

# Fultonville to eliminate its village court

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**FULTONVILLE** – Faced with declining revenues, Fultonville will eliminate its village justice position April 1 and send all local court matters to the town of Glen.

Mayor Robert Headwell Jr. said longtime Justice Thomas Murray is retiring this year, as is the court clerk.

Villages can't eliminate a justice post mid-term, Headwell said, but Murray's pending retirement makes it possible. "The timing was right, and we're always looking to consolidate services," he said. Operating the court costs roughly \$20,000 for salaries and supplies, he said, and brings in not as much revenue.

The court brought in \$42,150 in revenue in 2008 – the year the Village Board decided to end a contract with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office for dedicated patrols in the village. Revenue has been on a steady decline since then, according to figures from the state Comptroller's Office website.

Court revenue dropped to \$29,267 in 2009 and to \$23,670 in 2010. By 2011, revenue fell to \$19,425, less than half of 2008 revenues, according to the state.

"When you have the sheriff's department in your area for [10] hours per week, they seem to see a lot more things going on," said Headwell, who was alone on the Village Board in opposition to ending the sheriff's patrols back then.

New York state gets a big cut of the revenues that come from local courts, and the village's share increases only when tickets are pleaded down – such as reducing a speeding ticket to a parking violation – the mayor said. With its proximity to the Thruway, many tickets are issued to people from somewhere else who simply plead guilty by mail and send in their fine money – leaving the village with a fraction of the take, Headwell said.

Montgomery County also receives some of the revenue, but not as much as the state.

Of the \$54,060 the village court brought in last year, the state took \$32,345 and the county took \$2,290.

Murray also serves as justice for the town of Glen – a busier court that earned \$157,027 in revenue for the town in 2011, according to the Comptroller's Office.

Fonda, just across the Mohawk River, does not have a village court; all cases there are handled by the Mohawk Town Court, which earned \$53,288 for the town in 2011.