

## Chippewa County approves 5 percent preliminary tax levy increase

Commissioners hope to get final levy under 5 percent by December's Truth and Taxation meeting

By Sam Peterson

The Chippewa County Commissioners met for their regular meeting on Sept. 21 and passed the preliminary 2022 tax levy increase at 5 percent. Because it is the preliminary tax levy, the increase can go no higher than 5 percent, but Chippewa County is looking to get the increase under 5 percent by the Truth and Taxation Hearing on Tuesday, Dec. 21 when they approve the final tax levy.

The total 2022 gross levy is currently at \$12,584,399 with \$7,493,195 in the general fund, \$1,661,238 in the road and bridge fund, \$3,066,019 in the Family Services fund, \$281,947 in the library fund and \$82,000 in soil and water. The county received \$639,149 in county program aid, \$380,572 for the general fund, \$84,373 in the road and bridge fund, \$155,720 in the Family Services Fund, \$14,320 in the library fund and \$4,165 in soil and water. The county program aid brought the 2022 net levy down to \$11,945,250.

In other business, the commissioners heard a presentation from Summit Carbon Solutions regarding a planned carbon dioxide pipeline that is going to be constructed in a couple years. The pipeline will be constructed across several Minnesota counties to capture carbon dioxide from ethanol plants and permanently store it underground in North Dakota. The project would have less than a quarter-mile of pipeline in Chippewa County running from Granite Falls Energy. The pipeline will generate a number of temporary jobs during construction and reduce carbon emissions from the plants. Even though the project is not supposed to start for two years, they are currently educat-

ing all the local governments so they know what to expect when the project does get underway.

In other business, county drainage inspector Josh Macziewski addressed the commissioners. According to Macziewski, he and county auditor/treasurer Michelle May are currently working on proposed drainage assessments for 2022. They are working to find a date in November of this year to have a public hearing and will be mailing landowners letters in the next few weeks to start the process.

Later on the agenda, the board heard from CCM Health CFO Desi Anspach who was there to discuss some proposed bank account changes. Currently, the county has coordination with Anspach's office, but they are trying to make sure the relationship is appropriate, efficient and with proper oversight. No action was taken, but the county is doing some additional research on how they can work together with CCM Health, since it is a city/county owned hospital.

The commissioners also entered a closed session for the performance evaluation of county engineer Jeremy Gilb. According to May, the board gave him a satisfactory review and a step increase.

At the end of the meeting, the commissioners piled into a vehicle with Gilb and went on a county road tour. The tour went around much of the county and gave the commissioners a chance to see several road and bridge projects in person.

With nothing else on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned. The commissioners will be back for the next regular county board meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 12 at the Chippewa County Courthouse in Montevideo.

## Prinsburg sets 10 percent preliminary tax increase

Preliminary property tax levy comes in at \$439,289

By Billie Jo Rassat

By the end of the month the city of Prinsburg must report their preliminary numbers for property taxes payable in 2022. With the levy set at \$439,289, city residents will see a 10 percent increase from their 2021 property taxes, as was approved by the Prinsburg City Council at their September meeting earlier this month.

The city's projected revenue for 2022 is \$622,590, which is up from 2021's \$556,480. However, in 2021 their expenditures topped out at \$634,200, leaving the city at a loss of \$77,720 in their general fund. For 2022, the expenditures are projected to be \$601,400, which will leave the city with a \$21,190 surplus to be added to the general fund. The ending fund balance for 2022 is set to be \$489,115.

At the council's December meeting, the city will approve the final levy, which can not go any higher than the 10 percent approved for the preliminary levy. However, after the council takes the next few months to look closer at their numbers, they have the option to lower the increase of the final levy for 2022.

Also during the council meeting, four building permits were requested and approved. The first was for Warren Damhof, who will be adding a sidewalk from his front door to the driveway. The second for Amy Zempel is for a new utility shed for her back yard behind her garage. The third is from Service Oil Enterprises. The business will be putting a new roof line on. The last is for a fence on the property owned by Connor Hedlof.

In other business, a new water fountain will be installed at city hall/fire hall. The cost of the fountain is approximately \$5,458. It will feature a bottle filling station.

Also on the agenda, council member Mitch Swart gave a review of the Joint Powers/Fire Board meeting that was held at the beginning of the month. During the meeting, Swart said the board approved to replace the remaining lights in city hall/fire hall with new LED lighting. The truck bay had been done last year and they felt it was necessary to replace the remaining lights. The cost of this will be \$3,350.

Also discussed at the Joint Powers/Fire Board meeting was how the numbers were down for the Prinsburg Fire Department. Right now they sit at 14 and have three new applicants, but could use more. The new applicants are Tyler Wubben, William Marcus and Kevin Engstom.

Swart also announced that Fire Prevention Week will be held from Oct. 3-9.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned and the next regular Prinsburg City Council meeting will be held at 1 p.m., on Tuesday, Oct. 12, at the Prinsburg City Offices.



## Say 'Goodbye' to summer

It's always a sad day when summer relinquishes its final days to fall. While the Fall Equinox has come and gone, summer has shown some staying power these last few weeks. With temperatures ranging in the high 80's Monday through today, a cool front should move through dropping temps back down to low 70's for the rest of the week. Some monarch butterflies are holding onto these last days as well before they begin their long trek to Mexico.

## Kandiyohi County Board to help Prinsburg improve high-speed broadband

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, \$330,000 has been earmarked for fiber-optic broadband project

By Sam Peterson

The city of Prinsburg has been looking into ways to improve the internet quality within their city limits, but with a small budget, they were running into roadblocks. Prinsburg Mayor Roger Ahrenholz attended the most recent Kandiyohi County board meeting and the board agreed to set aside \$330,000 of their American Rescue Funds to help Prinsburg with the project.

Prior to the Kandiyohi County Board meeting, Prinsburg agreed to partner with Arvig Enterprises to construct a \$1 million fiber-optic broadband system for the city that will bring every residence in the city limits access to the state standard broadband speeds.

Arvig has committed \$450,000 to the project and will cover any costs over the estimated \$1 million project cost. Prinsburg has committed \$45,000 of their ARP funds for the project and another \$175,000 in city legal and accounting fees. At the meeting, Kandiyohi County approved covering the remaining \$330,000 for the project.

The construction for the Prinsburg project is expected to start this spring and be completed in December of 2022.

The Kandiyohi County Board has been

considering using all of its \$8 million in ARP funds for various broadband projects across the county, but no official decisions have been made on the remaining ARP funds.

In other business, the board approved their first remote work policy so they would be prepared if numbers continue to rise in the county. When COVID-19 started spreading a year and a half ago, Kandiyohi County was scrambling to figure out what to do. The doors to the county offices were closed and staff was allowed to work from home, even though there was no remote work policy in place.

As time went on, most of the Kandiyohi County employees returned to work in person. A group of staff created a committee to make a concise and detailed remote work policy. According to county administrator Larry Kleindl, this was one of the more extensive policies the county has ever worked on because they wanted to make sure nothing was missed. Over the course of several months, the policy was revised until it finally came in front of the board.

According to Kleindl, this policy will not allow all county staff to have the opportunity to work from home. For example, members of the Sheriff's Office will not have any

remote workers, but public works employees would be able to perform the duties of their position remotely. Kleindl went on to say that working remotely is a privilege, not a right. In order to qualify to work remotely, the employee must have worked for the county for at least a year. The employee will need a reliable internet connection in order to be considered for working remotely.

According to human resources director Connie Mort, the policy is more restrictive than many other workplaces, but that was done intentionally. In order for an employee to work remotely they have to adhere to many requirements and rules. If the employee's supervisor does not like how things are going, the remote work privileges can be revoked at any time. Because of all the requirements, Kleindl expects a large number of Kandiyohi County employees to choose to stay working in person.

When it came down to a vote, the commissioners were all in agreement and unanimously passed the remote work policy to make sure there is a roadmap to follow for any situation that arises in the future.

With nothing else on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned. The Kandiyohi County Board will reconvene for their next regular meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 12.

## Zero again

Raymond manages to set zero percent tax increase for 2022, this makes nearly 10 years in a row with no increase

By Billie Jo Rassat

They did it again. At their September monthly meeting, Raymond's City Council managed to balance the numbers so the city will again, nearly 10 years in a row, see a zero percent increase in their property taxes for 2022.

The proposed budget is set for \$395,442 in revenues with

\$393,150 in expenditures. This will leave the city with a positive balance of \$2,292. This leaves the city's preliminary tax levy at \$258,694 for 2022.

In other business, the city approved the purchase of a new pick-up. They will buy a Ford F150 four-door crew cab for \$38,800. The truck will be purchased from Nolan Baker Ford in Kerkhoven. The vehicle

will be used for city workers.

The council also approved the maintenance and cleaning of the city's filter plant. For \$38,720, Rubin Construction LLC will service Raymond's drinking water system. This maintenance has not been done in over 20 years.

Also on the agenda, the Raymond Ambulance reported on the number of calls they

received from December 2020 to August 2021. They responded to a total of 128 calls. The breakdown includes: December 2020 - 17, January 2021 - 13, February - 8, March - 10, April - 15, May - 15, June - 15, July - 12 and August - 22.

The next Raymond City Council meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 11.

## Maynard approves 7 percent preliminary tax increase

Households will see an estimated \$91.45 increase in their 2022 takes

By Billie Jo Rassat

At the regular September monthly meeting, Maynard's city council approved their 2022 preliminary tax levy for \$267,312.45. This makes for an increase of 7 percent.

The city's proposed budget has been approved at \$372,655 in expenses with \$430,810.45 in revenue to make for a positive balance of \$58,155.45. Now until the

December meeting, the council does have this time to make changes to the budget to possibly lower the tax impact. Until the final levy is due to the State at the end of this year, Maynard can lower the increase but not go any higher than the preliminary levy.

In other business, the council accepted the retirement of long-time Maynard fire fighter Jeff Tepfer. He has hung up his helmet after serving 29 years. He was thanked for his many years of services to the city and

surrounding communities.

Also on the agenda, the council approved three zoning permits. The first is for new siding at 200 Swift Ave., second is for new siding and painting work for 420 Cynthia St. and the final is for an addition to the garage at 720 Cynthia St.

The next Maynard City Council meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 11 at City Hall.