

## Chapter 7

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## PROTECTING McDONALD COUNTY 7.1

**Law enforcement, fire protection, and health services are essential to the safety and well being of McDonald County citizens.** As the arms of government in McDonald County strive to provide this protection to our citizens, it is important to acknowledge that alcohol and drug abuse has become endemic, challenging American society. Rather than being immune, Missouri is at the heart of the problem. In McDonald County, substance abuse destroys lives, families and strains governmental resources.

*“Alcohol and drugs have a devastating effect on the health of a community. The health impact is felt not only by those illegally or inappropriately using the substance, but also children born to substance abusers as well as other family members. Drug abuse can drain the various resources of a community including law enforcement, health care, education, and social welfare services. Marijuana arrests account for a greater number of arrests than any other drug. Synthetic narcotic arrests are second only to marijuana. More residents in McDonald County were arrested for DUI than for marijuana and synthetic narcotic crimes combined.”* Health Assessment of McDonald County, 2006

Dealing with substance abuse absorbs more than 12% of the state of Missouri's annual budget. Only 3% of that amount is spent for treatment and preventive measures. The balance of 9% goes into law enforcement, incarceration, child services and health care.

### THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Missouri spends more than 12 percent of its annual \$1.3 billion budget on substance abuse, predominantly for incarceration, health care, law enforcement and child services, according to the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse within the Department of Mental Health.

In 2005, Missouri reported a total of 2,252 meth-lab incidents, **the highest in the United States**, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol. The next highest was Indiana, with a reported total of 987. McDonald County reported 25 incidents in 2005.

“Methamphetamine continues to take a toll on our state, particularly in rural Missouri. In 2001, Missouri law enforcement seized 2,130 meth labs — nearly six every day. Last year, our officers seized 2,725 labs — an astounding 7.5 labs per day. This is more than the number busted in California, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida combined.” “The actions we as a society...take to intervene with... young people ... will define the safety of our future.” - Missouri Attorney General Nixon, April 2004

Source: Missouri State Highway Patrol Web site

At every level of government, emphasis must be placed on education, intervention and enforcement to stem the problem of substance abuse. The Planning Commission encourages all agencies of government in McDonald County to give priority to influence citizens of all ages to maintain a responsible lifestyle. It is important to note that this job will NEVER be completed. Just like each new child must learn for itself to walk and talk, each individual must make decisions for themselves regarding alcohol and drug use. The influence we have on others to live responsibly may never be known to us, but the effect of our efforts will ripple through this community for the betterment of all citizens.

## 911 EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICE 7.2

The voters of McDonald County, in 2002, approved a sales tax of up to one half of one percent to provide a 911 emergency telephone service for central dispatching of fire, law enforcement and ambulance service as provided by law under **RSMo 190.335.1.... the county commission of any county may impose a county sales tax for the provision of central dispatching of fire protection, including law enforcement agencies, emergency ambulance service or any other emergency services, including emergency telephone services, which shall be collectively referred to herein as "emergency services", and which may also include the purchase and maintenance of communications and emergency equipment, including the operational costs associated therein, in accordance with the provisions of this section.**

Following this vote, a board of seven citizens was convened to oversee the operation of the 911 service. The first order of business was the task of changing the county's rural route addresses to a street address for 911 service and included a GPS identification of each address.

Office space was provided near the courthouse by the county commission. Equipment for the dispatch office was procured and work was begun to upgrade the radio transmission towers. A call to 911 for a medical emergency, accident, fire or crime in progress now provides immediate assistance for the caller. Two operators are required in the 911 office 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Intensive training is required of all operators.

The rugged terrain in much of McDonald County has caused communication difficulties for the 911 service. Installation of radio equipment on communication towers also was the subject of much discussion and remains to be satisfactorily completed. Office conditions are crowded, with no room for additional equipment or personnel. Recruiting and training of personnel is an ongoing challenge. 911 assists the McDonald County Sheriff's Department by checking outstanding warrants, criminal history, alias, and physical appearance such as tattoos.

In spite of the difficulties and hurdles to be overcome to have the 911 system working smoothly for McDonald County, there are real bright spots to make things easier for that department. Sales tax revenues have increased considerably during the first five years of operation. The 2006 sales taxes generated for 911 exceeded \$1.2 million dollars. A carryover balance from the previous year, added to that amount, provided \$1.6 million for the year. **The 911 budget required only half that dollar amount. The excess revenue was allocated to two funds, a building fund and an operational emergency fund.**

**The first to be considered is the operational emergency fund.** While such an operational emergency fund is a valid budget procedure, six months is more excessive than usual for government agencies. However, the funds were available without harming function of the department and have already been allocated. Interest accumulating on that account should be adequate to cover any inflation. No harm is encountered by leaving funds in that account.

**The remaining tax collected in excess of current operation needs was in turn allocated to the second fund, the building fund.** Buildings for public entities are generally funded via bonds to be paid back through taxes over a period of time such as twenty years. It is rare to have funds accumulate by a public entity to fund building projects without the need for financing. However, the building fund for the 911 service already contains approximately half of the funds needed to build their new facility. The building is now being designed and a location determined. By the year 2010, the facility should be constructed and most probably paid for.

Also by that time, the tower and radio issues should have been resolved, although equipment would be aging and may need replacement.

With facilities and equipment in place and employees well trained and experienced, 911 should be functioning smoothly, efficiently and economically. **RSMo 190.335.7 (At least once each calendar year, the governing body shall establish a tax rate, not to exceed the amount authorized, that together with any surplus revenues carried forward will produce sufficient revenues to fund the expenditures authorized by this act.)** requires a rollback of the tax rate once needs of 911 operations have been met. Fiscal responsibility on the part of 911 should provide a tax relief for the citizens of McDonald County after the year 2010 with a roll back of the sales tax rate.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT 7.3

The Sheriff's Department and seven municipal Police Departments provide the basic law enforcement for McDonald County. The McDonald County Sheriff's Department is based in the county seat of Pineville. The Anderson Police Department, Goodman Police Department, Lanagan Police Department, Noel Police Department, Pineville Police Department and the Southwest City Police Department are the municipal agencies. The Missouri Highway Patrol Troop D has troopers that are stationed within McDonald County. The State Water Patrol and Conservation Agents also provide enforcement within the county.

The McDonald County Sheriff's Department is funded by a half-cent sales tax, which also funds the office of the Prosecuting Attorney. Sheriff Don Schlessman, a 22-year veteran of law enforcement in McDonald County, leads the sheriff's department as of 2007/2008. The department consists of 16 Field Deputies, 1 Chief Deputy, 1 Operations Officer/SRO (School Resource Officer), 2 Narcotic Detection Dogs, and 2 Narcotic Drug Task Force Officers. Another deputy is assigned full time to transporting prisoners. The Sheriff's Office is open and has a dispatcher on duty to answer any calls that come in 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

During 2006 the deputies drove over 460,000 miles and dealt with over 8600 calls for service. In 2006 the Sheriff's Office purchased seven new Chevy Impalas and purchased seven 2006 Chevy Trailblazers in 2007. These vehicles will be replaced on a three year plan and are all in good condition. The radio system is satisfactory to meet the needs of the Department.

The Sheriff is also responsible for operating the only jail in the county. In 2006 approximately 1550 people were booked into the jail. The sheriff's office and jail is located in Pineville. The jail has 32 beds, but averages 40 prisoners a day. **The County Commissioners are currently in the planning process of an expansion for the jail to over 100 beds.**

Most law enforcement problems in the county stem from drug and alcohol abuse and take such forms as bad checks, assaults and domestic abuse. A Drug Task Force is in place to help deal with these issues.

- **There is a need for more CSI (Crime Scene Investigating) equipment, as well as space to house such equipment.**
- **Space is also needed to house records, offices, and interview rooms.**

The rivers in the county can bring in as many as 5000 visitors on weekends during the summer months. In response to this added population, the Sheriff's Department also formed the first ever river patrol on Elk River which starts with the merging of the Little Sugar and the Big

Sugar Creeks in Pineville and flows west into Oklahoma. **Additional equipment is still needed for the river patrol, such as a new boat to replace the boat currently in use, a 14 year old flat bottomed boat with a 45 hp motor.**

Deputy Mike Hall is in charge of the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program in McDonald County. This highly acclaimed program gives school aged children the skills they need to avoid involvement in drugs, gangs, and violence. DARE is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug and violence-free lives.

An active Reserve provides officers to support the full-time staff. The Sheriff's Department would like to be able in the future to compensate reserve officers a little bit, even though they are volunteering their time.

- **It would seem appropriate to provide some measure of compensation to reserve officers to offset their expenses.**

One need that has not been met in McDonald County is for a full time Juvenile Officer. This would move the Juvenile Office close to the court, saving time for the juvenile officer, sheriff deputies and family members. There are two sides to a juvenile office, one for abuse and neglect and the other for delinquency. Deputy juvenile officers are paid by the Missouri Division of Youth Services. The judge holds juvenile court every Tuesday from 1:00 p.m. to about 2:30 p.m. and a juvenile drug court later that day.

In October 2007, the 40<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, which covers Newton and McDonald County, announced arrangements to provide a full-time juvenile officer for McDonald County. The County Commission agreed to provide office space in the Local Emergency Planning Council (LEPC) building east of the courthouse and to provide office supplies. This officer will only handle abuse and neglect cases, not delinquency.

McDonald County is fortunate to have had a substantial increase in sales tax over the past five years, and that tax base is expected to continue strong. The 1/2 cent sales tax devoted to law enforcement has provided the Sheriff's Department funding to be able to hire adequate numbers of deputies and to purchase equipment. However there are still critical needs which must be met in the form of capital improvements relating to law enforcement. The most glaring of these needs is that of a new jail. The existing jail has 32 beds, but averaged 40 prisoners a day in 2007. The overcrowding is expected to get worse rapidly with the increasing population of McDonald County. The Sheriff's Department also needs more office space, interview rooms and storage for records. Additional courtrooms and staff will be required by the Prosecuting Attorney's office for the processing and trials of these prisoners.

- **Funding for capital improvements is needed for the construction of a new jail and courtrooms.**

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 7.4

**The McDonald County Local Emergency Planning Council supervises and coordinates responses to major emergencies in the county.** The Local Emergency Planning Council meets monthly in the emergency building east of the courthouse and has appointed a Director.

An emergency number for this director should be published in the phonebook for citizens to call to report critical situations during disasters and request assistance.

Emergency Management was put to the test in early 2007 by an extreme ice storm that hit McDonald County, leaving the majority of the county without power for several days and many residences without power for more than 10 days. The county was fortunate to have Emergency Management prepared to take charge. Emergency shelters were set up for those without heat during the power outages. The Public Health Nurse and other personnel from the McDonald County Health Department provided crucial health services at the shelter.

A task force of deputies, firemen and national guard were sent house to house to make sure residents were safe and properly cared for. Massive generators were borrowed from the state to pump water into the municipal tanks and water district tanks so that water would remain available throughout the emergency. These and many other tasks performed by Emergency Management proved to be invaluable to the citizens of McDonald County during this emergency. The McDonald County Planning Commission commends Emergency Management for their service to the citizens of McDonald County.

## ANIMAL CONTROL 7.5

Animal ownership is welcomed within McDonald County. **The Planning Commission places strong emphasis on responsible ownership of animals, both livestock and family pets.** Animal owners are encouraged to respect the rights of their fellow citizens and also those of their animals. These owners are reminded to be aware that ownership of animals brings with it responsibilities to others.

- **One primary responsibility placed upon animal owners is to properly train and/or secure their animals so as to keep them within their own property boundaries.**
- **Another primary responsibility of owners is to prevent their animals from causing injuries and/or creating nuisances.**

**Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 273.** These Missouri statutes comprise the state's dog/cat laws. Among the provisions include laws for impounding loose dogs, licensing, rabies control, and the Animal Care Facilities Act, which regulates commercial breeders/pet shops.

As the population of people and animals increases within McDonald County, there is a growing problem of abandoned animals struggling to survive.

- **Thought and plans must be given for the control, housing and disposal of such animals.**

A review of RSMo Chapter 273 is in order so that animal control complies with Missouri Statutes.

- **The Planning Commission suggests provisions be made for a humane society that would serve McDonald County.**

## FIRE PROTECTION 7.6

When 911 receives an emergency call for an accident, medical emergency or fire, the closest

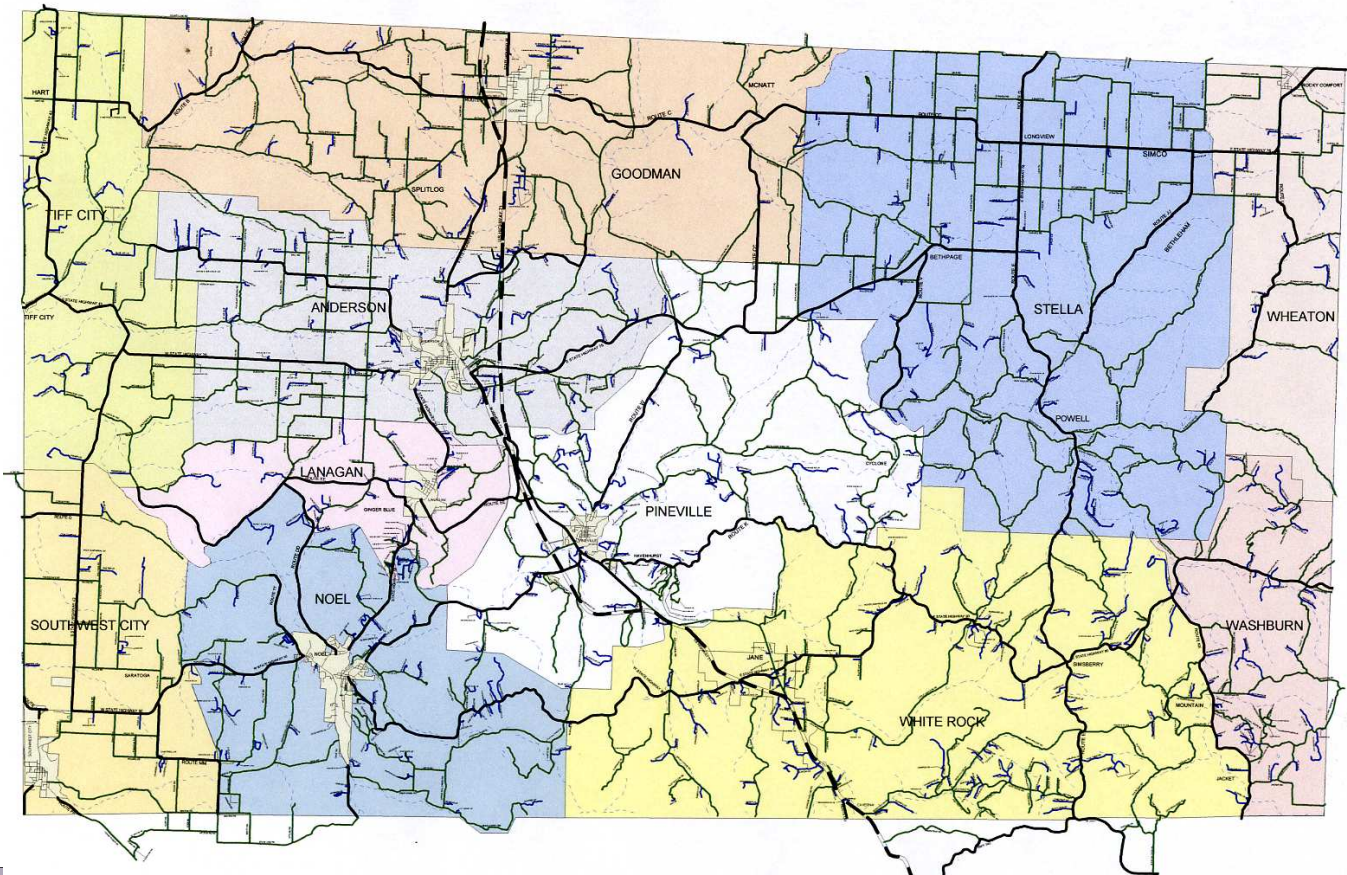
fire department is immediately summoned. The men and women from those fire departments who respond to emergency calls are all volunteers who rush from their homes, jobs or leisure activities to assist those in need. Many are trained as first responders to provide medical care until an ambulance can arrive. These first responders almost always arrive before the ambulance, as they are responding in the closest fire area.

**Volunteer firefighters and first responders train at their own expense and time.** They use their own vehicles to get to the emergency site or to the fire equipment. They risk their lives and safety to protect the property and lives of their neighbors. It is humbling to the citizens of McDonald County to acknowledge the importance of the vital services provided by the volunteer firefighters and first responders.

The eyes of the nation and the world were trained on the volunteer firemen of McDonald County when a tragic fire destroyed the Anderson Guest House on Nov. 27, 2006, resulting in the deaths of 11 people. In the middle of the night, these volunteer firemen entered the burning building again and again, searching for anyone still inside while risking their own lives. Their training and equipment helped to keep them safe and to save lives of others. Their bravery and self-sacrifice represented heroism at its finest.

**There are 9 fire departments that are either stationed in or who service McDonald County with 13 stations.** The fire departments in McDonald County include the Anderson Volunteer Fire Department, Goodman Fire Department, Lanagan Volunteer Fire Department, Noel Volunteer Fire Department, Pineville Fire Department, Southwest City Volunteer Fire Department, Tiff City Fire Department, White Rock Fire Department, Stella Fire Department, Wheaton Fire Department, and Washburn Fire Department.

The equipment and buildings of the volunteer fire departments are paid for through



membership fees paid by residents, fund raisers, donations and occasionally by grants. There is no tax funding for the volunteer fire departments in McDonald County, with the exception of



Goodman Volunteers 1978

Goodman Fire District which is supported by property taxes. In order to form such a legal fire district to be supported by property taxes, boundaries need to be established and a vote by the people included in that district. It is an expensive procedure which other fire areas have chosen not to pursue.

It would be possible to make the whole of McDonald County a single fire district supported by property tax. That would solve the problem of expensive surveys and boundaries. However, it would create difficulties in determining the amount of funding which should go to each area. If

divided equally, it could be unfair to some departments which have a more dense population or a larger area to cover.

The very worst thing that could happen would be to have conflicts that discourage individuals from acting as volunteer firefighters and first responders.

- **The McDonald County Planning Commission accepts that the volunteer fire fighters of this county know best their own interests in terms of funding and needs.**
- **We support the plans of the fire departments of the county. We will work with fire departments to resolve problems and increase efficiency and safety for our volunteers.**

### Noel to open firefighting academy

By the first of the year 2008, the Noel Fire Department will be ready to open a firefighting academy. In September 2007, the Noel Board of Aldermen approved a request to send three emergency services workers to receive training to become instructors. After the training, the instructors at the Noel Firefighting Academy will be state certified and can offer training to others in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, to be an emergency medical technician, a first responder or in Firefighting 1 and 2. When Noel opens its firefighting academy for area residents, they will no longer need to drive to Crowder College in Neosho or to Joplin for training. Most ambulance workers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians must be trained before they can even apply for work. "Having an academy in Noel will give us better emergency services in the area," said Noel Fire Chief Brandon Barrett.

Want to go? The average cost of tuition to attend the firefighting academy in Noel will likely be about \$150, Noel Fire Chief Brandon Barrett said. The intention to offer classes in Noel is not to make money for the city, but to enable more people to be trained in emergency services. [http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local\\_story\\_293171250.html/resources\\_printstory](http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local_story_293171250.html/resources_printstory)

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES 7.7

Emergency medical service refers to medical treatment and care which may be rendered at the scene of any medical emergency or while transporting any patient in an ambulance to an appropriate medical facility, including ambulance transportation between medical facilities. The Freeman Ambulance Service provides emergency transport to medical facilities for McDonald County. Freeman Ambulance Service has 15 paramedics (4 full-time and 11 part-time) and 15 EMT's (4 full-time and 11 part-time). There is no hospital in McDonald County, and patients are usually transported to Joplin, NW Arkansas, or Neosho. Freeman has purchased property in Caverna for another Ambulance and Medical Center yet to be constructed.

**Each Fire Department and/or District in McDonald County has a First Responders Unit that also provides emergency and medical response services.** These volunteer First Responders usually arrive on the scene of emergencies before the ambulance and are critical to the safety of county residents.

## HEALTH DEPARTMENT 7.8

The McDonald County Health Department provides numerous essential services, many of which the citizens of this county are not aware. Some of those services include: immunization, public health nurse, vital records such as birth and death certificates, environmental concerns such as inspecting septic tanks and water supplies, inspections of food service; planning for epidemics such as the flu and providing immunization, planning for bioterrorism events, family services such as the WIC Program (Women, Infant and Children), prenatal care, emergency preparedness education, and health alerts. The Health Department provides these services at little or no cost to its clients.

### Healthy People 2010

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

The nation's **health strategy** for the current decade describes a healthy community as one that embraces the belief that health is more than merely an absence of disease; a healthy community includes those elements that enable people to maintain a high quality of life and productivity. The underlying premise of Healthy People 2010 is that the health of the individual is almost inseparable from the health of the larger community and that the health of every community in every state and territory determines the overall health status of the nation.

**The Health Department has established McDonald County's top Public Health Priorities which include:**

- x drug and alcohol use.
- x teenage pregnancy.
- x dental care shortage.
- x motor vehicle deaths.
- x lack of public transportation.

A Health Assessment of McDonald County was prepared by Joy Gilgan in 2006 and funded by

a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health. That extensive report may be obtained by contacting the McDonald County Community Development Council in Pineville.

**One of the Health Department's most widely used programs is its Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program**, which provides nutrition education, counseling and discount food coupons to about 12,000 clients each year. Another service used actively by the community is the Immunization Program. Last year the Health Department gave more than 4,000 shots to children and adults. Nursing services also include teen issues, women's health programs, communicable disease intervention and testing, blood pressure clinics, diabetic screening, prevention education and health consultant to daycare facilities, food borne illness and communicable disease investigations including STD's (Sexually Transmitted Diseases), prenatal case management and cancer patient support services.

**Environmental services provided by the health department** include food service and lodging inspections, environmental investigations, private water testing, and wastewater treatment systems permits and investigating truck wrecks concerning food or products used for human health.

The Health Department staff of 10 employees serves McDonald County residents for the better health of the county. The array of services the Health Department provides are paid for by donations, grants and contracts with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). McDonald County has the responsibility of providing facilities to house the health department. Much of the Health Department budget comes from the county's General Fund.

**The current Health Department building is inadequate to serve the needs of that department.** Employees are stacked in crowded quarters. Space for storage is needed immediately in a climate controlled environment. As the population continues to grow, these needs are becoming increasingly more critical. The County has purchased the house next door to the existing Health Department building in order to build a new building at that site. This would enable the Health Department to continue functioning while the new building is constructed. Unfortunately, the county does not have funding at the current time to build such facility.

- **The Health Department needs funding for capital improvements in order to continue to provide adequate services to the citizens of McDonald County.**

## INFRASTRUCTURE 7.9

The McDonald County Planning Commission has no crystal ball to peer into to predict the needs of McDonald County for coming years. We have looked at the past, present and trends which influence the future and have seen significant needs looming for improved and increased infrastructure. Some infrastructure deficiencies are already upon us.

- **Reacting only to present needs means that in the future we will face ever more critical deficiencies.**

**Identifying infrastructure which will be needed must be coupled with a program to finance those facilities**, including such things as a new jail, courthouse, health department,

911 building, schools, or other county facilities. Priority for funding and construction must also be considered to provide adequate levels of public infrastructure and services to meet the needs of the present population and to anticipate and plan for future growth.

Infrastructure is built based on the needs of the population. When population growth is limited to simply the excess of births over deaths, without in-and-out-migration, infrastructure improvements and 'fixes' come at a gradual pace which can be planned and funded without hardship to the population. When population growth expands quickly - or in some cases explodes, as has happened in NW Arkansas in recent years – expanding infrastructure quickly enough to meet the current needs creates great expense.

A simple example is shown by school population. When enrollment increases at only a few students a year, funds are usually available through existing property tax to fund repairs and limited expansions. When school enrollment increases dramatically, a new school may need to be built every few years to accommodate the additional pupils. Property tax on new homes for these students typically funds the operations of the new schools, but not the construction of the schools themselves. The result is an increase in property tax to fund the new schools.

The increase in property tax affects the financial well-being of the whole population to accommodate new residents. This same response to increased population takes place throughout other branches of local government, including jails, roads, sewer, health departments and other public buildings, resulting in higher sales and property taxes and an increased burden on the long time residents of the county.

During the decade from 1990 to 2000, McDonald County population grew by 28%, making it difficult to keep up with infrastructure needs. That trend continues now and is projected to continue into the future, although the rate may slow down or speed up without warning.

**Already the jail, 911 and health department facilities are inadequate to meet current needs.** Other infrastructure additions such as courtrooms will be required in only a few years. Only 911 has the funding available to construct new facilities, so it is not being emphasized in this section of the chapter. The county is looking for funding sources to meet other critical needs for capital improvements. **Establishing priorities for infrastructure improvements is a first step**, and a new jail will likely top that list, followed closely by a new health department building.

Many funding sources are available for infrastructure construction, but jurisdictions typically have to “piece” together a “patchwork” of federal, state, and local, grant, tax, and debt sources to assemble an infrastructure funding package. Unfortunately, except for transportation grants, state and federal grants and loans are seldom available for growth-related projects such as those faced by McDonald County.

The Planning Commission of McDonald County considers it vital to keep taxes and spending under control, while at the same time meeting the needs of the citizens. In considering infrastructure funding, the first source to explore should be existing tax funds.

- **Fiscal responsibility on the part of this county would limit spending to necessities, while allocating remaining funds to critical infrastructure needs.**

McDonald County is fortunate to have had a major increase in sales taxes in recent years as shown by the box commentary. It is important to recognize, however, that **the addition of the 911 tax is responsible for much of the “increase” in sales taxes collected in the past five years and is not available for other county needs.** That tax money is earmarked solely for 911 establishment and operations.

**Commentary** 

*As the money grows,  
so does it go, go go*

McDonald County plans to spend over nine million dollars this year. That is double what it spent just six years ago. Double. In six years. Here are the annual budget figures since the year 2000. See the budget story on page one of this issue.

2000 – \$3.9 million	2004 – \$6.5 million
2001 – 4.3 million	2005 – 7.1 million
2002 – 5.1 million	2006 – 8.5 million
2003 – 6.0 million	2007 – 9+ million

Note: 911 sales tax began in 2003 with a \$650,000 budget. Their 2007 budget is \$1.2 million

—G.P.

**Source: McDonald County Press**

Also of note is that much of the budgeted dollars come from sources that are earmarked for specific projects such as roads or health services. Sales taxes represent less than half of the money spent by McDonald

County and is the only discretionary funding available.

Although sales tax funds are discretionary, that is only within a limited scope. Road sales tax and 911 may **ONLY** be spent on those projects respectively. They may not be spent on other county projects such as the jail and health department building. The law enforcement sales tax may be spent on the jail and courthouse, but not the health department building.

The general fund may be spent to finance infrastructure, but is also responsible for funding a multitude of county government functions. Among the uses of the general fund, maintenance of existing public buildings is an important expenditure. Should the general fund be called on to cover overages in the budgets of county departments, a burden is placed on the general fund and may cause needed expenditures on such items as maintenance to be neglected.

- **All county departments have budgets. Fiscal responsibility is important in all county departments to stay within budget in order to avoid harm to other county services.**

The total amount of funds collected by the road sales tax, law enforcement sales tax, and the general fund sales tax have nearly doubled since 2002. There has also been a significant increase in costs of providing services during that time. We are especially fortunate that the collection of sales tax has exceeded increases in costs and have funded remedial programs for the county. Now that county services are well funded, it becomes a fiscal responsibility to control spending on expanding services.

- **McDonald County has a critical need for infrastructure development that exceeds the need for expanding services.**
- **The Planning Commission recommends a review of the county budget for possible funds that could be allocated to infrastructure.**

- **The Planning Commission recommends that 10% or more of the general fund be set aside for capital improvements.**

Sales taxes increased by over 10% once more in 2007 and that trend appears to be continuing into the near future. It is not written in stone. The county must also be prepared for any possible downturn in economic health. This is another reason for the need of fiscal responsibility as we plan for the future.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the health department and jail are sorely in need of new facilities. The current budget may not have all the funds needed for developing infrastructure.

- **Determining the costs of the infrastructure to be built is a first step in determining how to finance those facilities.**

Should it become necessary to ask the citizens of McDonald County for an increase in taxes to fund infrastructure improvements, knowing the costs will be essential to understanding how much tax will be required and the length of time necessary to accumulate the funding with the requested tax.

- **When putting a tax proposal on the ballot, the Planning Commission recommends that funds be earmarked for a definite project so that the tax is eliminated when the funding of the project is complete.**

A “sunset clause” is a term often referred to which designates the duration of a tax and the conditions under which the tax is to be eliminated. Such a sunset clause may be changed by the vote of the people to allow funding of additional projects with the same tax rate, rather than adding another tax. In this way, bonds may be used with the backing of the tax to build infrastructure now without increasing the overall tax rate.

Other infrastructure improvements, such as school construction and sewer service, may come under the responsibility of other public agencies rather than county government.

- **It is important for the Planning Commission and the County Commission to always be aware of the needs of McDonald County and to support infrastructure projects on behalf of the citizens of McDonald County.**