

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

Seward County's Capital Improvement Plan has several categories, and county commissioners recently approved the 2009 plan.

One of those categories is the general fund, an area of the plan for departments which do not generate revenue, according to county administrator Mary Bloomer. Those items include departments in the county's new administration building.

"Most of those weren't large items," she said. "Those were copiers and printers and those kinds of things, technology things. Those aren't high ticket items. Vehicles, things that are on a normal rotating cycle, general technology things. The attorney's office who's adding additional staff, some furniture."

The 2009 general fund CIP equipment reserve was \$539,954, but the general fund items requested amounted to \$631,657, according to Bloomer, who said the county will be able to meet the requested CIP needs because of \$100,000 worth of additional funding from the Baughman Foundation specifically allocated for the sheriff's department. This brings a net result for expenditures from the general fund CIP to \$531,657.

Bloomer said the higher ticket items were in departments such as the landfill, which is supported by revenue fees.

"Those were items like the liners, trucks," he said. "There's a liner that's being approved in the meeting this Monday as the phase 4 liner. If the cash is not there, they don't get purchased. Those are all things like loaders, pickups, dozers. Each time you have a new phase where they do another liner, those kinds of things are all high-dollar ticket items."

Landfill CIP items requested amounted to \$1,928,798, she said.

The county's road and bridge department is under a separate levy, and Bloomer said items in that budget include Oklahoma road gravel, asphalt and motor graders. She said funds for that budget could be saved for over possibly two or three years.

Bloomer said the county used to be able to rely on a certain amount of highway funds from state, city and county, but there will be a shortfall of about \$70,000 in that funding this year.

"So we have to rely on other funds to take care of road and bridge projects," she said. "We have special highway improvement funds, and we have road machinery funds."

Bloomer said these are the budgets which road and bridge supervisor Tony Herrman has to use to take care of some of the department's projects.

"He has to rely on the specific road and bridge budget to take care of his general operating functions of his department," she said. "The CIP projects that he had, he'll have to rely on those other two funds to take care of them."

With a special highway improvement fund balance of \$567,312 and a road machinery fund balance of \$675,121, the total road and bridge CIP items requested were \$781,000.

The county's rural fire department's CIP budget is usually reserved for small items, but Bloomer said fire chief Mike Rice also does lease programs for fire trucks.

"Usually, his lease programs are 15- or 20-year programs, so he has another fund he uses for those," she said. "Those are more lease programs that go into CIP, but it is an equipment program."

Total rural fire CIP funds requested for 2009 were \$5,000.

The Seward County Health Department has a certain amount of its budget generated from the general fund every year, and Bloomer said the remainder of the balance is allocated either by insurance payments or state grant funds.

“If the state funds or the insurance that they bill doesn’t come into what they project, then they don’t have it,” she said. “If they don’t have the money, they don’t spend it.”

Total health department CIP funds requested for 2009 were \$37,850.

Bloomer said the budgeted CIP amount may not be spent, but at least, those dollars are available.

“For example, we have copiers in here for the administration or for the clerk,” she said. “As long as our copiers are performing well, we may not purchase that copier this year. We try and show two years or three years if we’re lucky. For this year, we may not purchase it, so for 2010, we’ll show that it’s to be spent for 2010 and not 2009.”