

Lake, sewer high budget priorities

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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City levy rises 4% to support services, projects

The rehabilitation of Lake Helen and costly sewer and water improvements are the largest expenditures in the city's proposed budget for 2013-14.

Although the levy dropped 6.5% last year, that's not the story this year.

For local taxpayers, the proposed levy of .32273 means an increase of \$12.48 on a \$100,000 home if real estate values didn't rise.

However when combining the city and airport levies, city administrator Bruce Clymer said the levy stays the same at .31025.

The Gothenburg City Council has fashioned a \$21,866,748 budget of which taxpayers will fund \$608,136, or 6.6% more, than the \$570,527 request in 2012-13.

Clymer noted that the biggest expense from the general fund is \$279,696 the city has budgeted to make Lake Helen more user friendly.

Grants will pay for the rest of the \$1,545,394 million project.

Another large expense, \$2,233,400-, is for sewer repairs plus \$642,330 in water improvements.

Both of those will be funded from the public works department.

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Clymer noted that capital projects are at a minimum in the proposed budget because of the Lake Helen and sewer projects.

Valuation this year increased 2.5% which isn't close to the 17% experienced last year but it still affects what the city receives in municipal equalization aid that is based on valuation and on comparison to other communities.

The city will receive \$23,112, or 78% less, in the coming year in MEF funds compared to \$107,012 in 2012-13.

Clymer said the decrease was expected because of tax-increment financing projects added to the tax rolls and because of the way the state formula works.

In the public works department, electrical bills are expected to increase 1.1%, because of a 2.08% increase from the city's wholesale provider—the Nebraska Public Power District.

Water rates are proposed to increase 5% to fund improvements in the system and help with increased costs.

Employee salaries and benefits are figured at \$2,075,291 compared to \$2,021,037 last year.

The Gothenburg Airport Authority's levy, although separate from the city budget is added to the city's to determine if the 45 cents per \$100 valuation lid is met.

Airport authority board members have requested \$72,669 this year compared to \$62,540 the council granted in 2012-13.

Clymer said the authority has budgeted \$40,000 for an airport plan which is needed to apply for

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grants.

Additional hangar space and the installation of airport lights is also on the wish list.

Highlights of the city budget, which can be viewed at city hall, are listed below.

The council will have public hearings on the budget and tax request at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 17, in city council chambers.

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REVENUES	
Property taxes The proposed budget calls for a property tax increase of 0.5 percent to 1.45, but some budget funds city services such as public safety and public works. The tax levy rises 0.5 percent.	By the end of the 2014 calendar during 2013-14 year \$25,000,000.
Water sales Customers will pay \$20.25 per acre foot in 2013-14, an increase from the \$19.25 per acre foot in 2012-13.	
Sales tax A new sport vehicle tax, created by a previous city council, is estimated to generate \$1,614,716.	
General fund The proposed budget for the city is \$21,486,240. This includes city services such as public safety and public works. The budget also includes the city's share of the state's general fund. The city's share of the state's general fund is \$1,614,716.	
Salaries & benefits Budgeted salaries and benefits for all city employees is \$20,729,100 compared to \$20,100,000 last year.	
Capital improvements Over \$2.5 million is budgeted for the rehabilitation of city streets. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$1,000,000 for the project.	
Public works projects The proposed budget includes \$1,000,000 for public works projects. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$400,000 for the project.	

EXPENSES	
Police The proposed budget for the police department is \$10,000,000. This includes salaries and benefits, equipment, and other expenses. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$4,000,000 for the project.	
Fire The proposed budget for the fire department is \$8,000,000. This includes salaries and benefits, equipment, and other expenses. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$3,200,000 for the project.	
Public Works The proposed budget for the public works department is \$3,000,000. This includes salaries and benefits, equipment, and other expenses. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$1,200,000 for the project.	
Library The proposed budget for the library is \$1,000,000. This includes salaries and benefits, equipment, and other expenses. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$400,000 for the project.	
Other The proposed budget for other city services is \$9,486,240. This includes salaries and benefits, equipment, and other expenses. The city will pay 40% of the cost of the project. The city will pay \$3,794,496 for the project.	