

County to install new ERP

By Alexa Zoellner Union staff writer | Posted: Friday, September 18, 2015 9:28 am

JEFFERSON — The county's Finance Department is seeking an increase in its budget, as well as \$300,000 in fund balance monies, to begin installing a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors Finance Committee heard on Thursday.

The requested budget is \$451,156 in tax levy, reflecting a \$14,322 increase from 2015 due to an increase in salaries and fringes and cost for continuing disclosure on debt.

During Thursday's budget hearing, the committee approved the Finance Department's budget, advancing it to the full county board of supervisors.

A countywide tax levy of \$26,743,522 is being recommended by the Finance Committee. The proposed levy represents an increase from \$26,510,891 this year.

The proposed overall budget, if adopted, would result in a countywide property tax rate of \$4.3259 per \$1,000 equalized valuation, translating into a 7-cent-per-\$1,000 decrease from last year.

“(The ERP system is) the main operational system to run the day-to-day things within the county,” County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said. “That would replace our existing system, which is fairly old. It's an overall system, so it's not just finance. Pretty much every department would have access to it.”

Wehmeier explained that, depending on what software package the county purchases, the ERP system would end up doing a variety of tasks, including accounting, budgeting, purchase orders, human resource functions such as time-keeping, application tracking and recruiting, management of personnel and project tracking.

“By the time it's done, I think we're talking about half-a-million dollars in costs,” county finance director Brian Lamers said. “We'd probably do a package at a time, like human resources, but we'd still be somewhat connected to our old system, so MIS is going to be a big factor in this and then the financial part of it and looking at departments and who needs what.”

The additional \$200,000 would be budgeted for 2017 due to the fact that the entire processes of installing a new system could take 12 to 18 months, according to Wehmeier and Lamers.

The Finance Department is looking at two possible vendors — Tyler Technologies out of Yarmouth, Maine, and New World of Troy, Mich.

“Something I heard over and over as I was being briefed as the new chairperson for the county board was the need for this,” Jim Schroeder, county board chairperson, said. “Hearing that potential seven-figure price tag, I was thinking, ‘how are we ever going to do this?’ I’m really glad to see we’re getting a start on it.”

The County Library System is seeking an increase in its budget this year, as well. It is looking to increase the budget by \$23,689 from 2015 to a total tax levy amount of \$1,041,235 in 2016, due to an increase in circulations. The library system budget is part of the non-countywide levy which, when added to the countywide levy, equals \$28,620,964.

The Jefferson County Planning and Zoning Department and the Parks Department both have major decreases in their budget requests for 2016.

Planning and Zoning’s requested budget is \$323,637 in tax levy, which is a \$31,302 decrease from 2015 due to an increase in licenses and permits. It also includes a reduction of carryover funds for the Solid Waste Program.

The Parks Department is asking for \$760,167 in tax levy monies, a decrease of \$29,568 from this year.

The primary reasons for the decrease is a reduction in capital items being charged to the tax levy, as well as other operating reductions.

The Finance Committee also heard budget reports from the Medical Examiner’s Office, Human Resources, Emergency Management, Corporation Counsel, Land Information, Veterans’ Services, Central Services, the Fair Park and the District Attorney. All proposed budgets were approved by the Finance Committee.

The Medical Examiner’s Office, which this year became an appointed position as opposed to an elected coroner, had an \$850 decrease from 2015 in its request, for a total of \$99,320.

“This year was a year of transition,” Wehmeier said. “So during that, we’ve had a lot of opportunities to look at operations and best practices.”

There were three main expenditures — indigent disposition, an increased number of autopsies and autopsy transportation.

“After a lot of conversations and looking at other counties, we thought it was the best practice to change who pays for transportation,” Wehmeier said. “Originally, families who had to have an autopsy ended up paying for the transportation, even though the county was the one that ordered the autopsy. So that should be a cost borne by the county versus those families.”

The Human Resources Department requested a budget of \$455,087, which is a \$38,975 increase from this year. The primary reasons for the increase were additional costs for contract

negotiations, administration of the Flexible Spending Program and an additional \$12,500 for professional training for county employees.

Emergency Management sought \$74,224 in tax levy money, a \$302 decrease from 2015.

As a result of the 2008 flooding throughout Jefferson County, the county received grant funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to acquire properties affected by the flood. In 2016, an estimated \$473,600 will be spent to purchase flooded properties using federal and state funding.

The budgets for the Corporation Counsel (\$350,991), Land Information (\$362,066) and Veterans' Services (\$160,363) all increased from 2015 by \$21,579, \$11,920 and \$5,052, respectively.

Central Services (\$654,388), Fair Park (\$70,349) and District Attorney (\$674,578) budgets all decreased from 2015 by \$43,390, \$9,329 and \$42,960, respectively. .