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Mayor Ed Pawlowski: Effective Leadership in Difficult Times

By Robert Wallace

Brutal economic factors have cut into revenues in cities like Philadelphia, which has drastically cut services and proposed new taxes to allay a 180-million-dollar deficit. Vellejo, Calif., a city similar in size to Allentown, was forced into bankruptcy.

However, nothing like that will happen in Allentown.

A blue-ribbon panel of financial experts commissioned by Mayor Ed Pawlowski has completed its study of the city's budget shortfall and Pawlowski will issue recommendations that will turn the projected 5-million-dollar gap into a surplus without a tax increase.

Pawlowski said the gap will be closed with a combination of budget cuts and new revenues, but no new or increased taxes.

"Our goal is to make sure we use taxpayers' money wisely," Pawlowski said. "We don't want to burden taxpayers in this time of hardship."

Among the new revenues will be \$580,000 in back taxes generated by the recent sheriff's sale of the long-vacant Americus Centre hotel in downtown Allentown.

"We have expended a lot of time and energy pursuing [the Americus sale] over the last three and a half years," Pawlowski said "It is our hope that this landmark will now be repaired and will reclaim its place on the list of prime places to visit in Allentown.

The rough economy is also hurting non-profits. With this in mind,

Pawlowski recently raised \$13,250 through his Mayor's Annual Charity Golf Tournament for the Lehigh County Senior Center. Pawlowski said he picked the center this year because economic stress can be particularly hard on seniors.

"We stepped in to fill the gap," Pawlowski said.

Whether Mayor Pawlowski is filling in the gaps for seniors, filling in the gaps in downtown development or filling in the gaps in a budget eroded by withering revenues, the mayor continues to provide the leadership to pull Allentown through these difficult times.