

County officials embark on budgeting process

The Washington County Board of Commissioners reviewed an overview of the county's 2010 budget during a workshop Sept. 1, which recommends operating expenditures that would decrease 1.4 percent from 2009, with a net property tax levy that will increase by less than 1 percent, due to decreased state aid.

See the accompanying PowerPoint presentation for details of the proposed 2010 budget. The recommended budget will actually see the net property tax levy per capita fall from \$356 to \$353. Operating costs per capita are also expected to fall, to \$592 in 2010, versus \$612 in 2009. That should translate into a slight reduction in the county's share of the property tax. Using the example of a home valued at \$150,000 in 2000, now valued at \$263,300, the county's share of property taxes on that home would be \$682 in 2010, down from \$712 in 2009.

The county's recommended operating budget would be \$144.3 million for 2010, down from \$146.4 million in 2009. The recommended budget comes on the heels of budget adjustments that came in 2009, reducing the county's current year's budget by \$3.1 million, primarily by eliminating 21 full-time positions on the county's staff.

The board must set the county's property tax levy for 2010 by Sept. 15. It will review more details in each department's budget during September and October, and is expected to adopt the final budget and levy Dec. 15. A budget review meeting will be conducted in the evening Dec. 8, to allow more public participation.

All budget workshops, to be conducted with individual department heads during September and October, are recorded and distributed to local cable access stations.