

City votes to restore drug task force money

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the figure for this year shows Goodland with nearly half of the cases in the four-county area.

Murphy said Police Chief Ray Smeed is an active member of the task force board.

"We gather information to plug into the puzzle and eventually put the pieces together and we can go for a conviction," he said.

Murphy said 13 were arrested in 2001, but only nine resulted in convicted.

"We rolled four over as informants," he said.

"I think the task force has done a good job," Billinger said. "I think it is important even if you only get one off the street in a year. If we don't fight this, the drug people will just move in here."

"We have to keep it from being a lucrative proposition," Murphy said, "and need to stop them from selling to our kids."

"We did not have this information when we met in July," Commissioner John Garcia said. "I salute you for the efforts the task force is making."

Wallace County Sheriff Larry Townsend, another task force member, said it is important for Goodland to be part of the task force.

"I am not sure I can ever explain to you what the effect has been on the counties to have the task force," Townsend said. "It is huge, and important that we keep after the drugs."

"What would be the major disadvantage if we were not involved?" Commissioner Dave Daniels asked.

"Our sheriff is a member. Aren't we covered even if the city is not a member?"

"The biggest disadvantage is going to be the effectiveness of the officer on the street," Murphy replied. "When they stop a car and find marijuana, they would not have the benefit of sharing information

with the other officers. The sheriff is mostly involved with enforcing laws outside the city.

"It was an off handed comment that led us to the last bust. It was a Goodland case, and that led us to another and to another."

Daniels asked how much each county pays, and Murphy said it is by agency.

Billinger said he felt it had to do with the number of people and the size of the police forces, noting that both Thomas County and the Colby police department pay.

Chief Smeed said he thought there was some confusion about when he said, "if he needs help he can get it."

"If I need help right now," he said, "I can make a call to Larry or Mike and they will get me help now in an immediate emergency."

"If we are doing a drug investigation and we are not part of the drug task force, we will not get the help over the long term."

"I think I misunderstood that," Daniels said. "My misconception is that could happen at any time. We didn't specifically discuss the drug investigation."

Murphy said drug investigations usually take a long time, from two to three months or two to three years.

"If you have a hostage situation, you will have all the help you need," he said, "but when that is over, they will go home."

Billinger said he felt it was important if they could keep one kid from getting involved in methamphetamine.

Murphy said meth is 97 percent addictive, meaning that only 3 out of 100 who try it will not be hooked. He said for those who try to get off meth, only 7 percent will not use meth again.

Billinger said when the Crimestoppers people were at the last meeting, they asked if people could donate money to help with the drug task force cost. He asked City Manager

Wayne Hill if he had checked with the city attorney about that.

Hill said he had, and that the answer is yes, people can donate money to the city. He said it goes into the general fund and it is up to the commission where the money goes.

Billinger asked insurance agent Walt Linthacum, a Crimestoppers spokesperson, what money might be available.

"We have not asked for any specific amount," he said. "We do not want to really look at that. We are not that well organized, and it would probably be an effort beyond what we can handle."

Commissioner Annette Fairbanks asked if they needed to vote that night, and Billinger said he felt they needed to give the task force and Crimestoppers an answer.

Daniels asked if the task force is on a calendar year or would the city pick up where they cut off the money.

Murphy said the grant is on the state fiscal year which means it started on July 1, and it is in the 2008 cycle.

"Goodland has not been kicked out," he said. "We hoped this would be fixed. The matching funds that you pay would apply from July 1 to June 30."

"We are looking at two years," Hill said. "We amended this year's budget to remove the \$5,000 for the year and cut the \$5,000 for next year."

Billinger made a motion to pay for this year's dues and to find money to pay for next year's dues.

Garcia seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Linthacum thanked the commission for their consideration and time.

County budget Ok'd; property taxes will rise

BUDGET, from Page 1

ders why it is taking nearly \$500,000 to balance the budget.

"I think the problem is with road and bridge," Enfield said. "I think they are over budgeting every year, and you have not held them down."

Enfield said the past few years, the road department has been over budget by at least \$195,000 and now over \$350,000. He said it appears the commissioners are allowing that department to stay over budget, and then he brought up the special machinery fund, which has a balance of \$300,000.

"That fund is for equipment, and we need a lot of new stuff," Tiede said. "There have been changes in the Cat (Caterpillar Tractor) product and Curt Way (public works manager) doesn't want one of the new electronic graders. He wants to wait until they are a little more developed. I am sure that money will be spent. He as only purchased one used truck this year."

Thomas said Way likes to rotate graders at 10,000 hours, and that there are now two graders at 10,000 hours he expects to trade.

Enfield said he knew costs had gone up, but feels the county has not looked for ways to keep from raising taxes.

Tiede replied that in his business, he faces increased costs and he has had to raise his rates to keep up.

"As a farmer," asked Enfield, "can we raise our rates?"

"Our rates did raise," Thomas replied, noting the current higher prices for most agriculture products.

"How many years has that happened," Hayden said. "If he can't find a way to get things cheaper - I am not just using him as an example - are we not checking far enough to find the cheapest prices?"

Thomas said the departments are checking to find the cheapest prices, and that the county takes bids on larger items.

Thomas asked Enfield if he had a personal conflict with Way and Steve Goodman, road and bridge supervisor.

"Yes, because I feel they have mismanaged things and overspent," Enfield said. "After all the discussion, you are going to raise my taxes."

Hayden asked if the taxes have to be raised every year?

"No, they don't have to go up every year," Tiede said.

"I am not doing this for me," Hayden said. "I think there are people who are overtaxed in this county."

Thomas said he did not believe that the county taxes are too high, adding that you can't compare about the city taxes.

Hayden said she did not think that was a fair statement. She said she was saying that the commissioners should be looking at everything in each budget.

"A lot of little things can be added up to a fair amount," she said.

Tiede said he would rather see the departments budget a little more than they spend rather than to run out of money at the end of the year. He said it is hard to do a budget with almost three months left in the year, not knowing what might happen.

"Why do we allow road and bridge to over budget every year?" Rasure asked.

Without answering the question, Thomas brought up the fact that last year there was an unplanned \$74,000 that had to come out of the road and bridge budget.

Rasure said while that was true, the department still came in way over budget.

"Why do we need to have such a large amount of money for equipment?" Rasure asked

"We need to have the money," Tiede said. "In the end, it will save the taxpayers money. You don't know what the interest rate will do, and it will not take too many purchases to use that money."

Thomas said the money is not just sitting there; it is making interest.

"When you get low enough, then raise my taxes," Enfield replied.

Tiede said if there is a big enough carryover next year, the commissioners might be able to lower the taxes.

"Are you saying you will lower the taxes?" Enfield asked.

"I would say that is a possibility," Tiede said.

Rasure said the county valuation will probably be up again next year, bringing in more money.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said the special machinery fund has \$300,000, and wondered if Way might not add more from the expected carryover this year. She said he might move another \$100,000 into the fund.

"Now we are looking at \$400,000?" Enfield asked.

"He hasn't spent any money this year," Tiede said.

"You are doing whatever he wants you to do," Hayden said. "I wonder who is running the county."

"I do not want that in the paper," she added. "I have heard some things about people who said things about him before."

"Why do we have to have such a large equipment fund," Rasure asked

"I would rather not raise more taxes," Hayden said.

"I feel like we need to raise the taxes," Tiede said.

"Allowing someone to budget what they want," Rasure said. "Will he put more money in special equipment this year?"

"It depends on what he has to do," Tiede said. "I suspect he will put more money in the special equipment fund."

"That raises up to \$600,000," Rasure said, adding the special fund and a \$200,000 line item in the road and bridge budget.

"It won't happen that way," Tiede said. "I am sure he will spend some

and he may have money to put it in the fund. I am getting tired of arguing about it."

"I am not a politician and don't want your job," Hayden said. "I don't understand your reasoning. This is not a rich county and I feel like we have enough of a tax burden."

"I talked to people about the issue and said they should come to the meeting. They told me, 'It won't make any difference. They've made up their minds. We cannot change their minds.'"

Tiede thanked her and Enfield for coming to the meeting.

Rasure, who runs a hardware store, said people he talks with are telling him they oppose a tax increase, too.

"I vote no on the budget," Rasure said. "You don't hear from people on a daily basis."

Tiede said no one has called him. Thomas said he has not been receiving any calls.

Rasure then left the meeting, and the vote was 2-0 to approve the budget and the tax increase.

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