

Adelphia woes jeopardize \$1 million media center loan

By Boris E. Hartl, Times Staff Writer

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The Carroll County commissioners are reluctant to approve a \$1 million loan to a group seeking to build a community media center because of uncertainty surrounding Adelphia's ability to make payments that would serve as collateral for the loan.

Adelphia Communications Corp. could file for bankruptcy protection sometime this week, according to Dow Jones Business News. Filing would prompt the Carroll Cable Regulatory Commission, a group that administers a franchise agreement with the nation's sixth-largest cable operator, to continue to demand that the company give a portion of its revenue to the county and the municipalities.

Adelphia pays 5 percent of its revenues to the county and municipalities. The county's cable provider gives 3 percent of its revenue from Carroll subscriptions to the municipalities. The remaining 2 percent is split between the Community Media Center group and the regulatory commission.

The media center group would use a portion of the money received from the franchise fees and the estimated yearly \$75,000 for equipment maintenance to help cover the loan to help pay for a Public, Education and Government (PEG) television studio complex on Old Washington Road in Westminster.

County officials, however, fear bankruptcy proceedings could affect those payments if Adelphia seeks Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The company is undergoing criminal and regulatory investigations involving the founding Rigas family.

"We don't know where that would put us in terms of receiving the money," County Budget Director Steve Powell told the commissioners Monday.

Powell said he would hesitate to make a recommendation to grant the loan to the media center group based on Adelphia's ongoing problems. The Nasdaq dropped Adelphia from its stock market listings earlier this month.

The regulatory commission is scheduled to meet June 27 to discuss what legal options it has under bankruptcy laws regarding Adelphia's problems.

"They do have some legal protection under the bankruptcy laws, but we are entitled to the franchise fees," said Carol Shawver, the commission's cable coordinator. "I don't know what the extent the protection is."

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