

Hospital board looks over budget

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including salaries and wages, professional fees, purchased services, travel, utilities, insurance and interest.

"The staffing levels will take some time to make adjustments," Laue said. "We are taking a look at a report about hospital staffing to give us some ideas. Many hospitals are trying to be more flexible in their staffing.

"The problem is that you are not sure what is coming in the door each day."

Salaries and wages were \$3,482,649 in 2000 compared to \$3,255,021 in 1999. The salaries budget for 2000 was \$3,319,096.

On the professional fees, Laue said this was mostly from a higher renegotiated contract with the anesthetist. The total expense for the year was \$493,198 compared to \$461,156 from 1999.

Purchased services include the contracts for mobile nuclear medicine, mobile MRI services and a mobile ultrasound truck. The cost for these in 1999 was \$340,093 while they ballooned to \$456,199 in 2000.

Board members asked why there was still a mobile ultrasound when the hospital had purchased an ultrasound system.

Laue said that there is no one at the hospital qualified to handle the procedures done by the mobile service. He said it might be possible to do these at the hospital if someone can be trained.

Laue said there is also a possible addition to the contracts which would be from a mobile radiologist out of Dodge City. He said he would be gathering more information on this to present at the next board meeting.

The real problem with the current purchased services are that they cost a flat rate per procedure while the hospital does not always receive the same amount in payment from the patient, Laue said.

"We charge what we can, but we do not always get enough to actually pay for the service," he said. "Mainly, the Medicare is a higher cost than the reimbursement. It is a costly service, but one we feel we need to have."

He said the travel expenses have dropped over the past two months, and he expects that to be much lower than the \$51,034 spent in 2000.

The hospital utilities, like everyone's, have increased with the total for 2000 of \$194,253. That is about \$10,000 higher than anticipated, and \$16,000 higher than 1999.

The interest and depreciation was over budget because of the purchase of the new CT, or "cat," scanner, he said. Interest paid in 2000 was \$56,156, over twice the \$27,515 paid in 1999. The 2000 budget for interest was \$33,276. Depreciation increased from \$744,634 in 1999 to \$857,272 in 2000. Again Laue said this was because of the new equipment.

Other expenses increased from

\$191,948 in 1999 to \$240,323 in 2000. Laue said this item includes all the hospital's airplane expenses, and there had been an expensive repair bill in the summer.

Laue was asked if the 2000 Chevy Tahoe had been sold. He said it had not yet because it had been in the shop, but that it has now been fixed and they will be taking bids on it in the next few weeks.

A possible answer to some of the hospital problems may be in the new federal budget relief act Laue said. There is a category for a "critical access hospital," and he thinks with the recent changes in the requirements, the Goodland hospital could qualify.

Under the critical access hospital designation, services would be reimbursed on a cost basis. He told the board one of the requirements is that the average length of stay be no more than four days, and Goodland's average is 2.9 days.

He said the number of beds and other requirements are more liberal in the new regulations, which might make it so that the hospital can qualify and continue to provide the same services.

Board member Larry McCants said it was possible the designation would help the hospital fight its way back to break-even.

"We might have a fighting chance financially," he said.

The next board meeting will be 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26.

Clean up crew



Twins Kevin (right) and Kyle Schulte scooped snow Wednesday morning from the sidewalk in front of the Goodland Activities Center. They were helped by their younger brother, Korey. Their parents and Ed and Becky Schulte.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

School one step closer to college

COLLEGE, from Page 1

as two weeks from today. If everything goes as planned, he said, the bill will be signed by April 15 and go into effect immediately.

Of course, Morrison added, anything can happen between now and then. Lawmakers could slip other issues or names of other technical schools into the bill, he said, which could hurt its chances. But he isn't expecting that.

"The leadership in the House and Senate are behind it," Morrison said. "I don't anticipate any problems."

Keirns said the school is hoping the bill will be signed in March so they can start making changes before the school year ends.

He doesn't expect a fuss, he said, because the bill won't cost the state anything. Keirns said the new college will continue to get the same amount of state money each year.

Besides the change in name and services, Keirns noted, the technical school is looking to change its accred-

iting agency.

Now, he said, the institution is accredited as a "technical school" by the Kansas Department of Education, but it wants to be accredited as a "technical college" by the Council of Occupational Education.

Keirns said a four-member team representing the council will come to Goodland in early April to look over

the school's curriculum, facilities and instructors. He said administrators are now making sure the school meets the council guidelines.

When the council meets in June, Keirns said, they will decide whether to accredit the school. By that time, he said, he hopes the school is no longer a school, and the sign out front reads, "Northwest Kansas Technical College."

Cap on revenue from school levy possible

TOPEKA (AP) — The opening salvo has been fired in the 2001 battle over school finance.

The Senate Taxation and Assessment Committee considered a proposal Wednesday to cap the state's revenue from the property tax levy for public education at the amount collected in the current budget year.

Sen. Stan Clark, R-Oakley, offered the amendment as the committee reviewed a bill reauthorizing the levy for another two years.

The levy is currently set at 20 mills. A mill is one dollar of taxation for every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value.

In the current budget year, the levy is expected to raise about \$380 million. The same 20 mills are expected to raise

\$403 million in 2003 and \$423 million in 2004 as property values rise.

Clark's measure would encourage the state to reduce the levy from 20 mills if it generated revenue greater than the amount raised this year. If the state decided to collect extra money and keep the mill levy unchanged, the Legislature would have to pass a resolution stating its intent.

"I think this sets a good example for the state," Clark said. The committee did not vote on his proposal.

Former Senate President Dick Bond got a similar "truth in taxation" law on the books in 1999 for cities and counties. That law replaced a lid on the amount of money local governments could raise from property taxes.

The Senate committee is considering reauthorizing the levy, a major source of money for public education. If legislators do not pass a bill, the state will have to find other sources — increasing sales or income taxes — to finance schools.

Placing a cap on the dollars raised also could hurt efforts by education advocates to increase spending on public schools.

The Legislature imposed the levy in 1992 when it rewrote the state's school finance formula. Under the Kansas Constitution, the state cannot impose a property tax levy for more than two years.

The 1992 levy was 35 mills, but legislators reduced it in the following years.

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