

County expected to hold line on tax rate

WAYNESBURG — Shrinking state aid has placed a strain on the Greene County Budget, but taxpayers won't feel the pain, at least not yet.

County commissioners are expected today to approve the tentative 2012 spending plan, which will hold the line on taxes. The \$14.75 million general fund budget will be about 2 percent smaller than this year's budget, due almost entirely to a decrease in state grants and subsidies.

"Revenue is down, so we tried to make sure expenses were down, too," said Chief Clerk Jeff Marshall. "But, in some departments that isn't possible. Like the 911 center, we're getting less state funding, but we still have to provide those services, so our expenses went up."

Revenue for 911 decreased by about \$49,000 or 31 percent and expenses grew by \$59,000 or 24 percent, because of additional spending for salaries and equipment. That department's total budget is \$305,113 next year.

Planning and development's \$1.2 million budget was hit hard by the drop in state aid, too. Revenue there decreased by 46 percent, or \$315,000, and expenses were down by 19 percent, or \$293,000. The department plans to spend more money in salaries but a lot less in professional services.

Recreation and its \$1.28 million budget will see a 41 percent or \$366,000 drop in revenue and a 20 percent or \$319,000 drop in expenses. The county received a large amount of state grants this year for planned improvements to the airport, but it will receive a lot less state aid for the project next year.

The Greene County jail will revenue drop of 23 percent or \$75,000 next year, but that has little to do with dwindling state funding. Instead, the lockup is housing fewer inmates from other counties, so it is collecting less rent. Expenses at the jail will grow by 4.5 percent to a total budget of \$1.88 million.

The property tax rate will remain at 7.535 mills. The owner of a \$50,000 house pays \$376.75 in taxes to the county.

The 2012 budget will have a shortfall of about \$97,000, so the county plans to dip into the fund balance to make up the difference. The fund stands just over \$2 million, county officials said.

The budget is available for inspection on the county's website, www.co.greene.pa.us. Commissioners will likely adopt a final version at their Dec. 15 meeting.

In another matter, commissioners will approve a consultant agreement with Delta Development of Mechanicsburg for a market analysis for the project to develop a business park at Greene County Airport. The county received a \$175,000 state grant that requires the study and Delta's \$22,000 fee will be covered through that grant.