

## Commissioners adopt budget

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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Phillips County Commissioners adopted the 2011 County budget Dec. 14. The County mill levy has remained at 28.28 since 1992. The commissioners again adopted the mill levy of 28.28.

The County's assessed value has decreased \$5,932,510 from \$58,329,710 in 2009 to \$52,397,200 in 2010. There was \$358,300 of new construction in the County; however, there was a significant drop in the value of natural gas production. Overall property tax collection will decrease for the County by \$167,771.

### 2009 and 2010 Mill Levies

General Fund  
2009 21.45  
2010 21.45

Road and Bridge Fund  
2009 4.23  
2010 4.23

Social Service Fund  
2009 1.60  
2010 1.60

Capital Expenditure Fund  
2009 1.00  
2010 1.00

### TOTALS

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□□□□ **2009** □ **28.28**

□□□□ **2010** □ **28.28**

General Fund budget was increased from \$2,533,509 in 2010 to \$2,597,036 in 2011. Changes in the 2011 budget include limited capital expenditure requests, a flat \$28/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 2011.

Phillips County's health insurance increased eight percent overall. This climb is due to increasing health care costs. Approximately one-half of the increase is due to mandated benefit increases which were part of the new national health care plan that was adopted by Congress last year and went into effect in September.

The County picks up the lion's share of the increase, but employees also pay 20-35 percent of the premium, depending on their plan. Their costs increased proportionately.

The board reviewed a number of major capital outlay requests. They include a new car for the Sheriff's Department, new computers for the Courthouse offices, the Courthouse steps project, major equipment purchases for Road and Bridge, a new second sprayer pickup and equipment for a roll off service at the landfill.

The Sheriff's car and the Courthouse steps projects have been approved. Other requests are under review and still need final approval.

Road and Bridge budget went from \$1,743,785 in 2010 to \$1,750,111 in 2011. 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 purchase of new capital equipment.

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Highway Users Tax Funds (HUTF) from federal and state gas taxes continue to be the major revenue for Road and Bridge. The estimated HUTF income for 2010 is \$1,071,513, up \$130,702 from 2010 projections. The mill levy for Road and Bridge will remain at 4.23 for 2011.

In 2010, the County Road and Bridge department again worked very little overtime, hired very limited part-time summer help and purchased a very limited amount of capital equipment, all in an effort to bring the Road and Bridge Fund balance back up.

Commissioners were able to complete the Phillips County Event Center project in 2010. Fundraising did fall short of costs by approximately \$350,000. They put in place a \$550,000, six-year lease-purchase agreement as the project ended to pay for the balance of the project.

2010-2012 pledges still coming in will pay for part of that agreement. The balance will come out of the Capital Expenditure Fund. Donors are still currently making contributions and will still receive the 28.5 percent tax credit.

Major project on tap for 2011 is the Homesteaders' "Yes, Everyone Can Play" playground and park improvement project. The County will be reapplying for a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant this spring to fund this project.

Other County fund budgets include the Social Services Fund \$679,772, which is a decrease of \$95,784 from last year; Contingency Fund at \$165,317; Conservation Trust (lottery funds) of \$22,500; E911 Fund Budget of \$108,500; and the Economic Development Fund with a budget of \$22,500.

Capital Expenditure Fund has a budget of \$2,801,000. A majority of that is a pass through grant from the Department of Energy for the NECO Wind Project south and west of Haxtun.

County Fair Fund has a 2011 budget of \$97,050. The County will give \$11,500 of tax funds toward that effort, which is the same amount given in 2010. The Fair Board utilizes ticket sales, contributions, income from stock car races and the current fund balance to fund the remaining amount.

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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.

Phillips County will also continue to provide \$4,000 toward the Haxtun Corn Festival.

### **Other business**

Also in the month of December, Commissioners approved a modification to an existing Intergovernmental Agreement between Phillips County, Holyoke Ambulance Service and the Haxtun Ambulance Service due to the increasing costs of purchasing ambulances.

Each ambulance service has been donating \$3,000 per year to an Ambulance Replacement Fund. The County has been donating \$7,000 to that fund.

The three agreed to increase their annual contribution by \$1,000. The ambulance services will be contributing \$4,000 a year, and the County will increase to \$8,000. The monies are then used to match state grants when County ambulances are replaced every three to four years.

The board approved an upgrade of the mapping software. The parcel maps have been converted and will soon be installed, allowing the County to utilize the mapping programs in a number of County departments.

Primary user will be the assessor's office which will maintain the maps. This information will then be available to the Communications Center, Road and Bridge, Weed District and Planning Department.

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Commissioners received notice the State solid and hazardous waste program fees for landfill trash will be increasing as of April 1, 2011.

The current fees are \$0.09 per vehicle which will move to \$0.13; \$0.17 per non-commercial vehicle which will move to \$0.26; \$0.27 per cubic yard which will move to \$0.39; \$0.90 per ton which will move to \$1.30; \$1.35 per 1,000 gallons which will move to \$1.95; and \$0.23 per ton of contaminated soil which will move to \$0.29.

The board voted to begin passing those fees on to landfill customers as of April 1.

Purchase of a new 2011 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 4-wheel drive pickup from Korf Continental for Road and Bridge District 3 was approved at a price of \$20,732. The unit is on order and should be delivered late January or early February.

In December, the board reviewed a number of natural gas drilling permits for Black Raven Energy issued by the State. Black Raven continues their ambitious drilling program, primarily in the northeast corner of Phillips County. They are also currently installing pipelines to service the new wells as they come on line.

Commissioners also approved adding an option to the County's retirement program. The new option will allow employees to invest their voluntary deferred retirement in a 457 Roth Deferred Compensation Plan if they desire. This will become available to employees after the first of the year. The County itself makes no contributions to this plan.