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Stoddard County Commissioners Hold 2023 Budget Hearing

FEBRUARY 01ST 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Stoddard County Commissioner Carol Jarrell made a motion to open the 2023 budget hearing. This was seconded by commissioner Greg Lintz. And the hearing opened with a 3-0 vote.

Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis went through the budget briefly for those in attendance during the hearing. Mathis opened by asking that Jarrell and Lintz to look at the equipment and remodeling budget. He said the collector/treasurer's office had a budget that was \$6,000 less than the previous year.

Mathis said Stoddard County Collector Josh Speakman sent the commission Missouri Statute 52.317 that said the budget of his office may not be less than the previous year. Mathis said Speakman does not anticipate any remodeling but for legal reasons the budget was adjusted to what it was the previous year.

Mathis then called their attention to Legal Delinquency and Status Offenses. Mathis said the juvenile office received an email from the state that said whenever delinquency issues occur within the county's school districts, those juveniles will now be represented by the public defenders office. Mathis stated these attorneys would come out of St. Louis when their schedule permitted. Rather than potentially bogging down delinquency issues within a school administration \$30,000 was put in the budget for a local attorney to handle the cases. Mathis said these cases could be handled on a weekly basis rather than wait for an attorney out of St. Louis.

Mathis pointed out a \$37,000 increase to the juvenile office. He said this was simply due to the addition of a new employee.

Mathis then addressed the coroner's office and the refrigeration rental for storage of deceased individuals while the coroner's office worked on the case. Mathis was renting refrigeration space to the Stoddard County Coroner's office \$650 due to the county not having its own facility. Mathis said he stopped charging the county for this service once he presiding commissioner.

Mathis said he called the ethics commission prior to taking office and found this service could be bid out and if no one bid he could legally collect the \$650 a month rent. Mathis said with everything that has gone on in the commissioners' office the last year it would be better if this went away. He said the money he had collected via the rent went to Midwest Crematory.

Next Mathis went to the Sheriff's Commissary Fund. He stated that the Sheriff's Department has had a part time nurse and has requested it become a full time job. The Sheriff's Department has direct video and audio with Southeast Health. This allows the nurse to communicate with a doctor and address an inmates' medical needs without transporting the inmate to a clinic. This will save the county both time and money.

The inmate will still be transported to a medical facility if the situation requires it. The Stoddard County General Revenue Fund and the Sheriff's Department will each pay half of the salary and benefits for the nurse position.

Mathis said the sheriff's salary is now mandated by the state. This is why there is an increase on this. Mathis said that the sheriff got a pay bump in the middle of last year plus back pay to meet state statutes.

Employees and office holders were given a three percent pay raise. Mathis said the commission and office holders did a good job with the budget, Mathis stated that he wanted to keep this budget as close to last year's as possible and this was a good budget.

In the 2023 budget the county has \$5,794,913.92 in total accumulated revenue along with \$15,801,625 in new revenue for a total of \$121,596,538.92. The county has \$21,532,694 in budget expenditures which covers salaries, benefits, utilities and any other expense that one of the county offices could incur. The county has a revenue surplus of \$63,844.92 in the 2023 budget.

Commissioner Carol Jarrell motioned to accept budget, Commissioner Greg Lintz seconded. The budget passed with a 3-0 vote.

Article by by JOSH AYERS, Editor of the Dexter Statesman

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