

City of New Strawn

September 2009

Message from the Mayor

Greetings! I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer.

I want to inform citizens of New Strawn about recent activity at City Hall as well as topics that will be tackled in the near future.

First, the really good news is the city council passed a budget at the Aug. 6 meeting that reflects a 7.012 mill decrease in the city tax levy, from 53.220 mills to 46.208 mills. That translates to a savings of \$80.64 for the owner of a \$100,000 homes.

Unfortunately, the county mill levy increased 5.857 mills and the Burlington USD 244 mill levy increased .180 mills, which will eat up all but .975 mills of the decrease. So, compared to last year, New Strawn taxpayers should see their overall tax bill remain about the same.

New Strawn's mill levy decrease is due to two general obligation bonds being paid off this year. The city has one more G.O. bond on the books, and it will be paid off in 2011. The good news is there should be enough money in the bond and interest fund next year to make the final year's payment. That should translate to an additional 2.251 mill decrease next year.

After the 2011 G.O. bond is paid off, the city's only debt will be the state loan for the water system, which now has a balance under \$1 million.

The city will be working the next several months with a represent from Kansas Rural Water Association to review our water rates. Our water fund has been subsidized by the general fund for a number of years. With fluctuations in expenses, it is time to review the health of the fund to determine if any water rate adjustments need to be made while ensuring all water users are billed fairly.

Our three-year trash contract with Allied Waste will expire in February. The city council will spend the next two or three months seeking and

reviewing bids for a new contract.

The city's overall assessed valuation increased from \$2.7 to \$2.8 million over the past year. Despite the slow economy, new construction is evident in New Strawn. New construction helps to grow the tax base, which helps keep the mill levy in check.

New Strawn is trying to remain business friendly by not imposing a city sales tax. The sales tax in New Strawn is 5.3 percent – the state rate. Burlington has a 2-cent city sales tax, which brings the total sales tax bill on purchases to 7.3 percent. The cities of LeRoy and Lebo also collect a city sales tax.

The city council soon will decide what to do with the city-owned school building. Allen Community College paid the city rent to operate its Health Care Academy from the building. ACC decided earlier this year to terminate its lease on June 30, based on several factors that included decreased state revenue, declining enrollment attributed to the slower economy and online course options, and a similar program that began operating about the same time in a nearby county.

The city council is seriously looking at moving city hall to the school building.

Here are some thoughts behind moving City Hall to the school building:

- * The two southeast rooms could be used for the city offices.

- * One classroom (likely the northeast classroom) could be used for the post office with lobby access from the east drive.

- * Two classrooms (likely the west classrooms) could be rented to a business or organization for additional revenue.

- * The large meeting room (former gymnasium) could be used for city council meetings and elections (plenty of space). It could also be rented for meeting space or additional rented space when the community center is booked.

City of New Strawn

* The school building is handicap accessible, including the restrooms.

* The school building has a basement that is accessible in case of severe weather; the basement at the present city hall is not readily accessible.

* The school building offers more and better organized and secure storage space than the present city hall.

* A lot of work was done to prepare the school building for ACC. The roof is in good shape. Leaks in the basement were fixed. The walls received a fresh coat of paint. The building has new carpet. The fire alarm system was refurbished. The storage area was improved. New entrance doors were installed. Electrical wiring was upgraded. ACC installed its own telephone system; the wiring is intact.

Here are a few other things being considered:

--The city could rent the building to one or more tenants, but the city would still have to maintain the building and recruit tenants for the building.

--The city could sell the building. However, the city has been told there is not a demand for this type of building and the price a buyer would pay is likely to be much less than the county's appraised value.

-- The city likely would be better off selling the present city hall, which would provide additional business retail space. City hall would likely sell faster than the school building. Then the city would only have one building to maintain.

-- The school will have some additional maintenance as far as the furnace and A/C. Each of the four smaller rooms has its own furnace and A/C and the larger room has two furnace and A/C units. I would recommend selling the present city hall building and placing a portion of the proceeds in a capital improvement fund in order to pay for larger ticket items, such as furnace or A/C, when necessary.

-- Utilities will cost more at the school, but the added cost could be offset by renting space to a business as well as renting meeting space in the large room.

--And ... the school has a flag pole; city hall does not.

I believe the best option for the city, at this point, would be to move city hall and the post office to the school building and sell the present city hall building to someone who will hopefully add one or more retail businesses. The city would be maintaining one building instead of two and we would have at least one additional property tax payer in the city. The school would also provide an additional meeting place for the community.

Mark Petterson
Mayor

OKKIDS

Saturday, September 12th through
Sunday, September 13th.

OKKIDS (Outdoor Kansas Kids) will take place beginning Saturday, September 12th through Sunday, September 13th. Camping will be available at John Redmond Reservoir, Riverside West campground. Meals will be provided by the Emergency Services Group, (EMS, Fire, and Law Enforcement). A short church service will be held on Sunday for those in attendance. All weekend activities, camping and food are free to everyone who comes to the event.

**Congrats!!
to
Richard Croll recently
appointed to the New Strawn
Zoning Board
&
Kathy Payne recently
appointed as New Strawn
City Treasurer.**

Peddler's and Solicitor's License

The City of New Strawn requires that door-to-door salespersons have a license from the City. When someone comes to your door selling a product or service, please ask to see their City License. If they do not have one, please contact City Hall and let us know that someone is out soliciting sales in the community. Please provide a description of the person (s) and/or vehicle, if possible.

Salespersons who have an established route such as Schwan's are not required to be licensed by the City.

Reminder

A recent ordinance passed by the City Council allows licensed drivers to drive golf carts on city streets. It is still illegal to drive ATV's, such as four-wheelers, on city streets.

Dog catcher needed

The City is in need of a dog catcher. The duties will be to pick up dogs and cats that are in violation of the city's ordinance. Anyone interested can contact city hall.

**Cancer Support Group
Meets the last Thursday of every
month at Coffey County Hospi-
tal. For more information,
contact Sheri O'Keefe
(620)-364-2704**

The City of New Strawn would like to thank

Ginny Mitchell

for her many years of service as City Treasurer.

City of New Strawn

P. O. Box 922

New Strawn, KS 66839

620-364-8283

Fax 620-364-5110

Attention Businesses

The City would like to put together a new resident packet. If you would like information about your business to be included please send it to City Hall.

Flyers, brochures and coupons would be great!!

We will be conducting sewer maintenance in the Arrowhead area September 9th through September 18th.