

County Commission Approves 2014 Budget

Today, the Greene County Commission approved the County's 2014 budgets for all funds. Most attention has surrounded the general revenue fund. The 2014 general revenue budget is \$34,701,704. This is an increase of \$963,070 over the 2013 budget. This increase reflects unavoidable increased costs. There were no increases in employee pay or other discretionary expenses.

Some of the highlights of the 2014 budget are as follows:

- First, we note that our beginning cash balance in the general fund has actually improved since the beginning of 2013, from \$4.4 million to a year-end projection of \$4.7 million. This is a result of improving sales tax collections, which are currently up 3.45% over 2012, and increased fees collected by the Sheriff's office, primarily revenue from housing Federal inmates in the jail. But perhaps the most important thing to note is the amazing job of cost control in all departments. While general revenue expenses were 1.6% over budget through October, the increase in expense was largely due unavoidable increases largely beyond our control: jail operations as a result of a 9% increase in inmate population, state mandated legal services for abuse and neglect victims, and the loan default on the Jamestown development. Without these expenses, all other general revenue expenses were below budget. We express our sincere thanks to all of our officeholders and employees. They continue to live without and yet remain committed to providing good service.
- 2014 will represent the 6th consecutive year in which County employees have received no pay increases of any type.
- The only increases in expenses which have been approved for the 2014 budget are those which are unavoidable due to State and Federal mandates or contractual obligations. Significant among these are:
 - Support costs for new judge: \$ 141,600
 - Mid-term Federal and Stat elections: \$ 575,000
 - Health Department funding: \$ 252,060
 - Out of County inmate housing: \$ 400,000
 - Expense for Jamestown NID: \$1,026,000.
- In order to accommodate these unavoidable expenses, other department budgets have been reduced.
- Revenues are expected to increase by \$1,053,331 or 3.1%. This includes a projected 1.25% increase in sales tax revenue.
- We have a number of significant threats in the 2014 budget year. Chief among these are:

- Increasing jail population.
 - Increases in out-of-county inmate housing expense. The budget includes \$400,000 for housing jail inmates out of the county. However, if inmate populations continue to increase, this amount could increase significantly.
 - Expense for new courtrooms
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- As statutorily required, \$1,043,000, equivalent to 3% of General Fund revenues has been included in the budget to help mitigate these and other contingencies.

In approving the 2014 budget, priority was given to maintaining current levels of service, particularly in law enforcement. For this reason, the decision was made to utilize building capital and equipment replacement reserves from the 2012 law enforcement sales tax to fund the following positions: In the Prosecutor's Office: Senior Assistant Prosecuting Attorney (1), Assistant Prosecuting Attorney (1), Victim Witness Advocate (1), and two Secretaries (2); In the Sheriff/Jail: Accounting Specialist (1), Court Security Officer (1), Network Administrator (1), Network Engineer (1), Buyer (1), and Building Operations Assistant Superintendent (1) at a cost of \$530,000. Without retaining the ability to support these vital services, we will begin to lose ground in keeping up with crime.

We recognize that this is a temporary solution. Serious challenges still lie ahead for the general fund. With current projected revenue and expenses we expect that general fund balances will continue to decline.

In order to meet these challenges we will continue to improve efficiency and reduce expenditures as well as to look for ways to increase existing revenue sources. We will remain committed to the principles of open book management.

We extend our sincere thanks to our officeholders and department heads for the cooperation they displayed in working through a very difficult budget. On behalf of the citizens of Greene County extend our appreciation to all our employees who continue to deliver excellent service with very limited resources.