

Commissioners adopt 2009 budget

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Phillips County Commissioners adopted the 2009 county budget Tuesday, Dec. 9. The county mill levy has remained at 28.28 since 1992, and the commissioners again adopted the mill levy of 28.28.

	2008 Mill Levies	2009 Levies
General Fund	21.45	21.45
Road & Bridge	4.23	4.23
Social Service	1.60	1.60
Capital Expenditure	1.00	1.00
TOTALS	28.28	28.28

The county general fund budget was increased from \$2,316,755 in 2008 to \$2,352,540 in 2009. Changes in the 2009 budget include limited capital expenditure requests, a flat \$35/month of additional pay per qualified employee, regular employee step increases and increased health care costs.

Most other budget items remain stable. The salary compensation plan put in place Jan. 1, 2000 will not be adjusted for cost of living in 2009. Commissioners said there is simply not enough new revenue to cover any increase.

The county's health insurance increased eight percent overall, primarily due to heavy usage. The county picks up the lion's share of the increase, but employees also pay from 20-35 percent of the premium, depending on their plans. Their costs increased proportionally.

Phillips County received some major capital outlay requests from elected officials and department heads for 2009. Major requests include another vehicle for the Sheriff's Office at \$22,100; a software upgrade for the Treasurer's Office for \$57,376; replacement of the courthouse steps and sidewalk for \$20,700; and a \$5,000 ATV for the weed district.

Road and Bridge again submitted requests for new maintainers and a new loader in 2009. Those purchases are under review and will only be possible if major grants are obtained.

Sheriff Rob Urbach has been able to hire a fourth officer in the Sheriff's Office. This was made possible by a court security grant which is paying 70 percent of the costs.

The Sheriff's Office currently is staffed with four people: the Sheriff, UnderSheriff, a deputy and a court security officer. Commissioners said they would like to see ways the county and two municipal law enforcement forces can work together to more efficiently serve the citizenry.

The Road and Bridge budget went from \$1,601,885 in 2008 to \$1,682,737 in 2009. The increase in spending will only become a reality if the board decides to seek and is successful in obtaining major grants to help with the purchase of new capital equipment.

Highway Users Tax Funds from federal and state gas taxes continue to be the major revenue for Road and Bridge. The estimated HUTF income for 2009 is \$950,685, down \$1,480 from 2008 projections. The mill levy for Road and Bridge will remain at 4.23 for 2009.

Commissioners added that in 2008, Road and Bridge again worked very little overtime, hired limited part-time summer help and purchased almost no capital equipment—all in an effort to bring the road and bridge fund balance back up.

County Commissioners hope to finish "raising the roof" on the new Event Center. The fund raising efforts and grant seeking still continue for the final amount needed.

The revised estimated cost is \$3.4 million. To date, \$3,066,302 has been committed or is in hand. Commissioners said the response has been exciting as the amount raised locally nears

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\$650,000. The committee is hoping residents will take the opportunity to invest in this project and raise the last \$375,414 still needed.

Other county fund budgets include the Social Services Fund \$723,358, which is an increase of \$28,500 over last year; Contingency Fund at \$157,000; Conservation Trust (lottery funds) of \$79,000; E911 Fund Budget of \$66,650; and the Economic Development Fund with a budget of \$21,000.

The County Fair Fund again has a 2009 budget of \$88,575. The county will give \$11,500 of tax funds toward that effort, which is the same amount given in 2008. The Fair Board utilizes ticket sales, contributions, income from stock car races and the current fund balance to fund the remaining amount.

While the county does maintain and improve the facilities at the fairgrounds, those funds are taken out of the General Fund allocation for fairgrounds improvement. The county will also continue to provide \$4,000 toward the Haxtun Corn Festival.