

Where do cities, counties put cash?

No Treasure Coast government had any money in Riverside when it was seized April 16

BY JIM TURNER

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City and county governments across the Treasure Coast didn't have any money in the failed Riverside National Bank when federal officials seized the 28-year-old local institution April 16.

Port St. Lucie did have \$24.7 million in the troubled bank as late as March 2009, but removed the money four days after the Fort Pierce-based bank laid off City Councilwoman Linda Bartz from her job as vice president and bank manager.

So where are local governments banking and investing?

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY

Invested: \$66.75 million

- \$8 million, Wachovia
- \$750,000, RBC Bank
- \$58 million, U.S. Treasury notes, money market accounts

VERO BEACH

Invested: \$52 million

- \$2 million, Wachovia
- \$35 million, U.S. Treasury notes
- \$15 million, Wachovia, mutual funds

SEBASTIAN

Invested: \$16.7 million

- \$7.3 million, Wachovia, interest-bearing checking account
- \$6 million, State Board SBA
- \$1.6 million, CDs with PNC Bank, originally National City
- \$1.8 million, U.S. government securities, two federal home loan banking bonds

ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Invested: \$391.37 million

- \$7 million, Seacoast National
- \$52.5 million, Fidelity Prime money market
- \$48 million, Federated Prime money market
- \$50 million, Prime Money Market, RBC Bank
- \$3 million, Florida Local Government Investment Trust Day to Day Fund
- \$22.9 million, Corporate Obligations (Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program)
- \$90.17 million, U.S. Treasuries
- \$5 million, State Board of Administration
- \$29.2 million, Freddie Mac
- \$10.69 million, Fannie Mae
- \$5.2 million, Federal Home Loan Bank
- \$6.7 million, Bank of America
- \$6.39 million, Citibank
- \$4.8 million, General Electric
- \$1.83 million, Goldman Sachs Group
- \$1.55 million, JP Morgan Chase
- \$1.54 million, Morgan Stanley

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IS NYC SUSPECT ON TAPE?

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OBAMA PLEDGES ACTION ON OIL SPILL



Real estate experts say program failing to solve foreclosure crisis



SAM WOLFE • Correspondent

Karen Lehmann of Vero Beach cuts fabric in her kitchen while making slip covers for a client. Lehmann, who works multiple jobs, is struggling to keep her home from being foreclosed on despite repeated attempts to modify her mortgage. "The last 18 months have been unbelievably stressful," Lehmann said. "More so than the 15 years I spent in law enforcement."

Mortgage modifications granted, revoked for thousands of homeowners

BY NADIA VANDERHOOF

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Karen Lehmann calls the past 18 months of her life a "nightmare." Since October 2008, Lehmann has tried to modify the mortgage on her Vero Beach home with Texas-based Litton Loan Services through President Barack Obama's Making Home Affordable Program.

During that time, Lehmann claims she's had to express mail and fax duplicate paperwork to the company numerous times, stand in front of an Indian River County circuit judge and follow through the precise instructions and stringent payment requirements set forth in a trial modification program twice approved by Litton.

In March, Lehmann got a letter from Litton, a loan modification servicing company, stating her lender plans to foreclose on the home despite her making five modified mortgage payments

"They're selling America out from under Americans."

Karen Lehmann, Vero Beach homeowner

under Litton's modification plan. Litton is owned by global investment and securities firm Goldman Sachs Group Inc. Lehmann's loan is owned by banking giant JPMorgan Chase & Co.

"They're selling America out from under Americans," Lehmann said. "But I have a file five inches thick and I just refuse to give in."

Real estate experts said Lehmann joins thousands of other Treasure Coast and Florida homeowners who have become victims of the Department of Treasury's failed modification program — a plan that promised to solve the nationwide

foreclosure crisis and stabilize the housing market.

"Unfortunately, this is quite common. We as Realtors hear the same story on a daily basis with many different owners and banks," said Maria Wells, president of the Realtors Association of St. Lucie and broker-owner of the Lifestyle Realty Group. "If an owner was fortunate enough to be provided a trial modification, it's not uncommon to have the terms rescinded."

There are currently 95,400 active trial modifications and only 28,000 permanent mortgage modifications documented in Florida through the Department of Treasury's Making Home Affordable Program. The \$55 billion TARP program was started in April 2009 under the premise of saving up to 4 million families nationwide from losing their homes by 2012.

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Florida court recommends ban on jurors' use of phones

Trials are disrupted and forced into mistrial over jurors using mobile devices while hearing cases

BY MELISSA E. HOLSMAN

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FORT PIERCE — Florida court officials and local judges are seeing trials disrupted and even forced into mistrials by jury members using mobile devices that can tweet, text and search the Internet, making it a breeze for jurors to contact the outside world during their deliberations.

It's enough of an issue that

Florida's Supreme Court is expected to adopt revised jury instructions that would tell jurors not to use any tools to communicate electronically with anyone about the case.

The Florida Supreme Court Committees for Standard Jury Instructions in civil and criminal cases have recommended banning jurors from communicating with anyone about a case on a cell

phone, through e-mail, Blackberry, iPhone, text messaging, on Twitter, blogs or Internet chat rooms, or by using other social networking websites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Sylvia H. Walbolt, former chairwoman of the civil division of the committee that formulated the jury instruction recommendations said some cases end up being mistrials as a result of jurors doing their own research and communication in the middle of a trial.

"Jurors are generally used to going on the Internet to research things; it's natural for them to do

that," Walbolt said. "Unless they clearly are told not to do this and why they cannot do this, they are almost certain to do so."

Currently, there is no standard language used to admonish jurors from using electronic devices, but judges routinely warn against doing routinely research of any kind during a trial, Chief Circuit Judge Steven Levin said.

"There has to be a heightened awareness among judges, the bailiffs and all court personnel to make sure the vast technology out there does not create problems for our judiciary system," Levin said. "Because a verdict has to be

decided upon what happens in the courtroom, and can't be decided on outside influences."

Recent examples of jury misconduct include a Florida case in which a juror used his Facebook page to share details to others and ask for advice on how to decide the case.

Last year, a building materials firm asked an Arkansas court to toss out a \$12.6 million judgment by claiming a juror had used Twitter to post updates during a civil trial.

And there's the 2008 two-month

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