

Madison County Finance Committee gives OK to budget and levy

October 30 2017 7:42 PM



EDWARDSVILLE — Taxpayers should see the property taxes they pay to Madison County drop this upcoming year, while at the same time spending for public safety will increase.

The Finance and Government Operations Committee on Monday approved the fiscal year 2018 budget, along with the property tax levy at \$30.7 million, which is \$1.8 million less than what the County Board approved last year.

Chairman Kurt Prenzler said property taxes are one of the biggest concerns for residents.

"The Finance Committee worked hard to balance the budget," Prenzler said. "Madison County will levy less in property taxes for the upcoming year. It is my priority, along with County Board members, to reduce the county's reliance on property taxes."

Prenzler said the general fund rate is staying the same. In 2016, Prenzler worked to bring down the maximum general fund tax rate from .25 to .20.

The general fund makes up about one-third of the county's total tax levy.

The tax rate is set after the county's equalized assessed value (EAV) is completed in the spring.

Prenzler said both parties worked diligently to balance the budget.

"It wasn't easy, but in the end it was a cooperative effort by all," he said. "Plus, we were able to add personnel for public safety and building maintenance, along with making sure early voting was funded."

The added positions include a Sheriff's deputy, four jailers, one public defender, a deputy coroner, a probation officer in pre-trial release, and full/part-time assistant state's attorneys, which includes a grant-funded position.

Additional positions are staff in the Facilities Department for maintenance, which includes the jail renovation project. The tax levy for the Veterans' Assistance Commission was increased as well as additional funding provided for the Child Advocacy Center.

Auditor Rick Faccin said this was the first time the county has held such a transparent budget process and he commended the committee and board members for their effort.

County Board member Tom McRae, R-Bethalto, said he would like to take his hat off to fellow Finance Committee members for all the time they spent working on the budget.

The committee held six budget review meetings prior to passing the proposed spending plan — which starts Dec. 1.

"We spent more than 30 hours working on the budget," McRae said. "We hope the public understands the process. We worked hard to reduce taxes."

County Board member Michael Parkinson, D-Granite City, said he was appreciative for the work of the Finance Committee and to both Republicans and Democrats for balancing the budget.

“We achieved both our goals,” Prenzler said. “More resources for public safety and lower property taxes.”