

Finance panel sends proposed levy to county board

By Alexa Zoellner Union staff writer | Posted: Monday, September 21, 2015 8:29 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors Finance Committee concluded its week of budget hearings on Friday by approving the final suggested 2016 property tax levy.

The Finance Committee will be recommending a countywide tax levy of \$26,743,522, of which \$1,138,284 is debt, to the full Jefferson County Board of Supervisors next month. The proposed levy represents an increase over \$26,510,891 this year.

“We gave a tax levy target goal (of \$26,149,469),” County Administrator Ben Wehmeier said during Friday’s session. “Pretty much every department hit it except one.”

Not included in the tax levy are \$838,207 for the Jefferson County Health Department and \$1,039,235 for the county library system. Including the noncountywide funds, the total tax levy is \$28,620,964.

The total tax levy is calculated by adding together estimated expenditures (\$72,005,446) and subtracting estimated revenues (\$39,309,217) and other finance sources (\$4,075,265).

With Jefferson County’s equalized valuation of \$6,177,155,800, the levy calls for a countywide property tax rate of \$4.3294 per \$1,000 equalized valuation. That is a 6-cent-per-\$1,000 decrease from last year.

Also approved on Friday were general revenue and expenditures, the 2016 fee schedule, the county debt service, capital projects, the capital budget and the fund balance policy.

Looking at general revenue and expenditures, the county is expecting total revenues of \$7,889,533 for 2016 and \$817,164 in expenditures, which will provide a \$7,367,457 in tax levy reduction.

A tax levy reduction reduces the overall tax levy by offsetting property taxes as a whole.

“With the general revenues and expenditures, that’s where we account for things like our sales tax and shared revenues,” finance director Brian Lamers explained.

“The only expenditure that may come out of there is contingency. There’s extra revenue over expenditures, so it offsets your property tax as a whole,” Lamers continued. Departments that have tax levy reductions take in more money than what they spend.”

Sales tax revenue increased by \$200,000 and contingency funds are at \$524,964, Lamers explained.

James Braugher, vice chairperson of the Finance Committee, opposed approval of the 2016 fee schedule due to the rise in the majority of Jefferson County Fair Park rates.

No capital projects were budgeted for 2016. For capital items, approximately \$4,197,065 was budgeted in the 2016 tax levy and \$1,051,049 will come from the fund balance.

“Overall, I think it’s a pretty good budget,” Finance Committee Chair Richard Jones said. “We got the capital needs, the Highway Shop paid for, we helped out our employees to the best of our ability and we lowered the mill (tax) rate.”