

Higher value means county levy will drop

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Tax asking up only .6%.

LEXINGTON—Because property values increased more than 5% from last year, Dawson County officials will be able to raise the county's tax asking slightly and still drop the levy.

Commissioners will consider the 2009-10 budget following a public hearing at their Sept. 15 meeting.

The numbers are not final, said finance committee members Bill Stewart of Lexington and Dean Kugler of Gothenburg. Still, preliminary figures give a solid indication of where the budget is going.

As it stands now, the total county budget is at \$22.1 million.

"It's hard to believe we need \$22 million to run this county," Kugler said during Tuesday's regular bimonthly county board meeting.

But not all of those dollars are likely to be spent.

Kugler explained that the county has applied for several grants and has been told to expect some federal stimulus dollars for various types of projects.

If those revenues are not included in the budget, they cannot be spent if awarded, Kugler said.

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“We’re not going to get all of the money we’ve asked for, that’s for sure,” Kugler said, “but we have to put it in the budget anyway.”

That possible income makes it look as though the county’s spending is going up, Stewart said, when in reality it has stayed relatively stable.

The tax asking will only increase \$40,000, a minimal amount in the grand scheme of things.

“I think that’s a key element here,” Stewart said. “We’re not asking for much more this year.”

Some significant changes were made to the budget, said county clerk Karla Zlatkovsky, but only in position of numbers.

For instance, money for the dispatch center previously filtered through the general fund will now have a separate line in the budget for better record keeping.

At the same time, DARE and county relief will be moved from their own appropriation lines into the general fund.

“It just kind of cleans things up,” Zlatkovsky said.

The only area where the county expects to spend significantly more is in the road department.

Kugler said an increase of \$1.2 million in the roads budget leaves room for federal funding for a couple of projects should money be awarded as well as planning for overdue highway overlays.

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During their Tuesday meeting, commissioners approved levy allocations for the 14 political subdivision in the county including hospital districts, fire districts and cemetery districts.

This year, the Railroad Transportation Safety District was also included in the list. Taxes were collected for the RTSD last year but the budget item was handled differently.

Commissioners also approved an additional 1% increase to the budget base, a formality the board votes on every year as a precaution against emergency spending.

In other business, the county board:

tabled a youth detention services contract with Scottsbluff County as well as a three-year contract with Maximus. County attorney Liz Waterman said the detention services contract had not been completed and she still had questions about the Maximus contract.

Maximus is a company which compiles an allocation plan for offices that administer federal programs and are entitled to reimbursement such as child support collection.

accepted inventories from county departments.

heard a presentation for insurance services from Larry Pelan of the Nebraska Intergovernmental Risk Management Association (NIRMA) which offers pool insurance programs to cover such areas as law enforcement liability, employee dishonesty and crime, workers compensation and loss prevention. Commissioners will consider a quote for the insurance services at a future meeting.