

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

County Eye Newsletter

With less than five months left in the current fiscal year, county officials are already busy working on the FY2016-2017 budget already. Department heads and elected officials were asked earlier this year to submit their budget requests for the next fiscal year. The county auditor and her staff have been busy refining those requests into a preliminary budget based on those numbers.

Later this month meetings are scheduled which will allow elected officials and department heads to justify their budget requests and discuss any changes or new requests with the auditor and county judge. This process is a bit different from previous years when those meetings were scheduled with the entire commissioners' court.

With two major capital projects ready to begin construction in the next few months, the East Kerr County Wastewater Project and the renovation and addition to the Kerr County Jail, the county will likely see very few or no major additions to the budget for next year.

No decisions on the budget proposals can be made this early in the budget process and the full commissioners' court must give final approval of the FY 2016-2017 budget and tax rate, hopefully sometime in late August.

The county and other local taxing entities will not receive the official tax roll from the Kerr Central Appraisal District until late July so most of what goes into the budget planning until that tax roll is finalized is based on historic figures and projected revenues.

The challenge facing the county and other taxing entities is their limited ability to significantly increase revenue to cover new expenses. Since most of the tax base in Kerr County is based on residential (ad valorem) taxes, the ability to generate new revenue is limited. The county also has the over 65 tax freeze in place.

Despite the efforts of many in this community there has been only limited expansion of our tax base through business growth. Mooney Airplane Company, James Avery Craftsmen and several new fast food restaurants account for much of the growth this past year.

Some growth in the housing industry has occurred but there is a large inventory of existing property on the market in Kerr County. The population of Kerr County has begun to grow after several years of almost stagnation. U.S. Census figures estimate the county's population nearing 53,000 in 2016.

Sales tax receipts are up significantly but sales taxes are only a very small portion of the overall revenue that comes into the taxing entities.

As the population continues to grow the demand for services from local government entities also increases, thus creating more challenges to the budget makers. The citizens of Kerr County and the two incorporated cities will continue to require more and more law enforcement and related services, fire protection and emergency medical services, better roads and bridges, parks and other services.

Another result of the recent growth is the additional services required by county offices such as the county and district clerk's staff. More birth certificates, marriage licenses, divorces, civil suits filed, more

criminal cases in the courts, real estate transactions and the demand for a myriad of other services creates the need for more efficiency in those offices, often with reduced staff.

With little chance that new programs or additional staff will be added to any department in the next budget, the county leadership will be challenged to continue to provide the quality of services now available with limited resources.

This is not a new battle to fight. Each year preparing the budget is a major challenge to county leaders and nobody wants to approve a tax increase. Somehow, thankfully, at the end of the process they seem to always be able to provide for the necessary services we, as citizens of Kerr County, demand from our local government.