

City realizes valuation growth of eight percent

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

More property tax dollars and a higher levy are represented in the 2013-14 city of Imperial budget approved at the council's Sept. 16 meeting.

The property tax request to support the General Fund, Imperial Airport and bonds, will increase from \$878,009 to \$947,944, or 7.9 percent higher, than what supported the 2012-13 budget.

The levy will go up to 81.58 cents (per \$100 valuation), compared to 77.06 cents last year.

The biggest chunk of the property tax request, or \$587,385, will support the General Fund.

The 49.94 cent levy for the General Fund is just shy of the 50-cent cap cities are under, when including the additional five cents for interlocal agreements.

As they were preparing the budget at work sessions, City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said they discussed their auditors' continued emphasis that the city's cash reserve be higher.

The auditors recommend that the city have enough in its reserves to operate for six months without property tax, Leyland said.

The 2013-14 budget includes an additional \$41,508.90 in cash reserves, and is now close to that six-month figure they recommend, she said.

The additional dollars added in 2013-14 will bring the cash reserve total to \$537,723.

The city realized about an eight percent increase in property valuations the past year, from \$113,929,910 to \$123,154,109, or eight percent.

Four percent of the \$9,224,199 increase was due to new growth, not re-valuation, Leyland noted. That growth allowed the city to add an additional 1.86 percent beyond the 2.5 percent spending lid in which cities Imperial's size fall under.

The only major capital expenditure in the budget is a \$1 million figure for a new fire hall. However, a bond issue will be proposed before the construction happens to provide funds for the building, she noted, but the dollar figure has to be shown in the budget.

The council approved the additional property tax request 4-0, as well as a resolution to increase the annual spending limit by an additional one percent as allowed after at least a three-fourths vote by the body.

City employee raises

Later in the Sept. 16 meeting, the council approved a wage ordinance without much discussion that gives all city department heads and employees pay increases.

Details on the employee raises were hammered out in earlier budget work sessions.

The department heads received between 1.6 and seven percent wage increases for 2013-14, as follows:

City Clerk/Adm. Jo Leyland, from \$70,000 to \$72,100, three percent.

Public Works Supt. Pat Davison, from \$70,000 to \$72,100, three percent.

Comm. Dev. Director Jason Tuller, from \$59,000 to \$60,000, 1.6 percent.

Police Chief Rob Browning, from \$51,000 to \$52,530, three percent.

Bldg. Inspector/Zoning Officer Nick Schultz, \$14,000 to \$15,000, seven percent.

Increases for all other employees in the various city departments and offices ranged between

2.8 and 16 percent (the latter involves one per-hour employee). Most increases ranged between the three and five percent level.

Recommendations on those employee raises come from the department heads, but all salary/per-hour pay rates are given final approval by the council.

The mayor and council receive no salaries for their positions.