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# Amsterdam man faces felonies

## *Bad check charges are lodged against Mohasco site redeveloper*

By DANIEL DeVRIES

Gazette Reporter

AMSTERDAM - A city man who has an agreement with a city agency to renovate a building on the former Mohascc industrial site was charged Tuesday with two felonies, one of them involving a bad check which police said was issued to pay for goods shipped to the site.

Adam Hemsley, 29, of 86 Lyon St., Amsterdam, was arrested by city police on felony charges of third- and fourth-degree grand larceny.

Police said the third-degree charge alleges that Hemsley wrote a check for more than \$3,000 to HSBC Bank at 1 Market St. The check was issued on Sept. 27 and drawn on a closed account at Fleet Bank, police said.

Police said the fourth-degree charge stemmed from Hemsley's issuing the Curtis Lumber Co. a check for approximately \$2,500 from a closed account at Fleet Bank. The check was to pay for goods being delivered to the Mohasco building on Lyon Street, and was issued on Dec. 5, police said.

Hemsley was being held Tuesday to await arraignment in Amsterdam City Court. He was not available for comment.

Amsterdam Industrial Development Agency officials entered into an agreement with Hemsley, CEO of Synergism Technology Inc. and an Australian citizen, in mid-October.

Under the agreement, Hemsley was given one year to complete upgrades to the building and, if he did so, AIDA promised to hand over title to the building to him.

An anonymous tip to the Amsterdam Police Department led to an investigation that resulted in a lengthy report on Hemsley, including an arrest record and allegations of questionable business dealings. A copy of the report was sent to AIDA officials and the mayor on Dec. 4.

The police report states Hemsley used a false Social Security number at a local bank, which led to his being denied a business loan.

The report states Hemsley was arrested under the alias of Adam Paul Van Zijl in Culver City, Calif., on Oct. 31, 1997, on a charge of grand theft involving vehicles.

Hemsley was also arrested in Fonda by state police on Nov. 1, 2001, on a charge of issuing a bad check, and he was again arrested in Fonda on April 26, 2002, on a charge of criminal contempt. Details of those charges were not available Tuesday.

The police report also cited problems Hemsley had with his previous company, E-Moola.

E-Moola officials blasted Hemsley in the police report, claiming he attempted to steal the CEO's identity and reciting a laundry list of other allegations.

Amsterdam Mayor John Duchessi said the arrest comes as no surprise to him.

"My original dealing with him was broken off when he couldn't show where the money was coming from," Duchessi said Tuesday.

Hemsley claimed he had some financial backing for renovations to the Mohasco building when he entered into the agreement with AIDA.

"The AIDA board is easily taken in and this is another example of that," Duchessi said. "I think that the Common Council should take a good look at that board."

The Common Council is responsible for appointments to the AIDA board.

AIDA Chairman Michael Chiara was unavailable for comment Tuesday night.

AIDA board member and Alderman Anthony Pallotta would not comment on Hemsley's arrest, but did note that the only agreement with Hemsley was that he could have the building if it was fixed within a year.

Hemsley's firm, Synergism Technology Inc., was founded in Newport Beach, Calif. Hemsley was quoted in a story this summer in The Business Review as saying that he hoped to have 60 to 65 employees by Christmas. The company was described as involved in research of high-tech thumb scans for possible use in airline security.

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## Incoming judge cites top priority

By **STEVEN COOK**  
*Gazette Reporter*

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FONDA - The Amsterdam attorney who will be sworn in today as Montgomery County's new Family Court judge said Tuesday he wants to increase the court's emphasis on social services.

Philip V. Cortese, 51, is to be sworn in at the Montgomery County Courthouse for a full 10-year term.

"I'm looking forward to working with all the social services agencies, both private and public, to try to expand the services that are offered to the families in Montgomery County," Cortese said Tuesday at his soor-to-be

vacated Amsterdam office.

Cortese won a full 10-year term on the bench in November, beating out two other candidates.

He defeated his Democratic challenger, Kelli McCoski, in the September Democratic primary and then defeated Judge Joseph Wollman and McCoski in the general election.

Today's swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for 11 a.m. at the Montgomery County Courthouse on Route 30A, Fonda.

Cortese said he expects as many as 125 people to attend the event.

Several family members are to have roles in the ceremony, Cortese said. His 5-year-old daughter, Anna Li, is to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, while his wife, Jerri, and mother, Margaret, will assist him as he dons the robe signifying his office.

His father, Philip T. Cortese, is to hold the Bible as he takes his oath.

The oath of office will be administered by Amsterdam Mayor John Duchessi, who was Cortese's boss as corporation counsel.

"I have mixed feelings," Duchessi said of losing Cortese as the city's attorney. "He's a close friend and been an outstanding counsel.

"I'll miss him terribly, but on the other hand, I'm very happy he was elected."

A native of Amsterdam, Cortese has practiced law for 21 years. He also spent the last 11 as the city's corporation counsel.

This year's race was his second for a judgeship. He lost in 1999 in his bid to defeat county Judge Felix Catena.

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## Johnstown city taxes to increase by 2.3%

By **JOE MAHER**  
*Gazette Reporter*

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JOHNSTOWN - Final budget numbers for 2003 were calculated by the city treasurer Tuesday and reflect the cuts enacted by the Common Council on Dec. 16.

The council cut raises for non-union workers of more than 3 percent that had been proposed by Mayor Bob Schultz. The mayor vetoed those cuts but the council overrode the veto.

All the raises that were cut totaled \$11,260. And a \$23,000 pickup truck purchase for the Fire Department was cut as well for a total of \$34,260 in savings.

The current city tax rate is \$15.54 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. It will increase 2.3 percent instead of 3.3 percent as the mayor had proposed.

The mayor's budget would have resulted in a new rate of \$16.05 and the adopted budget calls for a new rate of

\$15.90 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

The owner of a home assessed at the city average of \$50,000 will see the annual city tax bill go from \$777 to \$795 instead of \$802.50.

The mayor's proposal of an \$8.96 million budget was reduced to \$8.93 million, and the tax levy was reduced from his proposal of \$3.22 million to \$3.18 million.

The 2002 budget totaled \$8.3 million and carried a tax levy of \$3.12 million.

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