

Property taxes remain stable

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
Sherman County property taxes will remain about the same next year, county commissioners decided Thursday morning as they approved a balanced budget for next year.

County departments had asked for spending increases which could have boosted taxes by as much as a third, but commissioners trimmed and stuffed the requests into the current tax rates.

On Tuesday, they met with Sheriff Kevin Butts, County Attorney Bonnie Selby, Public Works Manager Curt Way and noxious weed manager Daryl West to look for ways to bring the budget down.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said he had an idea of how to cover most of what needs to be done, and make some cuts to keep the property tax increase under half a mill at most.

The draft estimate on Tuesday was about \$181,000 higher than last year, and Rasure suggested adding \$65,000 to the general fund to be used to spray weeds and hire a part time or full time person.

He suggested adding \$35,000 to the prairie dog bait fund, jumping the total to \$55,000.

That would add a total of \$281,000, Rasure said.

To get the budget back in line, Rasure suggested cuts of \$25,000 in the sheriff's budget, reducing repairs to buildings by \$10,000, reducing the computer capital outlay by \$10,000 and cutting road and bridge capital outlay by \$120,000.

The other \$100,000 would come out of capital outlay, he said, reducing the estimated budget from \$150,000 to \$75,000 and cutting the transfer to the capital improvement fund down to \$75,000.

The cuts would total \$265,000, leaving a difference of \$63,000, Rasure said. The estimate was that the property tax levy might go up as much as a mill after all the adjustments.

Thursday morning Commissioners Mitch Tiede and Chuck Thomas agreed to cut an additional \$50,000

out of the road and bridge capital outlay to reduce the property tax increases to about \$13,000 or .244 mills.

"I don't think people will complain about a full mill increase if we needed it," Commissioner Tiede said.

Commissioner Thomas said he thought that was a reasonable increase.

"I think people will support that," he said. "That is not a large increase."

"I want to keep the property tax down this year," Rasure said. "I think there will be more money coming in next year and help change the trend we are on. This will keep the taxes down."

Thomas asked if the roof repairs for the Bastille could come out of the building repair fund. County Clerk Janet Rumpel said it could.

Tiede asked where the \$170,000 would be cut out of road and bridge.

"I think some of his (Curt Way, public works manager) estimates are high for this year," Rasure said, "and I think some of the capital outlay is high even if he does what he expects to do."

"I agree," Tiede said. "I think it will work."

On the cuts for the sheriff, Thomas said that could come from the roof repairs and not getting a new car for the investigator he plans to hire.

Rasure said it would be up to the sheriff and road and bridge to determine where the actual cuts came from, but it would reduce their budgets by that amount.

The commissioners agreed to the changes Thursday, and Rumpel will have the numbers rechecked for a final review on Tuesday.

Rumpel said if the commissioners approve the budget with the changes, it could be published on Friday, Sept. 22, and the hearing could be held on Tuesday, Oct. 3.

The commissioners will meet in special session at 5 p.m. on Monday in joint session with the city commission to approve the agreement on the joint road-streets bond issue that was sold on Tuesday.

Gas leak fixed at Steever Water Park



City worker Neal Thornburg dug underneath a broken two-inch gas line at Steever Water Park on Monday afternoon after an Aquila employee had clamped off the plastic line. The city crew was digging a trench to install the new heat pump system when they cut the line that provides gas to the pool. Fire and police units rushed to block off the area, and as a precaution people at the High Plains Museum and Pizza

Hut were evacuated until the line was under control. Aquila workers got down into the hole and shut off the rushing gas. Aquila employee Chris Bauman (with hard hat) held onto the clamp as he waited for a splice to be brought to fix the break. City employees who helped were Dale Davis (left) and Eric Smith.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

Student gets nod to participate

By Pat Schiefen
The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland School Board decided Monday night that a student taking most of his classes on-line would need to meet the same eligibility standards as regular students — passing six classes — to participate in extra curricular activities.

The student, who wasn't named, also takes two classes at Goodland High School, Superintendent Shelly Angelos said.

She said she felt that all students should meet the same eligibility requirements, and the board passed a motion to that effect.

Dual enrollment will become a bigger issue as more students take classes on-line, Angelos said. The

Kansas State High School Activities Association requires only that a student be passing five classes to participate in sports or activities.

Board members asked how the school would check on a student's grades in on-line classes. Angelos said the district will have to develop a procedure.

The superintendent said she has been checking into virtual schools. That type of schooling is so new, she said, that most do not have a full curriculum. Virtual schools offer their classes on-line so they can be taken anywhere with a computer.

She said the district will have to decide whether it will offer its own virtual courses or sanction outside ones. Presently, she said, the district

offers classes from Greenbush Southeast Kansas Education Service Center.

Angelos said she had talked to the Southwest Plains Regional Service Center in Sublette, adding that Southwest and Greenbush classes are taught by certified teachers.

She said that having students enrolled elsewhere other than Greenbush or Southwest, the district could lose state money. Having students in those programs does not affect the population count of a school, she said.

Right now, students at Goodland

High School take eight classes, principal Harvey Swager said. He asked if that meant on-line students would need to take eight classes too.

Angelos said the board would need to iron out more details.

Board member Fritz Doka said there are 35 registered home schools in the district, mostly families who school their own children. The registration does not cost anything and the state does not check them, he said.

He wondered if virtual classes couldn't be used for home schooled students.

People can support community projects

If you want to support the Fourth of July fireworks, the carnival rides at the fair or restoration of the Goodland nativity scene, the Sherman County Community Foundation can help.

Money donated to the foundation can go to pay for the fireworks display, purchase and maintenance of carnival rides or work on the nativity scene, said President Kin Huang.

The foundation also has a general fund and manages the Derrick Lutter memorial scholarship and the Eugene Hall memorial scholarship, she said. Any amount of money can be donated to the foundation and earmarked for a particular project.

From the money raised this year, she said, the fund paid Joe Diaz for this summer's fireworks display

and has \$2,816 for next year. The display costs around \$7,000 a year.

Restoration of the Nativity Scene is headed by Jeanette Foust, one of the original artists for the murals. Connie Hatcher, another of the original artists, has been helping.

Around \$14,000 raised so far, Huang said, but more will be needed. The restoration cost is estimated between \$20,000 and \$25,000, said Josh Dechant, vice

president of Bankwest and a member of the group organizing the restoration.

The newest fund set up under the foundation is for the purchase and maintenance of carnival rides, Huang said. The carnival is run by volunteers with Sherman County Community Services, which owns the rides and runs them during the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair and other events.

The foundation has nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service and all money donated to it is tax deductible, she said.

corrections

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