

from our viewpoint...

Balancing needs or raising taxes

Faced with a possible 7 percent property tax increase in their proposed budget, Sherman County commissioners spent nearly 90 minutes focusing on two specific items in the road and bridge department last week.

In the end, the commissioners decided to cut money the commissioners had added to the budget to pay for the county's share of an upcoming Kansas Department of Transportation project to replace the asphalt on County Road 14 between old U.S. 24 and I-70 with concrete. The commissioners had put \$200,000 in the budget to cover the project, and to help if the bids for the one-mile sections of Road 14 and Road 16 north of old U.S. 24 to County Road 65 (Eighth Street) come in over budget.

The later two projects are part of the joint city-county road program being paid for by the special 1-cent sales tax that went into effect last year.

Planning ahead seems like a good idea. The county will face a number of costly issues dealing with roads, including the cost of the two sections of road and the need to chip seal more than 34 miles of new asphalt a few years from now.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure is on record against a property tax increase next year, but Commissioners Mitch Tiede and Chuck Thomas say they are comfortable with raising property taxes.

Rasure sought to cut the equipment and repair budget items in the road and bridge fund, since the special machinery equipment fund has over \$300,000. Rasure said that should be sufficient to cover the down payments and annual lease payments for purchases next year.

The machinery fund has been built up over the past few years from money that Curt Way, public works manager, has managed to keep from spending at the end of each year. It makes no difference whether the money left at the end of the year is the results of frugal spending or a padded budget, though; the fact is Way has been able to build up the machinery fund.

The money won't go to waste, but Rasure argued keeping it is like setting up a savings account with taxpayers' money. He said having more than \$500,000 for equipment is excessive.

Way said his budget estimate for next year showed an increase of about \$38,000 over this year. He does not see how that is being excessive. Way said the cost of road equipment is such that it would not take long to spend the \$500,000 and need more.

Road and Bridge, with a budget of about \$1.4 million, is the largest piece of the county expenses. With about 1,200 miles of road to maintain, the department has a large responsibility.

Maybe the commissioners should study the rest of the budget and see if there is another place to cut.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said she did nothing more than take the budget requests from all the county departments and add them up to get the total. That would require an increase of 4.6 mills in the property tax, but the cut to the state highway project reduced that to about 3.6 mills or about 7 percent.

The commissioners have time before the budget hearing to review the total again, and maybe ask each department to cut their requests by 3 to 5 percent. That could be enough to balance the county budget without having to raise taxes.

Way noted during his discussion with the commissioners that the county valuation went up about \$2 million this year, and should produce about \$150,000 more in income for the county.

The county is recovering from the long drought. To help that recovery, this would be a good time for the county to hold the line on taxes. — Tom Betz

Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 09/13/07 www.caglecartoons.com



It really has been 41 years

Had it really been 41 years?

Guess so, because here we were at our 40th class reunion.

OK, it should have been last year, but four classes from Emporia High School decided to go together and put on one big bash.

I'd been to the 10th and 20th reunions and had to skip the 30th for some reason, but I wasn't going to miss this one.

The first night, our class — the class of 1966 — met alone. All the others had to meet at some bar, but we were lucky; we got to meet a Lindy's house at the family lake. It's not much of a lake, just a block or so long, but it's their lake and they have a lot of fun at it. Her mom lives at the other end and her sister has a house on the opposite side.

It's a little surreal seeing people you haven't been around for 41 years. Some seem to have changed hardly at all. Others, you wouldn't recognize.

Ann and Betty looked the same. Nearly inseparable in high school, they drifted far apart after college. Betty said she was doing social justice work in the north woods of Wisconsin, just off Lake Superior, while Ann is a consultant in Manhattan, living in New Jersey.

Sure, like all of us, they'd aged, but no one had any trouble recognizing them.

People spent a lot of time peering at the little pictures on the name tags, trying to place a face now with a face then. Everyone said I hadn't



steve haynes

• along the sappa

changed — except for the hair. They always say that. It started going gray when I was 25 and I gave up worrying about it years ago.

Lindy made Jumburgers, a specialty from the drive-in we went to as kids. I think it was closed by the time we got to high school, but the adjacent bar was open, and still is. They put a smile on some faces.

Mostly, we drank wine and beer and talked, trying to get to as many of the 50 or so class members (out of about 240) who made the trip.

When the four classes got together, it seems like we had about everything you could expect: At least one state cabinet member, Roger, who married a girl from Oberlin. A gal who used to be a guy. Twins who never dressed alike and still didn't. Several professors. Doctors of different stripes. Lawyers and railroaders, you name it.

Some of it fit, some of it was a real surprise. Most interesting to me were the ones you didn't expect, especially the quiet, geeky kids. Bob became a research chemist, worked all around the world, helped perfect the catalytic

converter for pollution control. Ralpheia taught college chemistry.

Some of the socialites never changed. Some still acted like they were in high school. There are a few couples who married after graduation, raised kids, built homes, never left town. And they're still together. It's almost like even their hairstyle didn't change, though some of those girls are way too stylish to be stuck in the '60s.

Then there were the ones who didn't show. Some of them we'd really like to have seen, including a couple of lawyers and a doctor. A lot of people asked about my brother, who never comes back to town, even though he isn't in one of those classes.

There were some of the bright stars I'd like to have seen, but there wasn't time to talk to everyone who was there.

I'd like to have had 15 minutes with each one and jotted down some notes. The stories they have to tell. Guess that'll have to wait for another day.

I noticed the night broke up early. We're getting older, and next time, it'll be more so. By 10 p.m. Ann and Betty had gone to the bar to talk about old times and couples were drifting off.

Not like the old days. Not at all, but not a bad time, either.

Republicans Gone Wild 2!

If you're one of the millions still rolling on the floor in amazement at the greed and hypocrisy featured in last year's surprise hit: "REPUBLICANS GONE WILD," throw that DVD away. Because you're not going to believe the extreme and hilarious action we've compiled for you in the brand new "REPUBLICANS GONE WILD 2."

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All your favorite 2007 moments are here. Gasp as chastised Louisiana Sen. David Vitter, southern regional chair of the Giuliani



will durst

• raging moderate

campaign, admits to frequenting a house of prostitution, but avoids any further questions by saying the matter is between his family and God.

Inhale as newly elected millionaire South Carolina Treasurer Thomas Ravenel, chair of the SC Giuliani campaign, is charged with conspiracy to distribute a quantity of cocaine, carrying a possible sentence of 20 years in prison.

Guffaw as Robert W. Allen, co-chair of Sen. John McCain's Florida legislative leadership team, is arrested for soliciting prostitution from an undercover police officer posing as a transvestite in a public park restroom, but says he was intimidated into it due to being the only white guy in the area.

Thrill as Idaho Sen. Larry Craig, Mitt Romney's '08 GOP Senate coordinator, announces to the world, "I am not gay. I have never been gay." Then repeats it about 87 times and thanks those in attendance "for coming out today."

Become a member of the "REPUBLICANS GONE WILD Pioneers Club," and enjoy instant access to a special website and all the "REPUBLICANS GONE WILD" archives. 24/7. Republicans never sleep. Why should you? Get exclusive clips not available anywhere else. Updated daily.

NOTE: "REPUBLICANS GONE WILD 3," being compiled by assistant DAs all over America as we speak. Act within the next 48 hours and get a free "FOLEY/ CRAIG '08" bumper sticker!

Comedian, actor, writer, former radio talk show host and all-you-can-eat pancake flipper, Will Durst, thinks while Sen. Larry "Jiminy" Craig may indeed be a homosexual, he is certainly not gay.

Will Durst is a political comedian who has performed around the world. E-mail Will at durst@caglecartoons.com.



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