

## County Budget a Reflection of the Times Gary Moore

Arguably, the most important document the Boone County Fiscal Court approves annually is the budget. This is the roadmap that guides all county spending throughout the year. As your Judge/Executive, I take this responsibility very seriously. This year, I directed the staff to hold the line on spending and live within our means, while at the same time delivering excellent service. The budget was based upon the premise of no new fees or taxes and with the intention of reducing overall spending. The members of the Fiscal Court agreed with my approach and we have approved a budget that results in a slight decrease in spending over last year. In fact, this is the fifth consecutive budget with a decrease in the general fund from the previous year. In a time when other governments are proposing layoffs or cutting essential services, we are fortunate to be in a financially sound position. Although the budget process is an annual occurrence, its significance and importance requires a comprehensive approach along with plenty of opportunity for public participation and input. Below is a summary of the budget process.

In March, the county administrator informs each of the department heads to begin drafting their proposed plan for the following year, with guidance and input from my office. Each department considers the resources they will need for the upcoming year to accomplish the broad goals established by the Fiscal Court. The County Administrator and Treasurer then meet with each department to discuss the overall plan. After the numbers are fine tuned (and difficult decisions often made), this document is then subjected to a rigorous and transparent process where public comment and suggestions are encouraged. A public hearing was held on the budget on May 17th followed by the first reading of the budget ordinance by the Fiscal Court at the same meeting. Since the budget represents a significant policy item for the county, it is approved via an ordinance; requiring a first reading, public hearing and second reading prior to passage. An advertisement was placed in the Boone County Recorder along with notification through the county's website and weekly e-newsletter informing the public about these meetings. In fact, the entire draft budget document has been posted on the county's web page since early May, intended to inform the public and provide an accounting of how your tax dollars are used.

At our June 7th Fiscal Court meeting the commissioners offered a budget amendment, and voted to reduce the proposed 1.5% cost of living adjustment for county employees to 1.0%. Ultimately this was the only change from the originally drafted spending plan. I'm pleased the commissioners have supported this conservative budgeting approach and joined with me in unanimously approving the budget.

We realize that every tax dollar we are entrusted with had to first be earned by a taxpayer. That's why we're always looking for ways to stretch your dollars to the fullest extent. I hope you will agree with me that by holding the line on spending we are mirroring what many families are doing during this difficult economic time.