

NEWS RELEASE: Jan. 28, 2009

Greene County Commission approves 2009 Budget

The Greene County Commission approved and signed the 2009 Greene County Budget during a special meeting Tuesday morning.

The \$108.6 million budget reflects a 5.8-percent reduction in spending over the same funds within 2008. The bulk of the difference is due to reduced spending within the General Revenue fund.

“We have cut as much as we can without beginning to bleed off some of our services,” Presiding Commissioner Dave Coonrod said during Tuesday’s budget meeting.

Greene County’s budget policy requires projected revenues to exceed expenditures. Due to a combination of lagging sales tax revenue and a marked reduction in revenue from building fees and recording fees, the county began to slow spending in April, 2008 — a practice which continues today and helps insure this policy is met.

“We asked our officeholders and department heads to begin tapping the brakes in April,” said Associate Commissioner Harold Bengsch. “We really owe them a debt of gratitude for stepping up to the plate and responding to our request, because now it’s showing a real value.”

When compared to the 2008 Budget document, total appropriations in 2009 appear to be significantly smaller than 2008’s \$130.4 million. However, due to new accounting software installed last year, funds previously included in the total appropriations — but not actually part of county expenditures — have now been separated, including the Springfield-Greene County Library District, the Greene County Developmentally Disabled Fund and a portion of the Law Enforcement Sales Tax which is disbursed to area municipalities.

The 2009 Budget does not include a cost-of-living increase for Greene County employees in 2009. The budget includes 10 new positions, compared 69 new positions requested. They include two state-funded positions within the Title IV-D Child Support Enforcement office and eight existing positions within the Public Administrator’s Office, now absorbed by the county budget, as allowed by state law.

“We’re just so fortunate that we have not had to lay any people off at the county, although we have left some positions vacant,” said Associate Commissioner Roseann Bentley, referencing a temporary 90-day delay on filling vacancies, adopted by the commission in December.

Sales tax, the county’s largest source of revenue, is projected to grow only 1 percent in 2009. Greene County finished 2008 with sales tax revenues down 2.5 percent over 2007. Any growth in revenue this year will be dedicated to replenishing the county’s General Fund balance, which is at its lowest amount in five years. The fund balance currently does not meet the county’s policy of maintaining an undesignated fund balance equal to three months of operating expenses.

“There is no way, short of cutting services, that we could have met that policy,” Jeff Reinold, Director of Administration, told the commission Tuesday. “It’s been a difficult two years (for the fund balance) — one with natural disasters, the other with economic disaster.”

Reinold has asked each county office and department to try to save 2 to 3 percent from their budgeted expenses for 2009, to help rebuild the fund balance.

“We will try to build that reserve fund back up again as soon as we can, in accordance with best accounting practices,” said Coonrod.

Electronic copies of the 2009 budget are available online at www.greencountymo.org, or may be requested through the Greene County Budget Office at 868-4112.

For more information, call the Greene County Commission at 868-4112; or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Officer, at 829-6019 or 379-5713.

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