

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



DATE: January 8, 2016

Greene County Commissioners Sign 2016 Budget Into Action

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri- The Greene County Commission officially adopted and signed the 2016 county budget on Friday, January 8, 2016. The approved 2016 general revenue budget is \$42,176,175. This represents an increase of \$4,396,061 over the 2015 Greene County budget. The increase reflects the funding of several major needs due to the extended recession and the past seven years of budget austerity. The County's 2016 all funds budget totals \$145,869,259.

The 2015 Greene County fund balance reached \$13,115,698, made possible by conservative budgeting measures instituted over the last seven years, along with an improving economy. This fund balance was also due in large part to the dedicated service and conscientious spending of our county employees.

Of critical importance to the Commission when determining items to include in the 2016 budget was providing a cost of living increase to all county employees. Therefore, a 2.5% cost of living salary increase is reflected in the official 2016 budget. In addition, those employees with 1 year or more of continuous service will be eligible for a one-step merit increase in their pay grade.

In 2015, the county saw a significant sales tax revenue increase of 3.86% over that of 2014. The Commissioners budgeted a conservative 2% sales tax revenue increase over 2015 into the 2016 budget.

2016 budget highlights include:

- \$2,094,000 for the construction of two new Greene County courtrooms that will allow two new judges to adjudicate cases.
- \$678,000 that will facilitate the remodeling and rental of office space in the Cox North Tower for the Prosecuting Attorney's office.
- \$896,000 to provide funds for federal and state elections for the citizens of Greene County.
- An additional \$250,500 in funding to the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, which will allow for the removal of an out-of-city vaccine fee Greene County residents have had to pay for immunizations, as well as other expanded services.
- \$237,000 for the purchase and outfit of 11 used cars to replace high-mileage Greene County Sheriff's Office vehicles.

- \$230,000 to facilitate much-needed building repairs, including a replacement roof on the jail tower, repairs to the roof of the Greene County Historic Courthouse, and the replacement of a boiler in the Judicial Courts facility.
- \$200,000 for alternatives to incarceration, including an expanded ankle-bracelet monitoring system.

Additionally, it is the goal of Greene County to maintain a 90 day safe cash reserve to support 90 days of operating expenses. Through strategic cost saving measures and budgeting efforts, Greene County now has a \$9,900,000 safe cash balance to meet this need.

Though the 2016 county budget reflects a \$4,396,061 increase over 2015's budget, this still represents a very small overall increase in light of the lack of adequate funding for needed services.

Office holders and department heads were asked to submit to the Commission a list of their critical unmet needs as part of the 2016 budgeting process. Attempts were made to fund as many of these requests as possible, however, the 2016 adopted budget still falls short by over \$8,000,000 in meeting these identified critical needs, which include:

- \$394,000 set-aside money for the future replacement of the trunked radio system.
- \$2,500,000 in funds for stormwater mandates to meet the requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- Funds toward expanding the jail and aggressively addressing issues within the justice system.
- A need to provide over 150,000 square feet of office space, eliminate the need to rent office space, and enhance office conditions for employees.
- 147 additional positions within the Sheriff's Office.
- The replacement of windows and tuckpointing procedures on the Historic Courthouse.

It should be noted that the county implemented the "Great Game of Business" three years ago in an effort to foster open book management and employee engagement. This initiative, referred to in Greene County as the "Great Game of Government", allows all county employees to have a greater understanding of their role and influence on the county's bottom line. Employee response to this opportunity has been outstanding.

"Signing this budget assures that the office holders, department heads and their staffs are bringing forward a very conservative budget that addresses many unmet needs that have accrued over the last several years due to the recession. It is a budget that continues our ongoing efforts to meet the ever increasing needs of our citizens in a timely and cost-effective manner that speaks to our motto - "Greene County Works"." said Harold Bengsch, Greene County Commissioner.

The County's improving financial status can be attributed to many factors, among them a workforce of informed, dedicated public servants followed by very conservative budgeting and an improved economy. However, very real challenges still exist and many critical needs remain unmet due to lack of funding. The Commission remains dedicated to addressing these issues and to ensuring that Greene County offers a great place for citizens to live, learn, work and play.

To view the 2016 Greene County budget in its entirety, visit
<https://www.greenecountymo.gov/budget/>.

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