

## County board to vote on budget on Tuesday

By Alexa Zoellner Union staff writer | Posted: Monday, November 9, 2015 9:30 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Finance Committee will present a single amendment to the proposed 2016 budget to the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

On Oct. 13, Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier presented the county board with a proposed countywide tax levy of \$26,743,522, of which \$1,138,284 is debt. The proposed levy represents an increase over this year's \$26,510,891 levy.

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 non-countywide funds, the total tax levy is \$28,620,964.

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

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

The proposed amendment was presented to the Finance Committee by Supervisor George Jaeckel.

Jaeckel proposed eliminating \$27,000 from the Jefferson County Parks Department capital funds. The funds are planned to be used for replacement of the restroom at Cold Spring, \$15,000, and new pavement at Pohlman Park, \$12,000.

The tax levy would be reduced by \$27,000 and the funds transferred to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office to help offset its proposed capital costs for 2016.

"The (Cold Spring park) is just south of my district and I pass it several times a week," Jaeckel said. "When I saw it on the budget, I stopped in. The restroom is in, I would say, good to almost great condition for a restroom for a county park. I don't see any need for an upgrade."

Jaeckel pointed out that there is no power or running water at the site.

"I also drive by (Pohlman Park) several times a month," he said. "Very seldom do I see any vehicles at all. ... I just can't see us, as a county, spending \$12,000 on pavement for that property."

Parks Department director Joe Nehmer disagreed.

“The restroom at Cold Spring is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)-accessible,” Nehmer said. “Other than that, it really doesn’t function well and it doesn’t smell good. I don’t remember ever a compliment from someone using that facility.”

He said it would “be nice” to update the restroom and make it ADA-accessible.

Nehmer then addressed the parking lot at Pohlman park. Currently the lot is gravel, he explained, and the department would like to pave it.

“We have a new shelter (and) playground there,” Nehmer said. “(If we paved it) we could park vehicles there more efficiently. There would be maintenance, certainly, but you can have quite a bit more maintenance needed with gravel.”

He reminded the Finance Committee members that, in prior meetings, they had said that Jefferson County’s brand is outdoor recreation.

After discussion, committee members voted 2-2 on the amendment, with Supervisors Jim Braugher and Blane Poulson in favor and Supervisors Jennifer Hannemann and Richard Jones opposed.

The vote means that the proposed budget amendment will go before the county board on Tuesday with no recommendation from the Finance Committee for or against it.

If the amendment is passed at county board, the countywide tax levy would become \$26,716,522 and the countywide property tax rate would be \$4.3251 per \$1,000 equalized valuation.