



Taxpayers should see county's portion drop: Madison County passes budget, property tax levy

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EDWARDSVILLE — The Madison County Board approved the county's fiscal 2018 budget Wednesday night, along with its property tax levy.

The board voted, 24-4, to approve the upcoming spending plan that starts on Dec. 1. County Board members Gussie Glasper, Venice, Michael "Doc" Holliday and Jim Dodd, both of Alton, and Jack Minner, Edwardsville, voted against the budget and Ann Gorman, Edwardsville, was absent.

The board also approved, 28-0, the \$30.7 million property tax levy, which is \$1.8 million less than what the County Board approved last year.

Chairman Kurt Prenzler said both parties worked diligently to balance the budget.

"The Finance Committee held more than 30 hours of public hearings," Prenzler said.

There were six budget review meetings held prior to approving the proposed spending plan that went before the County Board.

"It wasn't easy, but in the end it was a cooperative effort by all," Prenzler said. "We achieved both our goals — lowering property taxes and more resources for public safety."

Prenzler said taxes are the No. 1 concern for property owners.

"Taxpayers should see the county's portion of their property tax bill drop," he said.

Prenzler said the general fund rate will stay 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.

Prenzler said funding for personnel in public safety and building maintenance were added, as well as support for early voting.

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

County Board member and chair of the Finance Committee Lisa Ciampoli, Collinsville, said she wanted to commend the administration for opening the budget process.

"I want to give credit where credit is due," Ciampoli said.

She said not everyone may like the budget, but the Finance Committee worked hard to balance it.

"We had to make tough decisions," she said. "'Previously the process was done behind closed doors. The past administration never let board members be involved in the process. So thank you.'"