 of this year and that by law the comptroller's office has no more than 90 days to approve or disapprove the grant request.

She said New York state law stipulates that the office of the comptroller render final

approval on all grants of the size being tentatively earmarked for Colton.

"We received the paper work from the DEC on Feb. 1 and we are reviewing that information now," said Freeman. "Typically with these contracts we have 90 days to do the review, although it doesn't always take 90 days."

Freeman said she could not speculate on whether her office will approve or deny the \$1 million grant for the town of Colton, but suggested a final decision could be made in days if not weeks.

Yancey Roy, a spokesman for the DEC in Albany said the \$1 million being talked about for Colton originated in what he referred to as a Memorandum of Understanding involving

the New York state Legislature and the office of then Gov. Pataki in December of 2006 - during the final weeks of the Pataki administration.

Roy spent several days researching the proposed Colton grant at the request of the newspaper.

He said he has not been able to determine what delayed the grant, but that at this point the DEC is in fact done with the project and that the grant is now waiting for approval in the comptroller's office.

"The grant is awaiting sign off from the state comptroller's office," said Roy.

He also said that the DEC has officially recommended approval of the grant, but that now it is up to the comptroller's office to approve or reject.