

## No fluff figured into county budget.

Written by Deb Egenberger  
Thursday, 15 September 2011 14:28 -

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DAWSON COUNTY BUDGET			
	2011-12	2010-11	Difference
Valuation.....	\$1,948,738,696	\$1,824,030,760	7.9%
Expenses.....	\$26,398,872	\$26,690,971	-1.1%
Revenue.....	\$20,026,917	\$20,726,371	-3.4%
Tax asking.....	\$7,870,056	\$7,340,200	7.2%
Levy.....	.4927	.4888	-0.8%

### Nobody clamped down on Dawson County officials forcing tight individual budgets.

They held the line on spending all by themselves, said clerk Karla Zlatkovsky.

“I think everybody knows there’s no room for anything extra,” Zlatkovsky said. “Everyone brought in proposals pretty close to last year.”

Dawson County commissioners will vote on the 2011-12 budget following a public hearing during their regular bimonthly meeting Sept. 16.

The \$26.4 million in operating expenses represents a 1.1% decrease from last year’s budget.

“There are no big purchases planned and, really, no major new spending to speak of,” Zlatkovsky said.

Minor increases show up in the election budget to account for bilingual election ballots and in the treasurer’s budget to upgrade 10-year old equipment but Zlatkovsky said much of the spending has remained steady.

At the same time, the total tax asking will increase by 7.2% or nearly \$530,000 due to a dramatic drop in revenue.

“We’ve lost state aid and some other federal funds,” Zlatkovsky said. “We have to make that up somehow.”

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But while the tax request increased, the actual levy remains virtually unchanged, shifting from 40.6 cents per \$100 valuation to 40.4 cents.

That levy will generate more property taxes because county valuation is up a whopping 7.9%.

“I know people don’t like to see their valuation increase,” Zlatkovsky said, “but the county is only trying to keep up with what the state mandates.”

One notable change that Zlatkovsky said was made in this year’s budget is the addition of a savings account for emergency use.

She said \$1.5 million from the inheritance tax fund was put into a sinking fund.

“They say you’re supposed to have enough in savings to cover three months worth of bills,” the clerk said. “The \$1.5 million isn’t quite three months worth but it’s a start.”

The county collects an average of \$200,000 in inheritance taxes each year and uses that money as a form of savings.

Zlatkovsky said approximately \$800,000 will remain in the inheritance tax fund.

“This year’s budget is a guessing game,” Zlatkovsky said, “because we don’t know for certain how much we are actually going to lose from the state.”

## REVENUES

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### Property taxes

The county will set the property tax levy at .40427 or roughly 40.4 cents per \$100 in property value. The total tax asking for the 2011-12 budget year is \$7,870,056.

### Treasurer

The county treasurer collects license and registration fees for vehicles of all types and personal property as well as title fees.

The estimated collection is relatively unchanged from last year at \$468,000.

### Law Enforcement

The sheriff's department collects a variety of fees including cost of warrants, inspections and permits.

The largest amount of law enforcement revenue comes from reimbursements for housing contract inmates from other state and federal jurisdictions.

County law enforcement is expected to bring in \$1.2 million, an amount offset by one of the largest departmental budgets in the county.

### Intergovernmental

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Multiple county offices receive funding from state or federal sources including tax credits, operating expenses and social services assistance.

During the last legislative session, lawmakers voted to reduce aid to counties and cities, cutting approximately \$126,000 from what Dawson County received last year.

The total for state and federal aid is estimated at \$624,000.

### Grants

It's difficult for officials to guess how many grants will be awarded in the coming year.

Last year the grant revenue was estimated at \$850,000 and the county received only \$91,000.

This year's estimate is \$950,000 for a variety of purposes, none of which affect taxpayers but all of which must be included as revenue before the county can spend the money.

### EXPENSES

#### Salaries & Benefits

The biggest chunk of the county's expenses goes toward payroll for 165 employees.

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With a planned 25-cent per hour raise for hourly employees, \$8.14 million has been budgeted to cover salaries and benefits for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

A large portion of that total is for health insurance. The worst-case scenario cost of employee insurance is \$1.9 million. The county actually spent \$1.46 million on health insurance last year. Premium costs have not changed.

### Roads Department

A five-year highway improvement bond of \$2,735,000 pushed the roads department's budget up to \$7,593,540 last year.

Without having to include the total bond amount this year, the roads budget drops back to its average at \$4,141,000 million. Of that, \$748,120 is the annual payment on the five-year bond.

### Law Enforcement

The county sheriff is responsible for preparing a budget not only for his deputies and office staff but also for the jail and dispatch center.

The total cost for law enforcement is expected at \$3,885,000 which includes \$542,000 for dispatch services.

### Political subdivisions

The 14 political subdivisions entitled to property tax funds include hospitals, fire departments and cemetery districts.

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They have increased their combined tax requirement by 4.92% to \$989,558.