

Smaller pumper truck will help drop tax levy

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
The Goodland Fire Department will look for a new pumper that will fit in its existing building, and property owners will see a slight decline in their tax bills this fall.

Scott Gilmer, city fire chief since May, told the city commissioners at a budget workshop on Tuesday that he had \$50,000 in his budget for a two-bay building to house a new fire engine the city has been saving up to buy.

He said the existing bay is too

short for a new, larger truck.

Commissioner Josh Dechant asked if the fire department could buy a pumper that would fit in an existing bay.

Gilmer said he could work with a smaller engine, but the one the department has is 19 years old and needs to be replaced.

The commissioners agreed to have Gilmer find a smaller pumper that would fit in the existing bay. The commissioners did include \$7,000 for new hydraulic extraction equipment for the rescue truck.

Gilmer said he was learning a lot about being the fire chief, and that City Clerk Mary Volk and City Manager Wayne Hill had helped him with the budget. He said the fire department is in pretty good shape, but he would like to buy a new compressor to refill the individual air packs the firemen wear into a burning building.

The commissioners agree that was important, and asked Volk if it could be purchased now.

"This is something that you may not want to wait on," Mayor Rick

Billinger said.

Gilmer said he had called and found a price of \$14,000, but now the company is saying that may not be right. He said it could be closer to \$16,000 to \$17,000.

"There are two things we don't scrounge on," Billinger said, "and safety is one."

Dechant asked Gilmer if he thought the price would go up if the city waited until the new budget year. He said it would.

"Do you want to do that now?" Volk asked. "We could take it out of

reserve, but we'd have to replace it next year."

Commissioner Dave Daniels said if the compressor is failing tests now, "What happens if we have a disaster?"

Gilmer said he has plenty of bottles on hand, and in case of a disaster he would call on Colby for help. The chief said he would get some bids and bring them back to the commissioners.

The commissioners agreed to cut the building for a larger pumper out of the fire department budget,

which brought the budget into balance and will drop the overall property tax levy by .42 percent.

Property taxes for the city are estimated to decrease by .24 of a mill to 56.29 mills, over the this year (56.53).

Taking a \$50,000 home as an example, City Clerk Mary Volk said the property taxes would decrease about \$1.32 for the year. Volk said commercial property taxes on a \$50,000 business would decrease about \$2.86 for the year.

Cost of installing water meters could triple, city says

WATER, from Page 1

of employees and help with their cost. A water meter is costing us \$1,200, and we are charging \$300. I think this needs to be addressed."

City Commissioner Josh Dechant said he thought connections should be on a cost plus basis. "I said that last year," Dechant added.

City Commissioner John Garcia said he thought the meter issue had

come up when Kendall Cooper put in Taco John's.

Mayor Rick Billinger said he thought the real stickler in the Taco John's matter was the transformer, not the water. Billinger said the transformer needed there cost about \$3,000. City officials say customers pay for extra costs on electrical hookups.

"There is a set fee for a new business if the service is above ground, depending on the size of the ser-

vice," said city building inspector Steve Criswell. "In the case of Taco John's, it was an underground one, which is more expensive, and the business is charged the additional cost between the actual tap fee and the cost of the underground."

"Everybody pays an electric tap fee, and it is determine by the size of service that is installed. An average 100-amp service would be \$125, and then there is a connect fee and deposits as determined by the

city ordinance."

Billinger agreed with Dechant that the city ought to recover the cost of materials on water connections, but he said he was not sure about the labor, which he said is sort of a grey area.

Hill said he would work up a resolution for the commission changing the water meter charge to cost plus. Garcia said he wanted to see the figures on the costs.

Rich Simon, public works man-

ager, said a one-inch tap is costing the city about \$1,800 for materials and labor. He said the two-inch meter is more, adding that the cost of copper has shot up in the past year.

Commissioner Dave Daniels said he thought the cost had been lower when the \$300 tap fee was set.

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City budget up 8.5 percent; property tax levy drops

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budget. The commissioners agreed the development office is important, noting that the were glad to see director Tiffani McMinn getting things moving ahead.

City Manager Wayne Hill, who was hired 11 months ago, said he has learned a lot and continues to learn every day.

"I enjoy working with the people of this community and especially the city employees, who have the desire to excel," Hill said. "I know there are times when you get complaints about people standing around and watching one person

shoveling or down in a manhole. I think that is deceiving.

"The city employees are exceptional and go above and beyond in their efforts to make this a good city. Being a city employee is not always

easy, and deserves a pat on the back and giving them a nod for the good things they do."

Hill said the budget includes a 5 percent for merit raises, and a raise for the volunteer firemen from \$20

a run to \$22.

He said the budget includes money to match grants the city is working on. He said Amy Thorson, his executive assistant, has taken some grant-writing courses.

Air conditioning to Cool off library approved

LIBRARY, from Page 1

air conditioning, the library budget of \$155,073 would be covered by increasing the property tax levy to 6.2552 mills from the present 4.3401, or a 1.92 mill increase to cover putting the \$37,500 back into the capital reserve.

Volk said splitting the replacement of the air conditioning cost allows the whole city budget to stay within the current property-tax levy.

Volk said the total city budget had to be increased by about \$78,455 because of the Neighborhood Revitalization property tax rebate pro-

gram, and that was split among the city departments. She said the library budget went up about \$10,000 because of the rebate program.

"The rebate program has to be figured into the total budget," Volk said. "It is part of the total city valuation, even though the city won't get but a small part of it back."

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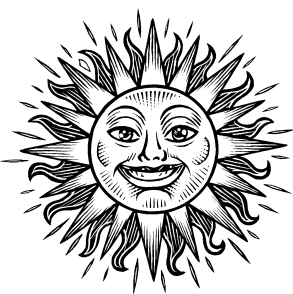
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