

New county budget passes

Written by Deb Egenberger

Thursday, 22 September 2011 15:03 - Last Updated Thursday, 22 September 2011 15:12

Increase in tax asking mostly cost of business.

LEXINGTON—The cost of everything is going up, from the price of fuel to a single ream of paper.

County commissioners did what they could to keep the 2011-12 budget in check, raising the tax asking roughly \$500,000 from last year.

County board members approved the new budget during their regular bimonthly meeting on Sept. 16.

“Part of the increase comes from about \$130,000 less in state aid,” commissioner Bill Stewart of Lexington explained. “The rest is simply the cost of doing business going up.”

Stewart said when budget calculations began, the county was looking at a 2-cent increase in the levy.

With a few cuts across the board, he said the levy holds steady at 40.4 cents per \$100,000 in valuation.

County residents who did not see an increase in valuation won't see much of a change in the county's tax bill although valuation did increase 8% overall.

Lexington commissioner Butch Hagan encouraged property owners to look closely at their tax statements.

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“Just because you pay taxes to a county office doesn’t mean the county gets it all,” Hagan said.

In fact, the county receives roughly 19% of the total tax bill.

That percentage varies depending on where the taxpayer lives.

For most county residents, 50% to 60% of the total tax bill goes to the local school.

“You’d be surprised how many people don’t even look at the breakdown,” Hagan said.

In other action, commissioners decided against entering into an agreement with the Central Platte Natural Resources District and Tri-Basin NRD as a group effort to combat possible ice jams on the Platte River between Gothenburg and Columbus.

Emergency management director Brian Woldt told the board he cannot find record of either damaging ice jams on the river through Dawson County nor any sort of previous agreement.

The contract, had commissioners agreed, would have cost the county \$3,450 initially.

In other business, county board members:

opened discussion with John Lawton of Overton concerning a tract of land north of Overton that he purchased in 2006 and has been paying taxes on since. Lawton said he was told by the county surveyor that the land belongs to the county. Commissioners agreed to look further into the ownership of the land.

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heard the monthly crime report from sheriff Gary Reiber. There were 1,465 calls to dispatch in August with 1,019 calls for service and 186 new jail bookings.

discussed possible changes to the employee expense form. Employees traveling for county business are currently allowed specific reimbursable amounts per meal, which some believe is too low. One suggested change would set a total amount per day while another recommendation was for increasing the per meal allowance.

County employees will work collectively toward a proposal commissioners will consider next month.