

Commissioners consider budget requests

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 07 July 2011 13:38 -

Agencies want county contributions.

LEXINGTON—As Dawson County commissioners begin crunching numbers for the 2011-12 budget, agencies have started requesting money for their individual operations.

The county board heard two such requests and approved two unrelated contracts for the coming year during the regular bimonthly meeting on Friday morning,

County clerk Karla Zlatkovsky said not all agencies which request money from the county will come before the board. Many simply submit written budget documents.

Jennifer Soncksen, executive director of the Parent-Child Center, is one agency head who visits commissioners each year to give them an update on services and funding.

Soncksen told the board the Parent-Child Center serves victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse in Dawson and Gosper counties.

In 2010, 317 victims received services through the center which include legal advocacy, criminal justice support, resource referrals, emergency shelter, transportation and financial assistance.

The center, which will operate under a \$286,000 budget for the 2011-12 fiscal year, will lose between \$9,000 and \$12,000 in funding from grant cutbacks

Soncksen requested \$15,000 from the county for the operating budget.

Commissioners will consider the request when the budget is adopted in September.

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Barb Vondras, executive director of the Dawson County Historical Society, also approached commissioners for funding.

She asked for \$31,000 for the historical society in addition to \$2,094 for the Robert Henri Historical Society and \$1,561 for the Gothenburg Historical Society.

Vondras said visits to the Dawson County Historical Museum have not dropped dramatically as may have been expected with rising fuel costs and expected reductions in travel.

She said there were 9,693 visitors in 2010.

Vondras' funding request for the historical society will be considered with the county's general budget.

Both the request from the Parent-Child Center and the Dawson County Historical Society were the same as last year's request.

In other business, commissioners approved contracts for wildlife control services and conflict attorneys.

Wildlife specialist Seth Tausan told the board he and other U.S. Fish & Wildlife employees spent 900 hours covering 45,000 acres in Dawson County last year. He said there was \$48,000 in private property damaged by wild animals.

Tausan said beaver complaints were numerous, likely caused by high river waters that pushed the animals to new areas.

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He also deals with complaints about coyotes, badgers, raccoons, opossums, skunks and other wild animals.

The contract payment for \$9,132 did not increase from last year.

The board also accepted contracts for conflict attorneys Jeff Wightman and Ken Harbison.

Dawson County public defender Derek Mitchell told the board that having the conflict attorneys on contract saves on the amount spent for court appointed attorneys who are paid \$100 per hour for their services.

Harbison will receive \$3,783 per month and Wightman, who carries a larger load, will get \$4,770 per month.

In other action, the board:

learned members of the board's roads committee have been watching micro-surfacing projects in Lincoln County. The process may be something Dawson County will try in the future to resurface paved roads.

heard the Railroad Transportation Safety District has interviewed three engineering firms for the east viaduct project in Lexington. Commissioner Butch Hagan said the final selection will be announced after the state has approved the project design.

authorized chairman Dean Kugler to sign a contract with Susan Advay as the county's juvenile services facilitator. The position is paid for entirely with a \$21,636 county aid grant from the state crime commission.

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voted to adopt the cafeteria/flex plan presented by First Concord, a company endorsed by the Nebraska Association of County Officials. The plan allows county employees to have money from their salaries set aside pre-tax for medical and child care expenses. Commissioner PJ Jacobson said it could save employees 30% on those costs.

reviewed a list of deleted inventory totalling \$416,707. The county retains \$21 million in inventory including \$13 million in buildings and \$8 in equipment.

set hearings for valuation protests to begin July 15, following the next regular meeting. Commissioners will hear 230 protests, up from 219 last year.