

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 possible property tax relief, is estimated to generate \$14.7 million.	
Electrical sales of service The city will receive \$4.5 million from customers for electric services which compare to \$4.3 million last year.	
Motor vehicle tax Motor vehicle sales tax is anticipated to be the same as last year at \$23,000,000.	
Revenue transfers Revenue from sewer services is expected to bring in \$95,000 in the coming year.	

EXPENSES	
General fund The proposed budget for the city is \$21,466,240. This includes city services such as public safety and public works. City departments and operating budgets for year's activities are a percentage of: Police - 25.0% (5,371,250) Fire - 25.0% (5,371,250) Public Works - 25.0% (5,371,250) City Administration - 25.0% (5,371,250)	budget requests are 100 percent. \$20,425,000 in water system improvement program. Capital and the program are identified in a 2011 study and will be discussed by the council. \$107,000 in general projects to upgrade the city's electrical system such as addressing main overhead lines, further \$100,000 in budget for repair and maintain the electrical system. \$100,000 in water is allowed through by homeowners to allow sewer and water change to basement after heavy rain in 2011. \$100,000 for the first of four years of payment for a bus shelter in the electrical department. Crews and the council has not yet determined how much will be spent on sewer improvements through \$1,000,000 was budgeted last year.
Salaries & benefits Budgeted salaries and benefits for all city employees is \$20,750,000 compared to \$20,600,000 last year.	
Capital improvements Over \$25 million is budgeted for the rehabilitation of city roads. Other projects for the city will include the use of city property for development.	
Public works projects Large projects include the construction of a new jail, a cost of \$100,000, has also been	
	from the electric and water and sewer departments for a storage facility at the city yard. An additional \$100,000 is requested for a water truck. The water truck is the center of all the department's water truck fleet. The public works department has a specially equipped vehicle. A \$6,700 grant will help to repair the vehicle. In addition to \$20,200 in water of \$200,000 from the public department to help pay for the Lake County project, \$100,000 has been budgeted towards the project. The city's development crew will increase from \$1,200 to \$1,400 because of additional jobs that will be done in the city's electric department. Within the department, \$2,000 is budgeted for the truck replacement and \$20,000 for new projects. The city's Council of Finance and a contract issued by the city will get \$20,000 for repairs that include floor and windows. The library will receive \$2,000 for three new computers and software with an additional \$1,000 for LED lights and new furniture or coverage.