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## Milan board at odds over financial records

### Supervisor: Bookkeeping software outdated

*By Colin DeVries*

*For the Poughkeepsie Journal*

MILAN - Tensions flared over the poor state of the town's bookkeeping at a recent town board meeting, highlighting potential flaws in the financial records as well as dissension across party lines.

Board members Ross Williams and Diane May, the sole Democrats, abstained from accepting the financial reports for April, citing the fact the board has still not accepted the December 2008 financial report.

"We're now looking at an April report based on numbers that aren't right," Williams said. "There is no integrity in the numbers of the monthly financial statements for the town."

Supervisor Richard Barrett, who serves as the chief financial officer of the town, said the problem roots from the outdated QuickBooks software the town uses for accounting.

"I had a woman who is a certified consultant in QuickBooks come in," Barrett said. "She initially said she would come in for one hour; she was here for three hours, no charge. ... She said, 'The least you could do is update it to 2009 now; the current software is 2002.' "

The consultant, Susan Simon, told Barrett the accounts were not properly set up, which was also confirmed by the state comptroller's office.

Simon also discovered several accounts were showing negative numbers that should have been positive and vice versa.

## State awaits documents

These findings were alarming for Barrett because the 2008 Annual Update Document had not yet been submitted to the state comptroller's office and the town had already applied for a 60-day extension.

Eric Gahan of the comptroller's office told Barrett another extension in submitting the Annual Update Document is not unusual and the office would work with the town to rectify the problems.

Barrett intends to work closely with Simon and former Town of Hyde Park bookkeeper Joanne Lown to straighten out the issues within the next month.

"Being a QuickBooks consultant or expert isn't the issue before the town," May said. "The issue is that we do not have a municipal accountant; a professional CPA with municipal and fund accounting experience and expertise."

Barrett said the accounting issues he is dealing with have been inherited. He said supervisors who

have preceded him have had similar issues with the software and bookkeeping.

Barrett said there have also been recommendations to make the adjustment from QuickBooks to RDA - software specifically designed for municipal accounting - but right now he's only trying to fix the current problems.

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