

August 12, 2015

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
ROSA LAVENDER  
KERR COUNTY VICTIM'S  
RIGHTS COORDINATOR  
700 MAIN ST.  
KERRVILLE, TX 78028

## County Eye Newsletter

Crafting the final details of the county's proposed 2015-2016 budget will be the primary task for commissioners and staff in the county auditor's office in the coming days. Once the proposed budget is complete it will be posted on the county website for public review and public hearings will be scheduled to allow citizens to comment on the budget.

The new budget year begins October 1 but commissioners in recent budget years have committed to approving the budget and tax rate in late August to allow the tax assessor collector's staff to have time to get the tax notices in the mail as early as possible in October.

One of the biggest decisions to make each year is adding personnel to the county workforce. It's not difficult to see the need for additional help in many of the county departments that bear responsibility to provide the services required by law but adding a new position often involves a lot more than just salary and benefits to the budget.

Many of the positions include adding a vehicle and equipment plus additional training that may be required can cost significant additional funds. Looking at the limited budget available can have a huge impact on the decision to add staff positions that are not mandated positions by law.

All decisions on the budget must be made based on the revenue that is projected for the next fiscal year. Those numbers are generated by the Kerr Central Appraisal District based on property valuations and are then provided to the county and other taxing entities.

Over recent years the county has been able to rebuild the reserves to the 25% plus amount recommended by the experts. County fathers don't like dipping into reserves to pay for mandated services as a regular part of the budget decisions. Reserves are designed for exactly what it says...a reserve in case of an emergency...like a flood or fire or other natural disaster.

Dipping into reserves is never a good way to cover day to day expenses and commissioners are reluctant to use the monies for that purpose.

In addition to property taxes the county receives additional revenue from fees and fines and sales tax receipts. Sales tax receipts have been going up...but only slightly over recent years while fines and fees have gone down, some significantly. Sales tax is a very small part of the overall revenue stream into the county budget.

One area that has been brought to light in recent months is the decline in revenue from speeding tickets and other revenue generated by traffic stops on IH10. Two factors have impacted that loss. First, the construction by the Texas Department of Transportation of safety cables in the median of the interstate which hampers law enforcement agencies from being able to pursue speeders efficiently. With only a few turnarounds along the interstate, the ability of patrolmen to catch speeders has been reduced, but the cables have increased safety to some extent.

Another factor revealed in recent discussions is that our local Texas Department of Public Safety officers are now spending at least a week of every month at the southern border of Texas on patrol protecting our state residents and the nation from the influx of illegal aliens attempting to cross the border.

Their absence from the county impacts the number of citations issued on the interstate and thus revenues from cases adjudicated in the justice of the peace courts and other courts in Kerr County. Working traffic is time intensive for officers in other law enforcement agencies in the county because of the other demands of their positions. This is a major issue that commissioners are looking at in the budget process.

Take time to follow the budget process over the coming weeks. Let your elected leaders know your views...so many major decisions are on the table for discussion. The minutes from commissioners' court meetings, budget workshops and hearings are available on the county website and the proposed budget and tax rate will be on the website and published in local newspapers...be informed. The county website is [www.co.kerr.tx.us](http://www.co.kerr.tx.us)