By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

A higher levy and additional tax dollars were approved 4-0 by the Imperial city council last week to support its 2012-13 budget, bond payments and airport.

No input from the public was received at the Sept. 17 budget hearing, and council members had little discussion as the budget was approved.

Property tax to support all funds will increase from $779,363 the past year to $878,009 for 2012-13.

Likewise, the levy will rise nearly six cents (per $100 valuation) from 71.07 cents to 77.06 cents to support the General Fund, bond payments and airport.

The General Fund, which supports the various city operations, will take the biggest chunk of the property tax request at $546,500, compared to $486,500 the past year.

The levy to support the General Fund will grow from 41 cents to 44.6 cents, just under the city's 45-cent General Fund lid.

The council had three separate votes in their budget approval action—adopting the higher property tax rate from the year before, adopting the budget of expenditures and increasing the city's spend limit an additional one percent beyond its annual 2.5 percent limit.

The city of Imperial saw its valuation grow from $109,654,00 to $113,929,000 since last August, said City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland.

Three million dollars of that increase can be attributed to new growth, versus revaluations, she said.

City employee raises

In other budget-related action later in the meeting, the council approved a wage ordinance giving most city employees and department heads increases.

The department heads, including Leyland, Public Works Supt. Pat Davison and Police Chief Rob Browning received salary increases between 2 and 9.6 percent, as follows:

City Clerk/Adm. Leyland, from $66,435,000 to $70,000, 5.3 percent.

Public Works Supt. Davison, from $63,860 to $70,000, 9.6 percent.

Police Chief Browning, from $50,000 to $51,000, 2 percent.

Bldg. Inspector/Zoning Officer Nick Schultz's, $13,000 salary was left the same.

Increases for other city employees ranged between 2 and 9.3 percent, and were approved by the council after a closed session. Recommendations on employee raises come from the department heads, but all salary/per-hour pay levels are approved by the council.

The mayor and council do not receive salaries for their positions.

Other council business

- Once again, the Citizens Advisory Committee will re-examine a recommendation they made to the council to waive tap fees and transformer expense for new rental housing development and for new and expanded business construction. A vote to adopt the committee's recommendations failed on a 1-3 council voted. Sue Moore vote yes, while Doug Gaswick,

Chad Yaw and John Arterburn voted no. Those voting no favored approving the fee waivers, averaging about $3,500, for all new housing projects, in addition to the new rentals and business construction.

- Two bids were received from local contractors to replace the original parking area concrete in front of the Imperial Manor. The difference in the pair of bids, $35,800 from Imperial Contracting (Ryan Greene) and $49,391.36 from Koellner Enterprises (Greg Koellner) prompted the council to reject both bids. City Attorney Josh Wendell said the trend has been that city governing bodies give priority to the lowest bid from a responsible contractor. "If you don't go with the low bid, my preference is that you establish some kind of record" on why the lowest bid was not accepted. Billie Hayes, maintenance manager at the Manor, said both contractors visited with her about the project so there should not have been a misunderstanding on the work to be done. Some concern was expressed by Mayor Dwight Coleman that if the bid approval was delayed it may likely put off the project until next year. The rejection of the bids came on a 4-0 vote.
- Taking the Planning Commissioner's recommendation, the council denied a conditional use permit requesting a workshop be remodeled for a dwelling unit (apartment) in the home's back yard at 607 Wellington. A letter from a neighbor expressed opposition to the permit. The council voted 4-0 to deny the permit, as did the Planning Commission, originally requested by Sid and Carol Harchelroad. The home has since been purchased by Kwik Stop Stores.
- At the request of West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD), the city's nuisance officer, two properties previously declared a nuisance by council action at Lots 19-20 Capitol Court and 230 East 5th Street were rescinded. Karl Elmshauser of WCNDD said both properties had taken care of the nuisance. In other action, the council voted to suspend the issuance of a citation to the property owner at 1319 Wellington, who had not made progress on cleaning up the nuisance. City Attorney Wendell suggested taking another look at the property in 60 days.
- WCNDD was also named interim administrator for the city's LB 840 (sales tax) program to start Sept. 29 and at a salary of $65 per hour. The position requires a certified housing administrator. Leslie Carlholm, who has served in that role as community development director, is leaving her position Sept. 28.
- The street department will possibly have a new street sweeper once employees can try out the 2008 Elgin Pelican the department is considering. Supt. Pat Davison said the company offered a lease/purchase agreement on the unit of $34,355.99 each year over a three-year period on the $105,000 machine. The price includes trade-in of the city's 1997 sweeper. The council approved the agreement contingent on the department's satisfaction. City Attorney Wendell said bids are not required on lease/purchase agreements.
- The city will extend electric and water service just outside the city limits, west of the Sage Addition, for a building planned there by John Burke. All the utility extension costs will be borne by Burke, said Davison.
- An annexation agreement between the city and Steve and Deborah Schilke was approved, adding their property outside the northwest edge of Imperial where their winery will sit. The Schilkes requested annexation.
- A new ordinance dealing with door-to-door sales was adopted on a 4-0 vote, stiffening the guidelines people must follow when selling to city residents in their homes. In brief, an application to sell door-to-door must be made out at the city office two days before they want to sell, allowing the police department time to do a background check. The ordinance covers any

business making "a sales attempt," Wendell noted. Some salespeople indicate they are just providing a "demonstration" of their product, but Wendell said that also falls under the sales guidelines. The ordinance was passed to take effect Sept. 24.

- The city of Imperial will have an 18 x 18 inch granite tile inlaid at the Centennial Mall's "Spirit of Nebraska Pathway" in Lincoln, based on the council's 4-0 vote. City sales tax funds will provide the $1,000 cost.