

City, county discuss budget

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In light of a multimillion dollar budget cut announced by Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius Tuesday, commissioners from Manhattan and Riley County discussed the possibility of writing a joint, interlocal letter to the area's state representatives during a joint meeting Thursday afternoon.

The letter, considered Thursday in the city commission room in City Hall, would detail the needs of Riley County and Manhattan. In a combined effort to gain financing for pending, "shovel ready" projects, commissioner Mike Kearns explained that "the county is concerned" with the cutbacks that would account for more than a \$1 million loss for the county and a \$1.2 million loss for the city.

Suggesting the idea of writing a combined letter signed by Mayor Mark Hatesohl and county commission leader Al Johnson to the Kansas Legislature, or inviting state Reps. **Sydney Carlin** and Tom Hawk to a joint city/county meeting, Kearns emphasized the need to create a strong front.

"We better work together or we're going to get hurt," he explained.

Also Thursday, commissioners discussed the current status of the intergovernmental Konza Sewer project. The conversation focused on the construction of a sewer trunk line south along K-177, in what is known as the "gateway corridor."

According to city manager Ron Fehr, the premise of the project is to begin equipping the area with standard infrastructure needs in an effort promote future commercial and residential development along K-177.

"One of the reasons we thought we'd tackle the sewer line first is because there isn't one out there right now," Fehr said, adding that the next step in developing the corridor will be to provide greater, city-operated water services to the area.

Though Riley County has already begun construction on the Konza Sewer line, the joint commissions reviewed a draft of an Interlocal Economic Development Agreement Tuesday, which outlined each parties involvement in and detail of the overall project plan. Under the agreement, total cost for the construction effort is estimated at \$1.041 million, and is to be divided between city and county in an equal 50/50 split. Upon Riley County's completion of the project's construction, control of the line - including all future maintenance and operational responsibilities - will be transferred to the city of Manhattan upon payment of their agreed-to \$520,536 share.

With no concerns raised over the current draft agreement, city and county staffs will present a finalized version to each commission within the next few months.