

Manos indicted for official misconduct

Iroquois supervisor of assessments faces possible 2-5-year prison term

By Will Brumleve

WATSEKA — The top official in the Iroquois County Assessments Office has been charged with official misconduct and faces removal from office and time in prison if convicted.

An Iroquois County grand jury returned a seven-count indictment this week against Jerome Manos, the county's supervisor of assessments, for allegedly completing certain forms entitling township tax assessors to receive a state stipend, then illegally receiving a portion of those stipends from the township assessors. The charges further allege that Manos knew the payments were improper.

Manos has been charged with five counts of official misconduct, a Class 3 felony with a sentence ranging from probation to two to five years in prison; along with two counts of attempt, a Class A misdemeanor that carries a maximum imprisonment of one year.

An official misconduct conviction also would require Manos to forfeit his office.

When contacted at his Watseka home Thursday afternoon, Manos declined to comment on the charges that have been filed, instead referring the Record's questions to his attorney, Frank Simutis of Watseka, who also declined comment.

Simutis' secretary said that Simutis "hasn't seen anything yet (regarding the charges), so he is not in position to comment."

Kankakee attorney Christopher Bohlen, who has been appointed as a special prosecutor for the case, said in a faxed, one-page press release: "It is unfortunate that these charges have been brought. However, it is with the cooperation of a number of concerned people that this investigation is being con-

ducted. There are still other persons to interview and leads to follow in this continuing investigation, and we will explore all the information which we have received regarding this office."

The county appointed Bohlen as a special prosecutor to avoid the

possible conflict of interest that could arise if State's Attorney Jim Devine was to prosecute the case. Devine, along with Sheriff Eldon Sprau, withdrew their involvement in the case following an initial investigation.

Sheriff's police began investigating possible official misconduct in the county assessor's office in November, in response to a tip from a private

citizen. Later that month, Iroquois County Board Chairman Ron Schroeder of St. Anne placed Manos and his chief deputy, Vivian Bossong, on paid administrative leave, pending the outcome of the investigation.

Bohlen's press release mentioned nothing about any charges being filed against Bossong. Bohlen did not return telephone calls made to his office requesting comment; and Bossong could not be reached for comment at her home in Watseka.

In the absence of Bossong and Manos, the Iroquois County Assessments Office has been paying overtime, if necessary, to assessment office employees. In December, the county board also decided to seek an opinion from the Illinois Department of Revenue regarding who should be responsible for signing routine assessment forms submitted to the state in the absence of an appointed official. The board later gave assessment office clerk Peggy Shoufler, who has been handling Manos' and Bossong's duties, enhanced compensation and a new title.



File Photo ('93)

Jerome Manos