

County reviews budget

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Wednesday, October 12, 2016 8:32 am

JEFFERSON — Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier presented the proposed 2017 budget to the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors Tuesday, noting a slight increase in the countywide tax levy.

“At the end of the day, we have a great balanced budget,” Wehmeier said. “We’re not headed down the path of having debt for our capital projects. We’re not using our reserves to balance our operational revenue. We’re doing it as we need to within the fiscal parameters we’re responsible for.”

He proposed a countywide tax levy of \$27,068,827, of which \$1,134,343 is debt. The proposed levy represents an increase over \$26,743,522 this year.

Not included in the tax levy are funds of \$838,207 for the Jefferson County Health Department and \$1,070,311 for the county library system. Including the noncountywide funds, the total tax levy is \$28,977,345.

The total levy is calculated by adding together estimated expenditures (\$72,138,040) and subtracting estimated revenues (\$38,867,672) and other finance sources (\$4,293,023).

With Jefferson County’s equalized valuation of \$6,299,618,300, the levy calls for a countywide property tax rate of \$4.2969 per \$1,000 equalized valuation, translating into roughly a 3-cents-per-\$1,000 decrease from last year.

“The other part of the equation as we develop the budget is (net new growth),” Wehmeier said. “We are a property tax cap state, but we’re able to capture, if the board chooses, new growth. We actually had a pretty good year versus past years. We’re slightly above the state average.

“We’re netting about 1.26 percent in net new construction,” he continued. “That is \$333,165 of new growth that we can use. We’ve allocated this in the budget.”

Approximately \$225,031 will go toward capital expenditures, and \$108,134 will help with operation and contingency line items, Wehmeier noted.

“Overall, the equalized value with TIF is about 2.64 percent,” he said. “Without the TIF it’s 1.98 percent — a pretty strong year compared with many other counties in the area.”

Property value is frozen for tax purposes in a TIF district and tax revenue from an increase in value, called “increment,” may be used to promote development. The city can spend or lend

money for a number of purposes, including streets or sewers, parking and even direct financing for a development.

“Our general contingency is looking to be \$521,482,” Wehmeier indicated. “Our contingency gives the Finance Committee opportunities to utilize funds for those ‘things that just happen.’

“In the courthouse with the air conditioning this summer was a prime example of ‘things that just happen,’ and we want to have the funds to fix it, so we try to make sure we have sufficient funds available to take care of those items you can’t plan for as they come about,” he added.

There also are two contingency line items: Vested Benefit Contingency, \$290,000, and UW Contingency, \$28,000.

A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 25, for public comment on the proposed budget. All amendments from county board supervisors are due by Nov. 8 and will be reviewed by the Finance Committee on Nov. 10. The 2017 budget with amendments is slated to be approved on Monday, Nov. 14.

The proposed 2017 budget is to be posted online today for public viewing at www.jeffersoncountywi.gov.

In other business, the council:

- Authorized entry into a contract for asbestos/hazardous material removal and disposal for the former Jefferson County Highway site at 141 Woolcock St. with Balestrieri of Elkhorn, for \$38,180, with an additional contingency allowance of \$5,000 to be authorized upon the county administrator’s approval.
- Approved amending the Board of Supervisors Rules of Order to add two citizen members to the Fair Park Committee. The committee now will contain seven members appointed by the county board chairperson. There will be five county board supervisors and two citizen members.
- Approved an ordinance allowing the county to take part in Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing and a resolution authorizing the county to become a member of the Wisconsin PACE Commission. Look for a related story in a future edition of the Daily Union.
- Authorized entry into an intergovernmental jurisdictional transfer agreement with the City of Watertown and the Town of Watertown for the purposes of deleting segments of West Street (County Highway T) from the county highway system, and transferring jurisdiction to the City of Watertown and transferring jurisdiction of segments of Gypsy Road from the Town of Watertown to the City of Watertown, subject to the approval of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.
- Approved amending personnel ordinance HR0360, hours of work, overtime and compensatory time to allow for pay-out of accumulated compensatory time throughout the year.

- Recognized retiree Maria Dabel, who worked for the Jefferson County Human Services Department.