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County invests \$500G in film

BY LYNNE SLACK SHEDLOCK STAFF WRITER

Lackawanna County is sinking another \$250,000 into actor Paul Sorvino's movie, bringing the county's total investment in the \$3 million production to \$500,000.

"He needed that to trigger his other financing," majority Commissioner Robert C. Cordaro said.

Mr. Sorvino, best known for his portrayal of mob boss Paul Cicero in the 1990 film "Goodfellas," approached the county about contributing to the movie last year.

Under the original concept, Mr. Cordaro hoped the county and the city would contribute \$250,000 each. Mayor Chris Doherty, however, balked at contributing money, saying the city was not in a position to give anything. As a result, Mr. Cordaro said, the county agreed to fund the other \$250,000.

The commissioners decided to contribute because of the economic benefit to the area and potential profits from the movie, described by Mr. Sorvino as a "small film" that's guaranteed a television sale at least. The movie will be made here this summer.

The funds were taken from last year's \$775,000 sale of the county's Dickson City warehouse to F&S Supply Co., Mr. Cordaro said. The money will either be reimbursed from the county's cultural and education fee or returned in the form of movie profits since the county is an investor, he said. The 1-mill cultural and education fee generates about \$1.2 million annually.

A mill is a \$1 tax on every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value.

Minority Commissioner Mike Washo said he wanted the warehouse proceeds used for a tax cut or applied to debt. The majority commissioners have already cut taxes and plan another decrease, Mr. Cordaro countered.

The county also hopes to benefit in other ways. One-third of the movie's production cost is expected to remain in the county through hotels, shopping and food, Mr. Cordaro said. In addition, the film will present Scranton to "an international audience" and could attract more filmmaking here.

"This film is intended to show we can work with heavyweights in this business," Mr. Cordaro said.

Mr. Sorvino previously described the film as a serio-comic tale about a young girl from a dysfunctional family, who is romanced by a talent scout. At the time, Mr. Sorvino said the working title was, "The Trouble with Cali." Mr. Sorvino said his daughter Amanda would write the screenplay, his son, Michael, would be a producer and another daughter, Mira, might have a cameo role. Mira Sorvino won a 1996 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role as Linda Ash — "the tart with a heart" — in "Mighty Aphrodite."

Asked for an update of the film project Friday, Mr. Cordaro said the movie is about the "family issues" of a Scranton police officer. He said the script is in development and Sorvino family members make up most of the cast.

Mr. Sorvino was a longtime friend of the late Scranton actor and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Jason Miller, which resulted in his forming a relationship with the area.

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