

## County re-evaluating wants, needs

Written by Deb Egenberger  
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### Commissioners try to hold line on tax increase.

LEXINGTON—There's a difference between updating a wardrobe with a stylish new pair of shoes and replacing old soles that are worn clear through.

It's a separation between wants and needs.

When Dawson County officials submitted their budget requests to commissioners earlier this month, the total came out a little higher than board members hoped.

To accommodate all that was requested—\$26.6 million in expenses—the county would have to increase the tax levy from last year's 38.9 cents per \$100 property value to nearly 45 cents.

That kind of jump in taxes makes commissioners uncomfortable.

So during their regular monthly meeting on Friday, county board members met with elected officials and department heads asking that they get rid of the wants in their budgets and leave only the needs.

Essentially, that means cutting out the Prada shoes and settling for Keds.

Board chairman Bill Stewart was quick to tell officials not to misunderstand. The county is not broke.

"We have built up about \$1.5 million in reserve," said clerk Karla Zlatkovsky, "but we really don't want to have to touch it."

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So each county office is being asked to take back its budget and do some trimming and prioritizing.

To keep the county levy at or near what it was last fiscal year, roughly \$840,000 will have to be cut.

That's not an enormous amount, said Gothenburg commissioner Dean Kugler who serves on the county finance committee.

"Every little bit here and there helps," Kugler said.

That may mean holding off adding an employee in one office or eliminating the purchase of a large equipment item in another.

"The commissioners have some areas where we will make cuts as well," Kugler said.

For one, health insurance claims were so high last year that commissioners originally budgeted

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