

County

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\$4.3 million a year, which included tax support. Auditors told Hernandez the recently completed 2019 audit shows, at this point, a \$480,000 profit for the year. "That profit is the first time in a long, long time," Hernandez said. "We didn't do it alone. We did it with your support, the medical system ... everybody who wanted to turn the health system around."

Changes that helped with the turnaround included implementing accreditation for the first time in 62 years, becoming a critical access hospital, which increased cash flow, and becoming a 340b pharmaceutical participant.

Hernandez also mentioned accounts receivable went from over \$7 million five years ago to about \$3.6 million today; and days in accounts receivable has been cut 100 to 53 (60 days is good in health care). "A lot of work has gone into the health system," Hernandez said.

"We have had three months that have not been good dollar-wise, but the good news is we have been able to supplement those lost charges through grant funds and advance Medicare payments," he said.

Chief Financial Officer White summarized the hospital and ambulance budgets, which reflected little change from last year's actual budget. The hospital budget was about breakeven at \$43.5 million and the ambulance budget was just over \$2 million.

"With this budget, it feels like we can move forward again," White said. "We are starting to ramp up again, we are starting to see some activity."

White pointed out the capital outlay line has remained steady at \$370,240 per year; however, infrastructure needs far exceed that amount at \$1.9 million. Infrastructure needs include a roofing project, computer system upgrade, and medical equipment coming to end of life. "This is not a wish list, it is a needs list," White said.

Of particular concern in 2023

will be replacing the information system that will be coming to the end of its 10-year life. White said the \$3.6 million projected for an information system is probably an extremely low figure.

The hospital currently receives 1.830 mills, or \$1,019,747 and the ambulance service receives an identical amount.

Hernandez then addressed the \$2.9 million outstanding balance on the county loan made in 2014. The last few years, CHS asked to defer the payment and the payment is now due June 3. "We need to talk about that. What do we do going forward about the loan?" Hernandez asked.

Hernandez presented three options for county funding in 2021, as part of the county budget process:

Option 1 would reflect no change in funding and reduce services and expenses to cover the \$35,416.67 per month, or \$425,000.04 per year in repayments scheduled to resume this month. Under this option, no capital expenditures would be made except that which is needed in an emergency. It would further push back existing capital needs and likely set CHS back five years and necessitate a multi-million dollar building project in the near future to help address those needs as done in the past.

Option 2 requests total loan forgiveness of the current \$2.9 million balance due, leave the current mill levies in place and not internally address future capital needs above the current annual capital budget of \$370,240 in 2021.

Option 3 would be a one-time proposal based on the fact CHS has supplemented cash through one-time COVID-19 funding options of PPP, advanced/accelerated CMS payments and grants to get through 2020. This option would offer to forfeit the second half of 2020 county tax money (\$941,056.71) in exchange for total forgiveness of the remaining \$2.9 million and keep the 2021 appropriations the same as 2020 with the understanding future capital equipment needs may have to be addressed with an increase in the total mill levies for both the ambulance and hospital as allowed in Kansas statutes.

"Keeping the loan, we are always going to put our capital equipment on hold," Hernandez said. "Our biggest concern is what a relief it would be to move forward not having that \$2.9 million loan hanging over our head."

Hernandez acknowledged the county is probably in a tougher position this year because of COVID. "This is the one and only time we have to make this offer. I truly mean that," he said. "This would be a huge advantage for all the 300 people who work at the health system and for all of the taxpayers."

Commissioner Saueressig said he sat on the board when the county made the loan in 2014. "I am not in favor of forfeiting the loan, but I am in favor of deferring it another year," he said. "Leave the current mill levies in place."

"In normal times, I would say you are right ... my job is to look forward," Hernandez said. He referred to a behavioral health project talked about several years ago. "That would be about \$1.5 million to convert the space. We cannot do that with a \$2.9 million loan," he said.

"In my opinion, if you cut services and employee staff to save 5 percent ... my feeling is if you cut 5 or 6 percent, your gross revenue will probably drop 10 or 15 percent," Commissioner Meats said.

"Exactly," Hernandez said.

"In my opinion, that would be more negative than positive," Meats said.

"That is absolutely right," Hernandez said.

"I think the hospital needs to have some skin in the game," Saueressig said. "It was not intended as a grant, it was intended as a loan."

"The other solution to this is to increase the mill levy and put that money toward the loans until it is paid off," Hernandez said. "But, that doesn't make a lot of sense ... it is taxpayer money ... it is not the time for us to raise the mill levy."

CHS has paid back about \$1.3 million. "That is more than I ever dreamed we would do," Hernandez said. "I came here today to present the budget, to present this option ... if you want to make our health sys-

tem stronger for years to come; I think it is the right thing to do."

Commissioner Rowley was also on the board when the loan was made in 2014. "Most of the discussion was that the hospital would never be able to repay it," he said. "When you carry an albatross around your neck, it can hold you back ... I would say total forgiveness be made to that loan."

Commissioners have 10 days to think about and approve the hospital's request.

County Engineer

County Engineer Wayne Blackburn said testing for ground water sampling passed. One road permit was issued last week to CenturyLink to bury fiber cable at the northeast corner of Dobbin Road and K-58 Hwy. then north 415 feet to a cell tower easement.

Commissioners approved Blackburn's request to solicit informal bids per structure and purchase two precast concrete boxes at Native Road - 10.5 and the intersection of Native Road and 10th Road for the Mathias Lake project.

Boom mowing, seeding and sign maintenance continues throughout the county. Preparations are also underway for dust control.

Blackbourn gave an update on bridge work throughout the county. He said asphalt work will need to be done on the approaches on the Emmer Road bridge north of Eighth Road. He estimates the cost will be about \$12,375 for asphalt and subgrade replacement. A change order will be prepared for approval next week.

Miscellaneous

County Appraiser Connie Lawrence requested a 10-minute executive session to consult with the county counselor for the purpose of protecting the privacy rights of nonelected personnel with Lawrence and Payroll/Benefits Coordinator Denise Humlicek physically present and County Counselor Wade Bowie II present via phone.

Upon return to open session, commissioners approved Lawrence's request to advertise for and hire one full-time field appraiser for the appraiser's office, to fill a vacant position.

Recycling Coordinator Todd Bemis told commissioners he gave a tour of the county's recycling center to a citizen's group from Iola. The group is requesting to take recyclable plastics and glass from Iola to Coffey County rather than taking them to Wichita. This will be a semi load every month or two. Although the market fluctuates greatly, Bemis said the county would realize an income, except for the glass. Commissioners were supportive.

Sheriff Randy Rogers said the sheriff's office is open for business. He recommended keeping restricted hours at

Coffey County Lake for at least two more weeks. He also plans to hold off on hiring any additional personnel.

Commissioners approved one tax abatement to the treasurer's tax roll in the amount of \$306.74.

Commissioners will meet next at 9 a.m. Monday in the basement meeting room of the Coffey County Courthouse. The agenda will include: (9:05) SOS Executive Director Connie Cahoone - 2021 budget request, (9:20) Emergency Management Director Russel Stukey - monthly report, (9:40) County Engineer Wayne Blackburn - weekly report.

Events

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Amy Birk and Gennifer Birk said the celebration will look slightly different. They are working with the Coffey County Health Department and the City of Gridley to make sure all requirements are being met and they are doing what they can do to safely hold the celebration. Hand sanitizing stations are being purchased and will be placed around the park for everyone to use as needed. Everyone will be encouraged to observe social distancing and follow any group gathering rules that will be in effect at that time. One event, the German dinner, has been cancelled for this year, but many other events will still be held, including live entertainment, Firecracker 5K, bingo, Gridley Gravel Grind bike ride, children's fishing derby, parade and fireworks. The dinner and ice cream social and the children's games will also be held, but with some modifications that are still being planned. Visit the Gridley, Kansas Independence Day Celebration Facebook page for further information.

Lebo's Stars and Stripes Extravaganza is being planned for Saturday and Sunday, July 4 and 5. This year's theme is "Lebo's Stars and Stripes Corral: A Western Round Up." The event is still in the planning stages, so few additional details are available. This will be the 31st year for the celebration.

Ohio Days, held annually in Waverly in July, is being planned for Friday through

Tuesday, July 10-14. This year's will be the 124th edition of the celebration. Ottaway Amusement Company has notified event organizers it may not be able to get the workers needed to bring its carnival to Waverly for Ohio Days. Few additional details on this year's event are available as planning is still in progress.

The Coffey County Fair, which holds the title of longest consecutively run fair in Kansas, will continue its run in 2020. The 140th Coffey County Fair will run Wednesday through Sunday, July 22-26, with pre-fair events beginning Friday, July 10. The theme this year is "From Pioneer Ways to Modern Days," and the fair is dedicated to John Wayne and Roberta Norman. Many events are scheduled for the fair, including all of the 4-H judging events and shows, the horse and pedal power tractor pulls, the Sweet 6 and 16 contest, parade, fair breakfast, demolition derby, livestock premium sale and much more. Further information on the fair can be seen on the Coffey County Fair and Events and Coffey County Fair Entertainment Facebook pages.

LeRoy Homecoming is being planned for Sept. 19 in LeRoy. Events being planned include an auto, farm and tool swap, fall craft fair, the LeRoy Homecoming Hustle 2K/5K run, parade and more. Further information on LeRoy Homecoming can be viewed on the LeRoy Homecoming Association Facebook page.

The Coffey County Republican will provide further, more in-depth coverage of each of these community events as they approach and more details become available.

Election

Continued from Page 1

State Representative - 76th district.

Except for precinct races, winners will appear on the general election ballot, as well as U.S. President.

The following candidates filed for office before the deadline.

County Commissioner - District 2
Republican: Don S. Meats, Neosho Falls; Christine Williams, LeRoy.
Democrat: None.

County Commissioner - District 3
Republican: Jesse Knight, Lebo; Randy Miller, Lebo.
Democrat: None.

County Clerk
Republican: Angie Kirchner, New Strawn; Stella P. Eccles, Gridley.
Democrat: Donna Wallace, Waverly.

Register of Deeds
Republican: Gwen R. Birk, Gridley.
Democrat: None.

County Treasurer
Republican: Karen E. Maley, Burlington; Laura Hawkins, Burlington; Richard Croll, New Strawn; Danah Stahl, New Strawn.
Democrat: None.

County Sheriff
Republican: Tom L. Johnson, Burlington; Michael L. Roney, Burlington.
Democrat: None.

County Attorney
Republican: Wade H. Bowie II,

Burlington.
Democrat: None.

Precinct Committeeman and Precinct Committeewoman
Avon
Republican: None.
Democrat: None.

Burlington Township
Republican: Warren W. Bell, Linda Bell.
Democrat: None.

Burlington - Ward 1
Republican: Kathleen D. Gales, Robert Fitz.
Democrat: None.

Burlington - Ward 2
Republican: Rebecca Jo Smith, Brad Jones.
Democrat: None.

Burlington - Ward 3
Republican: Denise Humlicek, Donald E. Small.
Democrat: None.

Hampden
Republican: None.
Democrat: None.

Key West
Republican: Kim Strawder, James R. Strawder Jr.
Democrat: Julia F. George, Philip W. George.

LeRoy
Republican: Bill Otto.
Democrat: None.

Liberty
Republican: None.
Democrat: None.

Lincoln
Republican: Richard Morgan, Ida M. Wilson.
Democrat: None.

Neosho
Republican: Tasha K. Rogers, Roger Cook.
Democrat: None.

Ottumwa
Republican: Angie Kirchner, Illa M. Weeks, Garold D. Gilkinson, Russell K. Stukey, James D. Weeks.
Democrat: None.

Pleasant
Republican: Carol Harris, Mark Harris.
Democrat: None.

Pottawatomie
Republican: Greg Kropf, Sharon K. Henry.
Democrat: None.

Rock Creek
Republican: Georgia J. Masten, Timothy E. Johnson.
Democrat: None.

Spring Creek
Republican: None.
Democrat: None.

Star
Republican: Susan J. Mueller.
Democrat: None.

Township Trustee Burlington
Republican: Sean Douglass.

Key West
Republican: Janie Baker.

Neosho
Republican: Irene Kennard.

Pleasant
Republican: Terry Emmons.

Pottawatomie
Independent: Pete Foltz (will appear on general election ballot).

Rock Creek
Republican: Timothy E. Johnson.

Township Treasurer Burlington
Republican: Warren W. Bell.

Key West
Republican: Holly Ann Myers.

Lincoln
Republican: Ida M. Wilson.

Neosho
Republican: Lyle Fischer.

Pleasant
Republican: Nancy Jesse.

Pottawatomie
Republican: David Poire.

Rock Creek
Republican: Larry Bender.

U.S. Senate
Republican: Lance Berland, Abilene; John L. Berman, Richland; Derek C. Ellis, Topeka; Bob Hamilton, Bucyrus; Kris Kobach, Lecompton; David Alan Lindstrom, Overland Park; Roger Marshall, Great Bend; Brian Matlock, Kansas City; John Miller, Overland Park; Steve Roberts, Overland Park; Gabriel Mark Robles, Topeka.
Democrat: Barbara Bollier, Mission Hills; Robert Leon Tillman, Wichita.

U.S. House of Representatives - 2nd District
Republican: Jake LaTurner, Topeka; Dennis Taylor, Topeka; Steve Watkins, Topeka.
Democrat: Michelle De La Isla, Topeka; James K. Windholz, Lawrence.

Kansas Senate
Republican: Michael A. Fagg, El Dorado; Bruce Givens, El Dorado.
Democrat: None.

Kansas House of Representatives - 76th District
Republican: Robert Harmon, Osage City; Eric L. Smith, Burlington.
Democrat: None.

The Coffey County **Republican**

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