

TAX LEVY

From Page 1

Alexandria's tax levy is the lowest of 22 comparable cities that are considered to be regional centers, Schultz said. From 2020 to 2021, the average levy of those 22 cities increased 3.71% while Alexandria's increase was just 1.08%, Schultz said. Put another way, the average city taxes on a \$210,000 house in Alexandria amounted to \$820.68, considerably lower than the 22-city average of \$1,313.44.

As in past years, the Alexandria Police Department is the largest 2022 budget item at \$3.58 million, an increase of 4.6% from this year.

Other budgets in the general fund are proposed as follows (2021 amounts are shown in parenthesis and amounts are rounded):

- General government - \$2,716,986 (\$2,536,292).
- Streets - \$1,454,903 (\$1,402,282).
- Parks - \$760,342 (\$728,265).
- Runestone Community Center - \$681,647 (\$677,106).

- Fire protection - \$452,313 (\$444,725).
- Building department - \$409,930 (\$409,006).
- Airport - \$185,200 (\$185,200).
- New staff positions - \$146,800 (zero).
- Engineering - \$105,000 (\$95,000).
- Recreation - \$50,000 (\$50,000).
- Animal control - \$23,500 (\$23,000).
- Senior Center - \$22,000 (\$15,000).
- Emergency management - \$8,500 (\$8,500).

The 2022 budget will be offset by \$196,800 in health care reductions from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, which was not in place in 2020.

There were no public comments about the budget.

The city council can still adjust the budget or lower the levy before the final amounts are approved. The final adoption of the 2022 budget and tax levy, known as the "truth-in-taxation hearing," will be considered at a public hearing at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 13.

Contact Editor Al Edenloff at aedenloff@echopress.com

PROJECTS

From Page 1

According to its website, Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge offers treatment and recovery programs including outpatient, both telehealth and in-person; licensed residential programs (seven to 90 days); long-term recovery (12 months) and more. The programs are for those seeking treatment for the first time to those who have been struggling with addiction for years.

Those entering in the program are expected to pay for it. However, if they do not have insurance or need financial assistance, they could go to the county and apply.

In a letter to the planning commission, Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, R-Alexandria, supported the project. As a former sheriff, Ingebrigtsen said he's seen first-hand what drug and alcohol abuse

does to individuals and families.

"The life changing success of this program is known state wide," Ingebrigtsen said.

New apartment building

The council issued a conditional use permit allowing Kuepers, Inc. to build the market-rate apartment complex in a 3.99-acre site south of the Westfield Apartments, northeast of Apol's Harley Davidson near the 42nd Avenue intersection.

The project also calls for three detached garages.

The owner also owns the Westfield Apartments and is listed on the land use application as Heritage Property Development in Alexandria, represented by Tim Wagner. Christopher Raimann from Kuepers in Brainerd is also listed on the application.

According to the City Planner Mike Weber, city code required 2,500 square feet of

land per unit for multiple family buildings. This site has about 174,000 square feet, which would allow up to 69 units, 20 more than the proposed amount.

City code requires the developer to pay \$500 per unit, in this case, \$24,500, which will go to the city's public parks and recreation facilities.

Runestone Community Center

The council approved the city's conditional use permit to add 64,100 square feet on the main level of the center and 22,000 square feet on the upper level.

The addition will add event space that will also serve as a third sheet of ice.

There will also be additional storage, meeting rooms, a new entry, team rooms, restrooms, offices, figure skating space and a new main circulation area that connects the three rinks together.

The site is located at 802 3rd Ave. W., on the south side of the Third Avenue/County Road 82 intersection, north of Viking Speedway.

The city's plan calls to expand the RCC on its southwest corner, along with improving the roads - Third Avenue, Fairgrounds Road and eventually Latoka Drive - and making the entire area more attractive and usable on a year-round basis.

Parking will be expanded by adding 412 stalls.

During a planning and zoning meeting about the project, Thomas Betti with the 292 Design Group said the expansion will provide more dry floor space, which he said is a big need in the community. He said it would allow the RCC to hold some of the bigger shows. The arena will have seating for 600 people.

Contact Editor Al Edenloff at aedenloff@echopress.com



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