

Cass County Budget Sees Reduction from 2009; Commission Votes to Appropriate Dollars Quarterly

President John Quincy Adams once said, "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." Cass County Commissioners finalized 2010 budget plans this past month looking at facts and worked diligently with office holders across party lines to balance the budget and yet continue to provide quality services to citizens.

The facts were clear! In 2009 county revenues were down 6.3%. Cass County used a portion of its reserve funds to provide services to citizens. Revenue projections across the state look to be lower in 2010. Governor Nixon made it clear in his State of the State Address that the state budget would have to be reduced and prioritized. The jobless count in Missouri remains at 9.3% as of this report.

The unanimous consent of the County Commission was to maintain a balanced budget for 2009 and look at the fact that we had to make reductions in 2010. Our resolve is clear...we will live with what the voters have given us and we will not raise taxes to balance the 2010 budget.

The Cass County Commission voted to adopt a 2010 Budget Plan. However, due to the struggling economy the County Commission voted to appropriate budget dollars quarterly rather than annually. This is an effort to watch revenues closely and make sure the county lives within its means in these tough economic times. State designated budget items or items regulated by state law were appropriated for the year.

The Cass County Auditor and Cass County Treasurer are completing closing the books for 2009 and estimate that the county ended the year with approximately a \$41 million dollar budget. It was noted that the overall budget was higher than expected because Cass County received more grant or federal money than expected for road projects, historic preservation, H1N1, and other projects. It should be noted that these grant funds did not help fund general revenue and had to be used for designated projects. Overall, the county general revenue saw a decline.

The 2010 budget will be less at \$40.5 million. The Cass County Commission noted that the a \$200,000 increase in the Election Fund due to the 2010 Congressional Elections and increases in grant funds from HAVA (Help America Vote Act) combined with Courthouse Restoration Grant, Broadband Tech Grant, and the Trigen/Bio-gas sale are included in the budget but do not help general revenue and are designated funds. The County Commission also noted that there are a number of funds in the county budget that are regulated by state law and cannot be adjusted or used except for the purposes intended by law.

Due to the decline, the County Commission worked with every department to reduce expenses. The county is now operating with 20 fewer employees than in 2010 with each department sharing the burden of balancing the budget and finding efficiency in services.

Some of the budget highlights are as follows:

DESIGNATED COUNTY BUDGET ITEMS

The Cass County Budget has a number of funds that are designated or are regulated by state law. Particular line items of notice include the Assessor who had a \$1.59 million budget in 2009 and will see a decrease with a \$1.39 million dollar budget for 2010.

Cass County is reorganizing its management system for departments. It is creating the Cass County Public Works, in which codes & zoning, building maintenance, and road & bridge will be under one roof. However, the road & bridge office will continue to receive its designated road & bridge funds. Road & Bridge did see a significant reduction moving from a 2009 budget of \$5.171 million to \$4.476 million for 2010. It should also be noted that the Road & Bridge Office is now operating with five less crew members in 2010.

Certain state regulated funds will see an increase. The Cass County Recorders Fund had a 2009 budget of \$784,010 and is expected to increase to \$878,661. It should be noted that Cass County Recorder, Sandy Gregory is transferring \$30,000 to the General Revenue Fund of Cass County to help the county in 2010. Cass County Collector Pam Shipley and Cass County Prosecutor Teresa Hensley are also assisting the county by voluntarily transferring funds from some of their accounts to county general revenue to insure the budget is balanced. Pam Shipley is transferring \$170,000 from the Collector's Fund and Teresa Hensley is transferring \$83,900 from her office's Delinquent Tax Fund. Janet Burlingame is also transferring funds from her office to help pay for her election-employees salaries. Your county officials are working together to make sure we balance our budget and provide quality services.

GENERAL COUNTY ITEMS

The General County Budget funds general county services such as county employees, Health Department, WIC, Nursing, Vital Records, Environmental Services, Buildings & Grounds, County Planning Office, County Clerk, Voter Registration, County Treasurer, County Auditor, Codes & Zoning Office, Recorder, University Extension, Collectors Department, and Medical Examiner.

The 2009 General County Budget ended at nearly \$11 million. It will see a slight increase at \$11.4 million due to an increase in grant funds for the Help America Vote Act (\$44,000+), a Broadband Tech Grant (\$33,000), and the TriGen-Biogas Bond Sale (\$400,000) – a project to help reduce utility costs at the Justice Center. Specific county services will see budget reductions for 2010.

The County Health Department saw \$180,162 in expenditures in 2009. The department reduced expenditures for 2010 with a budget of \$160,004. Nursing expenditures will also be reduced in 2010 from \$190,221 to \$162,170. Environmental Services also will see a reduction from \$140,497 in 2009 to \$125,842 in 2010. Building & Grounds was reduced from \$193,500 to \$188,500.

The County Commission took time to look for efficiencies and new management plans that may help the county function more efficiently and effectively. Management of Planning & Zoning office was changed. Zoning enforcement has been moved to the Codes Department. The Cass County Planning Office was

reduced from \$136,007 to \$69,413. Codes & Zoning had a budget of \$281,760 in 2010. Its budget was reduced to \$240,810.

The County also combined the Emergency Management Department with the Sheriff's Office. This move provides savings, cost efficiencies, and a number of resources that will help our Emergency Management better serve the county.

LAW ENFORCEMENT & JUSTICE CENTER

The office of Public Administrator looked for savings and will see its 2009 budget of \$129,076 reduced to \$124,396. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office will see a slight decrease in its 2009 budget of \$1.054 million reduced to \$1.030 million in 2010.

The Sheriff's Administration Budget expended \$964,993 in 2009 and will see a slight increase at \$1,000,316. The Jail Services budget did see a decrease in its budget from \$1.913 million in 2009 to \$1.819 million in 2010. The Patrol Budget did see a slight increase to \$1.814 million.

The Cass County Commission made law enforcement the last offices to see reductions. It is the belief of the County Commission that the Sheriff's and Prosecutor's Office are extremely important in keeping our neighborhoods and business community safe and we must be diligent in that service even in tough economic times.

The Total Law Enforcement & Justice Center Fund will see a slight increase from \$10.096 million to \$10.123 million.

MISCELLANEOUS FUNDS

Cass County remains committed to economic and community development throughout Cass County. It will provide \$59,217 to community development and work with city leaders to attract new businesses to Cass County.

One fund that will see an increase is the Cass County Election Fund. Since it is a US Congressional Election Year the 2009 Election Fund of \$242,700 will increase to \$438,234. Much of this is funded through the Help America Vote Act.

COUNTY RESERVES

Maintaining a sound and reasonable reserve was an important goal in balancing the 2010 budget. In 2009, Cass County had to use a portion of its \$1.465 million reserve budget to balance the FY 2009 budget. By making reductions in each office and department, the county will be able to maintain a reserve of \$1.148 million in 2010.

President John Quincy Adams was right. Facts are stubborn things. Whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts. Yet, amidst difficult times we have worked to maintain services, improve the quality of our roads, support law enforcement, and improve efficiency.

We will continue to live within our means and use the resources that you, the citizens provide to us. We look forward to working with you in 2010.