

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

A district-wide valuation increase of more than 22 percent the past year will have a big impact on the tax bill for property owners in the Chase County Schools district.

At Tuesday's school board meeting, the 2013-14 CCS budget was approved, showing over a 10-cent drop in the levy to support the budget.

Taxpayers will see their levy drop from about 91.5 cents (per \$100 valuation) in the 2012-13 budget to just over 81 cents for 2013-14.

That will be possible due to a nearly \$150 million valuation increase in the district, which according to CCS Supt. Brad Schoeppey was not experienced by other area school districts in the amounts seen in by CCS.

"Nobody increased as much as we did," he told board members.

The valuation in the CCS district boundaries grew to \$801,259,745 this year.

Of that total, \$761,086,210 represents the Chase County valuation. Another \$40,173,535 comes from the property in Dundy County that is in the CCS district.

That compares to last year's total valuation of \$652,858,946, or more than 22 percent.

In other parts of the budget, the board approved more money to go into the special building fund for 2013-14.

This year, \$250,000 will be added to the building fund, compared to \$101,000 last year.

Supt. Schoeppey and board members indicated they anticipate additional building maintenance needs in the coming year, as well as long range hopes of moving all of its facilities to the East 9th St. area, which would mean some new construction or additions. Not including the bond fund, the property tax request (General Fund, building fund and Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund) approved by the board to support the budget is \$1,043,434.28.

That compares to last year's request of \$6,149,110.

The biggest chunk of the property tax request, or \$6,129,292.87, will support the General Fund. The General Fund budget for 2013-14 is \$8,081,328, in addition to \$1,820,613 cash reserve, totaling \$9,901,941. The additional cash reserve added this year will put the school's total reserve fund at \$2.2 million, according to Supt. Schoeppey.

The total building fund property tax request is \$252,525.25.

Another \$161,616.16 of property taxes will be used to support the Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund, which is being used to pay off the HVAC improvements installed at the school last year.

All the above property tax figures include the one percent collection fee assessed by the county treasurer and a delinquent tax allowance.

The bond fund, which is outside of the lid limits school districts fall under, will also use \$421,442 in property tax dollars in the coming year.

Supt. Schoeppey said that bond fund will be used to pay off the school's debt responsibility this year on the pool/athletic complex CCS built with the city.

Board Vice President Gregg Smith said he felt this year's is a good budget, and spreads the taxes across a bigger chunk of property valuation that grew nearly \$150 million.

"While the economy is going good I think it's important to probably keep our budget going up at about the limit of the lid," he said.

If and when the economy would turn around, it will be beneficial to have the cash reserve that

has been built up, he added, “and not have to make abrupt cuts,” Smith said. Approval of all motions regarding the budget came on 9-0 votes.

Other school board business

- The board’s facilities committee plans to meet on Monday night to continue discussions on options for the school’s Wellington property. The city is interested in purchasing a section of the Wellington football field’s north end for a new fire hall. Supt. Brad Schoeppey said their legal counsel indicated the school cannot give away school property, but it does have a couple of options in transferring land—sell directly or through a realtor at fair market value or sell it at an auction. Several board members indicated they do not favor selling just a portion of the property. Fire Chief Nick Schultz was at the meeting, and indicated that having to buy all of the property, including the Wellington building which is approaching \$300,000 in needed repairs, is likely “a deal-breaker.” He said the fire department is looking at other sites, but the Wellington field appears to be most functional for their needs. He said the IVFD needs to finalize the location for the fire hall within the next month or two so site-specific plans can start. After the school’s facilities committee of Tom Gaschler, Willy O’Neil and Dirk Haarberg meets on Monday, they will then meet with a city/IVFD committee for further discussion.

- Leslie Nordhausen of Imperial was hired as an asst. junior high volleyball coach, replacing Kara Engbrecht. Nordhausen’s husband, Jon, is a Wauneta native.

- Cathy Hanna, the family consumer science teacher and FCCLA advisor for grades 7-12, gave a short presentation on her programs. Since starting as teacher in that department, Hanna said she’s seen about a 50 percent growth in student numbers in her classes. A new class added this year under her direction is sports nutrition, and a Pro Start Level II class is also being offered. They’ve had Pro Start I in the past, but this is the first year for the second level, she noted.

- Cassie Burpo was welcomed by Board President Jeff Olsen as the new student board member. She reported on some of the activities she is involved in, including softball, FFA and FBLA. Student board members contribute to the school board discussion and have their own time for a report each month, but do not have a vote in action items.

- It’s been a good start to the school year, Supt. Brad Schoeppey said in his report, much different than last year in his first year as CCS superintendent. There were several lunch program changes at the start of the 2012-13 school year, which were challenging, he said. It’s been a smoother start this year, although his big concern now is a lack of bus drivers, especially when substitutes are needed. Due to some sickness and a family death, they are very short right now he said, so Schoeppey has been driving a special ed. van in the mornings and afternoons. Ads this summer for bus drivers drew no applications, he said.