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NIFA cuts Nassau borrowing plan

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The state board in control of Nassau's finances yesterday cut by a third the county's plan to borrow \$90 million to pay for dozens of capital projects, such as road maintenance and park improvements, and admonished County Executive Edward Mangano for allowing work to begin without its authorization.

"This is not business as usual," said Ronald Stack, chairman of the Nassau Interim Finance Authority, a state board that imposed financial controls on the deficit-ridden county a year ago.

Stack also said Mangano had not provided NIFA with a plan to cut \$150 million in recurring labor costs, which was due yesterday, but said the county executive had asked to meet with the board to present his proposals for the savings. That meeting likely will be this week.

While authorizing the bor-

rowing of only \$60 million for the county's \$90 million capital plan, NIFA agreed to allow Nassau to borrow \$34.6 million for sewer and stormwater improvements, \$9.6 million for environmental bond act projects and \$17 million to pay severance for union workers who were laid off or retired by the end of December.

The board also approved the county's borrowing of \$7.7 million to settle a lawsuit, filed by the family of Jo'Anna Bird, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 2009. The lawsuit alleged police failed to protect her.

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County contractors, vendors and social service providers have complained for months that they have not been paid for already-completed work. Marc Herbst, head of the Long Island Contractor's Association, appeared before the county legislature Monday to say payment of \$4.5 million to members was long overdue.

Chief Deputy County Executive Rob Walker told legislators Monday that it had been common practice for Nassau to allow work to start before the county borrowed the money needed to pay them.

But Stack said yesterday, "We are in a control period. The way you always did it is not the way we're going to do it now."

NIFA member Chris Wright said, "This is an opportunity for the county to spend \$30 million less."

The county will decide which projects should proceed, board members said, adding

that the \$60 million should cover payments for those who already completed their work.

Mangano spokesman Brian Nevin said in a statement, "County Executive Mangano has stopped this business as usual practice that occurred for decades in Nassau County."

NIFA also complained that Nassau also had gone ahead with a retirement incentive pro-

gram, without its approval, for Civil Service Employees Association last year. After the fact, the control board approved the CSEA agreement — except for one paragraph that set the union share of the \$150 million in labor savings at \$54 million.

But NIFA warned in its resolution "that this type of retroactive request for approval will be frowned upon in the future."



LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT OK'D. NIFA did approve \$7.7 million to settle a suit in the murder of Jo'Anna Bird, seen with her two children.