



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Only one entity so far in Imperial has been notified of federal stimulus money coming here as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The Imperial Housing Authority is expecting an additional \$30,000 this year for capital improvements at the federally-subsidized Sunset Housing complex at West 10th and Douglas Sts.

However, most other governmental entities here are uncertain if any stimulus money is coming. And, if it eventually does, it's not expected to make a big impact.

Julie Gockley, director of the three city housing units (Sunset, Sunrise and Pine Grove), said they receive federal money every year for capital improvements and operating expenses at Sunset Housing.

The \$30,380 coming from the stimulus package will basically double what she was expecting this year from annual HUD Public Housing Capital Funds.

Gockley said the \$30,380 in stimulus money can be used for capital improvements only.

A meeting with residents last week indicated an interest in additional parking there. The Imperial Housing Authority will use that input in deciding where the stimulus money will ultimately go, she said.

City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said other stimulus funds coming to the city are uncertain.

"There are some things in the works" in water and waste water areas, she said, but the city hasn't sought out any particular stimulus money for that.

Plans for a new fire hall between 7th and 8th Sts., on Broadway are in the works, and members of the IVFD building committee met recently with a USDA representative. USDA has had a grant program for construction projects such as fire halls in the past, which could fund up to 15% of the project.

While here, the USDA official noted their department will also be directing stimulus money for emergency services, and indicated she could include the fire hall "on the list" of potential projects.

School, county

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman was scheduled for a press conference Wednesday this week, where he was expected to discuss use of stimulus money the state is receiving for education.

Chase County Schools Supt. Matt Fisher said Heineman was expected to announce that all of it would be used to supplement state aid to education.

The Legislature has been grappling with state aid again, and was not expected to fully fund the formula this coming year, Fisher said.

Senators had been discussing adding \$100 million in state aid over the next two years, but that would fall short of the formula.

Over \$300 million in stimulus money is coming to the state for education, Fisher said, but he still expects CCS to get less state aid than this year.

"I know with the stimulus money, big chunks are going to Lincoln and Omaha," he said.

Fisher said there is also stimulus money earmarked separately for Title I and special

education. CCS may receive some of that, “but I’m not expecting much,” he said.

County Commissioner Jodi Thompson said the county did apply for some stimulus money for a handibus, and they have an “outside chance” of receiving it.

“But I’m not holding my breath,” she said.

She’s not sure if it would be funded 100% or just a portion of the cost would be allotted.

If the county would have to come up with any difference, she said they’d have to determine if it was feasible at that time.

She noted the county gets federal/state funding for handibusses on a regular basis anyway, with about \$10,000 in county funds required to match.

Counties in Nebraska are to receive \$9 million dollars earmarked for county roads projects. Chase County did not put any requests in for that money.

When that was divided over “shovel-ready” projects in 93 counties, it wouldn’t have gone far, Thompson predicted.

Plus, there were \$86 million in requests from other Nebraska counties submitted for the \$9 million in stimulus funds.

Paychecks will have a little extra

The stimulus package includes a \$400 per-worker tax credit for 2009 and 2010.

It won’t come as a separate “stimulus check,” but will be reflected in a lower federal withholding amount in paychecks.

That will amount to an average of \$13 per week more per worker in take home pay this year, and about \$7.70 per week in 2010. The difference in 2010 is due to the fact the \$400 will be spread over a full 12 months.

Employers have been directed to use the new federal withholding tables as soon as possible, but no later than April 1.

For those receiving food stamps, the stimulus package is also providing a 13.6% increase in the maximum allotment for all food stamp households.

The extra benefits will automatically be added to recipients’ Electronic Benefits Transfer cards starting April 1.

This increase will replace the annual cost of living increases normally given in October, according to the Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Nebraska is expected to receive a total of \$1 billion in stimulus funds in all areas.