Tax rate cut fourth year in row
UG levy is less than half of total tax bill

By MIKE TAYLOR
Unified Government

The Unified Government Commission has cut the tax rate for Wyandotte County residents for the fourth consecutive year under the approved 2007 UG budget. The tax rate, or mill levy, will go down 2.4% over last year. For all property owners in Wyandotte County, the Unified Government’s portion of the total tax bill is less than half of their total taxes paid (see chart at right, other budget highlights Pages 4-5).

Since 1996, the combined city-county property tax rate has decreased 25%. And for the first time in more than a decade, the tax rate for Wyandotte County/KCK will be lower than the combined city-county tax rate for Topeka and Shawnee County.

While cutting tax rates, the budget still pays for a number of new initiatives, including creation of a Midtown Police Division and launch of a demonstration School Resource Officer Program by adding 10 Police Officers. Another public safety initiative is replacement of the obsolete control system in the Wyandotte County Detention Center with a new computerized $1.5-million system.

The budget will also increase investment in the Countywide Initiative for Funding Infrastructure (CIFI), which not only advances the goal of countywide cooperation, but gives every resident the opportunity to touch tangible infrastructure improvements in their local community through a $2.8-million revenue sharing effort with Bonner Springs and Edwardsville.

In 2006-2007, nearly $6-million has been allocated for needed street, sewer and infrastructure projects under the CIFI program.

Another major initiative in the 2007 budget is a major expansion of the Senior Citizens’ Utility Tax Rebate Program.

Other major initiatives in the 2007 Budget include earmarking dollars to help fill the funding gaps which sometimes effect urban core redevelopment projects. The budget also includes $100,000 for enhancement of public transportation options to connect workers in the eastern part of Wyandotte County with thousands of new jobs in the western part of the community.


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Senior program has big increase

The Unified Commission has significantly increased the number of seniors who can qualify for the Senior Citizens’ Utility Tax Rebate Program. Beginning in 2007, seniors earning less than $25,000 a year can receive a rebate up to $300.

Eligible seniors should now begin saving copies of their utility bills (BPU, gas, telephone). To qualify, you must be a resident of Kansas City, Kansas, and have been at least 65 years old during the entire 2006 calendar year. Gross income from all sources, including that of spouse, shall not exceed $25,000.

Eligible seniors can apply for the program by bringing in their 2006 utility bills to the Unified Government’s Clerk’s Office, 701 North 7th Street, Room 323, between January 2 and March 30, 2007.

KCK Master Planning process to begin

By ROB RICHARDSON
Unified Government

The City of Kansas City Kansas will begin conducting a series of important meetings to discuss the City initiated Master Plan process. Our primary goal is to create a citizen driven long-term vision and plan for the community. This is our Citizens’ most significant opportunity to give input into the process and help shape the future of our great community. We should all be excited to help set a vision for the future of our community and work through the planning process that will guide us to that vision.

Do you want to know how to improve your neighborhood? Do you want to help shape how future development and redevelopment happens within the City? Are you concerned that some parts of the City do not receive the same level of quality development as other parts of the City? Are you concerned about quality of life issues like crime, trails, parks and schools? Is downtown revitalization important to our City? Citizens can volunteer to participate in any of the issue oriented focus groups that will be formed to assist the city in formulating a community based master plan. A steering committee will also be formed. Group meetings will meet periodically for the next 18-20 months while the plan is being developed.

The focus groups are Infrastructure/Transportation (streets sewers, sidewalks etc), Parks and Trails, Neighborhoods, Economic Development, Urban Design/Land Use (what will buildings look like and where they should go), and Downtown.

The first series of meetings will be held on three different dates and at three different locations within the City to help foster participation throughout the City:

Monday, August 28, 4:00–8:30 p.m., Wyandotte County Fair Grounds, 1405 N 98th Street (Spanish Interpretation Provided);
Wednesday August 30, 4:00–8:30 p.m., Memorial Hall, 600 N 7th Street (Spanish Interpretation Provided); and
Saturday September 9, 9:00 a.m.–Noon, Nefertiti’s, 1314 Quindaro Boulevard town.

A speaker’s bureau will be available starting Sept. 9th to meet with
I remain committed to lowering taxes over time to become competitive with other cities and reduce the tax burden for working families, seniors and young people.

We are the only first-class city in Kansas that has reduced its mill levy every year for the past four years, making the Unified Government’s combined tax rate less than half of a Wyandotte County homeowner’s tax bill. Further, we are on track to have a lower city/county tax rate for KCK residents, than those in Topeka, that hasn’t happened in 13 years. We have accomplished this despite the fact that the State of Kansas has eliminated nearly $5-million a year in revenue sharing.

Our budget doesn’t just reduce the tax rate. To continue to move our community forward in a positive way, we must re-invest in our priorities. Continuing to advance high quality public safety has been an important objective of the commission and the 2007 UG Budget supports that objective. We approved a budget which adds 10 new police officers to our ranks. This move will form a new Midtown Police Division which will support our efforts to fight crime throughout the community. Further, in cooperation with USD 500, we will implement a School Resource Officer pilot program to bring our police officers closer to our young people in positive ways. As the result of commission efforts, we will have added 25 new officers to the police department over the last three years.

I believe the long term viability for Wyandotte County continues to be economic growth. This year we are on track for the third year in a row to establish 40 year records in the number of homes being built in our community. Statistics show we are building as many new homes in KCK as our neighbors in Shawnee.

The success of Village West and the fact we have more than 1,000 new businesses operating throughout our community since last year are also strong signs of economic growth. We must continue that trend. Increasing our tax base and generating more sales tax (sales tax revenue is up 26 percent since 2003), will enable local government to provide further property tax relief to our citizens.

We have focused on new ways to fund our growing infrastructure needs. We must invest and re-invest in our street and sewer system. Last year the Commission created a unique fund called the Countywide Initiative to build and repair infrastructure on specific conditions (such as 20 years). The only exception is if the animal is unfit to undergo the required surgical procedure because of an extreme health condition; the other exception is if the pet owner annually obtains a spay/neuter program.

In 2005, the Commission passed an ordinance that makes it “unlawful to own, possess or keep in the city any dog or cat over the age of six (6) months that has not been spayed or neutered.” There are two exceptions to this law: a licensed veterinarian stating in writing that the animal is unfit to undergo the required surgical procedure because of an extreme health condition; the other exception is if the pet owner annually obtains a spay/neuter program. Under specific conditions (such as a licensed breeder); a permit from the KCK Animal Control Director.

Pet owners who adopt animals from our shelter are charged a regulated fee as part of the adoption process. The local veterinarians honor this fee and any difference is paid by the new pet owner. We follow up with people who adopt from the shelter by auditing our files on those who have not returned to collect their City license after showing receipt of the adopted pet being altered. With the approved funding our shelter will continue to move forward and expedite the future spay/neuter program.

The two additional officers and the spay/neuter unit will be beneficial in controlling the local pet population; however, Animal Control needs Citizens’ cooperation. Animal Control problems begin with people. Animals and People are at risk when irresponsible pet owners let their pets roam free, fail to observe ordinances, and allow pets to have unwanted litters.

Finding good homes to responsible owners is one of several priorities of Animal Control. When roaming free, animals may bite people, spread disease, destroy property, breed at an astounding rate, or die from accidents, starvation, disease, exposure, and infumation. In addition to the cost from injury and property damage, thousands of tax dollars are spent annually to shelter and humanely euthanize homeless, unwanted or injured animals.

The KCK Animal Control Unit’s adoption program last year found homes for 295 dogs and 98 cats. In 2006 (through July 31), 191 dogs and 37 cats have been adopted. Animal Control is also involved in a Shelter Transfer Adoption Program with other Kansas licensed shelters. Last year KCK Animal Control transferred 66 dogs and 48 cats to other shelters for adoption. As of July 31, 2006, 13 dogs and 11 cats have been transferred for adoption.

We need shelters that practice humane euthanasia given the pet overpopulation in our society. It is vital that we stress humane education (people being the ultimate source of most animal problems), spay/neuter for ALL pets, and aggressive adoption programs. To help in this effort it is important for citizens to practice responsible pet ownership:

- Have your pet spayed or neutered
- Do not let your pet run free. Keep him or her on a leash.

UG fortifies Animal Control effort

By CAPTAIN R. H. HORN
KCK Animal Control Division

The Kansas City, Kansas Police Department’s Animal Control Unit operates an animal shelter and adoption programs, to protect and find homes for unwanted companion animals; license animals to help identify and aid in the return of lost animals; enforce ordinances, such as leash law, cruelty and neglect, laws governing vaccinations and companion animal welfare; and educate the public, to make citizens aware of the animal control problems and ways to solve them.

KCK Animal Control works hard to maximize adoptions, but sick, injured and dangerous animals face dim futures given the supply of healthy animals available for adoption. Older animals are difficult to adopt given public preference for young, healthy pets.

To meet the challenges of a growing population of stray animals, the Unified Government in 2004 created an Animal Control Task Force comprised of neighborhood leaders, animal welfare activists, a local veterinarian, the director of KCK Animal Control and UG administrative staff. Its mission was to examine ways to maximize the efforts of Animal Control related to its adoption program and to improve customer service.

In 2005, the task force submitted to the UG Commission its recommendations which included the need for additional animal control officers and an in house spay/neuter program.

The Commission in 2005 approved funding that added two additional animal control officers. In the recently adopted budget, the Commission provided $170,000 for a spay and neutering unit. The governing body has also provided funding for computers, equipment and additional units to house animals.

In 2005, the Commission passed an ordinance that makes it “unlawful to own, possess or keep in the city any dog or cat over the age of six (6) months that has not been spayed or neutered.” There are two exceptions to this law: a licensed veterinarian stating in writing that the animal is unfit to undergo the required surgical procedure because of an extreme health condition; the other exception is if the pet owner annually obtains a spay/neuter program. Under specific conditions (such as a licensed breeder); a permit from the KCK Animal Control Director.

On August 3, the Unified Government Commission approved a budget that reduces the tax rate for property owners by 2.4%, while funding additional police officers and increasing efforts to build and repair infrastructure.

This marks the fourth year in a row the Unified Government has reduced its tax rate. Since 2003, the Unified Government has reduced its mill levy by more than 11 mills. We are the only taxing entity in the county to consistently lower our tax rate over this period of time.

I write as Mayor of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, Don Denney, Media Relations Specialist • 913.573.5544
KCKPD honored at national conference

The Kansas City Kansas Police Department Training and Communications Unit were recently honored at the national CALEA conference in Lexington, Kentucky. The police department has been accredited since 1993. The Training and Communications Units were awarded accreditation officially on July 29th 2006. There were four awards presented at the annual conference:

- Training Academy Accreditation - presented to Captain Vince Davenport, Master Sergeant James Brinkley, Police Officers Wendi Dunnuck and Elaine Moore
- Communications Unit Accreditation – presented to Captain Scott Breshears, Detective Todd Schumaker, Communications Supervisor Mindi Lobner
- Kansas City Kansas Police Department - received a Department Award for contributing to the TRI-ARC award, presented to Retired Chief Ronald Miller and Deputy Chief Stephen Culp
- The Unified Government - received an award for supporting Excellence in Public Safety - presented to Mayor/CEO Joe Reardon.

UG transit offers many specialized services

The Unified Government provides transit service that includes its own “UG Transit” service which has fixed route service that connects to Kansas City Area Transportation Authority’s “The Metro” and Johnson County’s “The Jo.” Riders of “UG Transit” pay $1.25 per regular passenger and $0.60 for seniors over age 65, youth up to age 18 and persons with disabilities if they have ADA certification. For information on this service please call (816) 221-0660 or visit www.kcata.org.

In addition, the Unified Government has a special program called “Dial-A-Ride,” which provides specialized service for persons with disabilities. “Dial-A-Ride” takes individuals from their residence to work, medical appointments, or school. For information please call (913) 573-8351.

Senior Citizens over age 60 may also use the “Aging Transit System” which provides “Meals on Wheels,” trips to the grocery store and for medical reasons. For more information on this program please call (913) 573-8308.

Dialing 3-1-1 will make it easy to contact UG

Across the country, dialing 3-1-1 provides local citizens easy access to government services. Cities including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Baltimore, and Washington DC are already realizing substantial benefits from 3-1-1 services. The Unified Government is not far behind. A 3-1-1 service will be launched in Wyandotte County next year. Further details will be forthcoming.

Besides improving the Unified Government’s customer service capabilities, 3-1-1 provides an important tool for measuring the performance of UG departments and services. It also eases the burden on 9-1-1, by giving citizens a quick and easy way to call about non-emergency municipal services.

When 3-1-1 is fully implemented, citizens will be able to dial 3-1-1 to report anything from hazardous road conditions to traffic light outages to noise complaints. And in most cases, citizens should be able to contact a live operator to receive directory assistance to access a host of municipal service sectors for questions pertaining to water quality issues, public transportation requests, routine property tax issues and many other topics.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

No matter how the November elections turn out, the 2007 session of the Kansas Legislature will be challenging for local governments. Mayors, Commissioners and City Council members in communities across Kansas will once again be forced to fight for position and respect in the Kansas Legislature.

There are of course many individual legislators who support local governments and work to represent the best interests of their local governments. That happened this year when the Wyandotte County delegation stood strong in opposing repeal of the property tax on machinery and equipment because of the devastating impact it will have on local property taxpayers.

It’s estimated the Unified Government will lose $33-million in revenue over the next 7 years because of the tax break for business. Money which homeowners may have to make up or see services cut. And now it’s been discovered the M&T tax cut law wasn’t written the way legislators intended. If the 2007 Legislature doesn’t correct the wording, KCK and many other cities will be hurt even worse than predicted.

There’s no guarantee the Legislature as a whole will do what’s best for local governments. Many lawmakers are looking for ways to punish local governments for doing things they don’t like. One legislator from Wichita calls local government, “loco government,” because of what she views “the crazy things” it does. Things which in her opinion need to be controlled. Things like allowing citizens to buy liquor on Sunday and allowing them to vote on whether they want casinos in their communities.

As the Unified Government Legislative Program states, “This Legislative Program is based on the principle that Federal, State and Local Governments are all partners in the effort to make Kansas and its communities great places for people to live, work and play. The Governor, State Legislature and other State officials must realize they represent the same constituents as locally elected leaders. And they should act like it. The Governor and Legislature should work with local governments in a cooperative partnership to attain economic success and quality communities.”

As the Unified Government builds its 2007 Legislative Program, cooperation, partnership and respect will be the foundation of all the proposals.
2007 Unified Government taxes; increases public services

Who Gets Your Tax Dollars?

Many people are surprised to learn the Unified Government gets less than half of the property tax bill they pay every year. Most of the property taxes you pay go to fund public schools and the Kansas City Kansas Community College.

Under the approved 2007 UG Budget, 54% of the total tax bill goes to public schools, the Kansas City Kansas Community College and the state of Kansas. Only 46% is collected by the Unified Government.

The owner of a $100,000 house in Kansas City, Kansas will pay about $830 a year in Unified Government (city-county combined) tax. That's about $69 a month, less than many people pay for telephone or television service. That money provides services such as 24 hour a day police, fire and emergency medical protection; streets and infrastructure; parks; and many community and social services.

The rest of the tax bill for that same $100,000 house, approximately another $980, goes to the public school district, the Kansas City Kansas Community College and the State of Kansas. So, the total tax bill for a $100,000 house in KCK will be about $1,811. $980 goes to public schools, the Kansas City Kansas Community College and the State of Kansas. About $831 goes to the Unified Government.

The Unified Government tax levy continues to be less than half of the total tax bill paid by Wyandotte County residents.

Fast Facts on 2007 UG Budget

- Is less than half of Wyandotte County taxpayers' combined tax mill levy rate. City of KCK accounts for 27-cents of every tax dollar; Wyandotte County accounts for 19-cents of every tax dollar. Education (local school district, Kansas City Kansas Community College) and the State of Kansas account for the remaining 54-cents.
- The UG tax rate will be reduced by 2.4% for ’07, and has decreased by 25% since 1997. This was done in spite of losing $5 million a year in state funding since 2003.
- This is the fourth straight year the UG has reduced its tax rate. KCK is the only first-class city in Kansas to reduce its mill levy for the last four years. Wyandotte County/KCK combined mill levy is now less than that of Shawnee County/Topeka.
- 25 new police officers have been added in the past three years, including 10 that will form a new night Community Policing Unit in 2006. A new Midtown Police Division will begin operation in 2007 along with a School Resource Officer Program in the four KCK USD 500 District high schools. USD 500 is sharing in the costs.
- Appropriated $1.5 million for a computerized control system for the Wyandotte County Detention Center.
- The UG created a Countywide Initiative for Funding Infrastructure (CIFI) program that gives county dollars to Bonner Springs, Edwardsville and KCK to use on infrastructure. In 2006 and in ’07, $2.8 million was allocated for CIFI.
- Increased Senior Citizens’ Utility Tax Rebate Program. Beginning in 2007, seniors earning less than $25,000 a year can receive a rebate up to $300. Eligible seniors should begin saving copies of their utility bills (BPU, gas, telephone). To qualify, you must be a resident of Kansas City, Kansas, and have been at least 65 years old during the entire 2006 calendar year. Gross income from all sources, including that of spouse, shall not exceed $25,000.
- Increased funding for transportation. $100,000 has been earmarked for public transportation options to connect workers in the eastern portion of KCK to jobs in the western sector of the community.
Budget decreases taxes; increases public safety and infrastructure

**How One of your 2006 Tax Dollars Is Spent for a Kansas City Kansas Household in USD 500**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount USD 500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
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<tr>
<td>City</td>
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<tr>
<td>WyCO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$0.13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Reducing the Tax Rate**

City and County Mill Levies: 1996-2007

**UG Property Taxes for KCK Residents on a $100,000 Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Property Taxes USD 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$881.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$851.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$831.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Cost of the Unified Government How Your Dollars will be Spent in 2007**

- Community Service: $0.19
- Public Works: $0.21
- Debt Service: $0.09
- Judicial Administration: $0.08
- Public Safety: $0.40

**Growing the Community**

Number of New Single-Family Residential Permits Kansas City, Kansas 1996-2006
By SUSAN J. ALLEN
Board of Public Utilities

As a not-for-profit public utility, the Kansas City Board of Public Utility's primary focus is on its customers and the community. BPU's goal is simple: to provide the highest quality of electric and water services at the lowest possible cost.

In planning for our community's future, our research shows that BPU will need to provide significantly more electric power for our customers within the next six years. The additional power is needed because of the increasing electric demands of our existing customers, and because we will have more customers requiring electricity.

This growth is the result of the ongoing economic development in the BPU service area, including the new businesses in western Wyandotte County, new housing in all areas, and as industrial business expansion.

In addition, our older generating units that produce electricity require more costly maintenance and do not produce enough power to meet the needs of the community. We will need to replace our power plants in the future. BPU must take steps now to meet the future electric needs of the community.

As part of the initial planning effort, BPU developed an Electric System Master Plan which identified the need for future electric generation capabilities. Earlier this year BPU engaged Black & Veatch, a leading engineering, consulting and construction company, to review the Master Plan and provide objective analysis and recommendations.

BPU and Black & Veatch are currently evaluating the best options in terms of future power generation, environmental technology, type of fuel, potential plant size, and plant location. We expect this research to be completed over the next few months and will share those results with the community.

BPU will communicate regularly with our customers and the community to ensure that you are informed of any plans or decisions regarding this project. We will also hold public meetings to gather and share information. Soon we will have a portion of our Web site (www.bpu.com) dedicated to information about this initiative.

BPU will work to ensure that any final decisions take into account the needs of our customers and our responsibilities as a public utility. We look forward to providing the same reliable, safe, environmentally sound, and cost-effective service as we have for the past 94 years.

BPU prepares for future power needs
Sunshine Biscuits is a longtime Fairfax fixture

By TRISH SCHURKAMP
WyCo Historical Museum Director

Whenever I drive by the Sunshine Biscuits plant in the Fairfax District of Kansas City, Kansas, I think about the days when my mother worked there. I was six-years-old when she took the job, but driving by the plant still stirs up memories of the wonderful smell of fresh cookies.

In 1902, John L. and Jacob s. Loose, along with John Wiles, formed the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company in Kansas City, MO. Prior to World War II, Loose-Wiles Company looked to expand and improve their baking facility, but with the advent of the war, plans were put on hold. By 1946, Loose-Wiles, now Sunshine Biscuits, began to construct their new cookie and candy plant in Fairfax. The September 9, 1947 Kansas City Kansas remarked, “Sunshine Biscuits would have the most modern baking and candy-making facility in the world.”

The building would be the longest of its kind in the world with 2,000 windows and 7,000 window lights – which is how the company got its name. The company had a tradition of having lots of sunshine throughout its plant. Swenson Construction Company in Kansas City, MO built it at a cost of $3 million. The building sat on 44-acres which provided for ample parking spaces for its employees and visitors.

Sunshine Biscuits was scheduled to begin operating in 1949. At that time, the plant manager was Hanford Main. The building had over 800,000 feet of floor space, with five stories in the center and three and two stories to the east and west. Two parallel railroad spurs ran along the entire length of the building allowing simultaneous loading and unloading for as many as forty railroad cars. Giant ovens more than two city blocks long were installed in the new plant. The ovens were placed on the top floor so that manufacturing of the cookies and candies would be under the most sanitary conditions. The ovens were placed where they would receive the maximum daylight available. At the time of its construction, Sunshine Biscuits hired 1,200 employees.

To go along with the ample parking and increased traffic, a road expansion was done on what was then White Eagle Road. In 1946, the county received a 66-foot strip of land approximately 2,000 feet in length for construction of a new road to serve Sunshine Biscuit. The road was renamed “Sunshine.” Throughout the years, Sunshine has made many renovations and has undergone a couple of name changes.

As time moved on, I had put Sunshine Biscuits and those wonderful smelling cookies out of my mind. I never gave much thought to the fact that when I ate a sugar wafer, it was probably made at a Sunshine Biscuits plant, or that when I bought crackers that they were Sunshine Biscuits. These were just things that I did as I moved through life. Then, a couple of years ago, I was part of Leadership 2000. During that time, we took a tour of the Fairfax district. As we maneuvered down Seventh Street Trafficway, I was aroused to the scent of my childhood. That familiar smell of fresh cookies lingering in the air snapped me back to being six again.

The voice of the tour guide brought me back, “This is Sunshine Biscuits – the only plant in the United States to make the famous Cheez-its crackers.” And to remind us of the places we have been and the people in our lives, today, they are a part of the Kellogg’s Company. But for me, they will always be Sunshine Biscuits.
COMMUNITY LANDMARK... The Rosedale Arch, dedicated in September 1924, was designed as a “scaled down” version of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. It was created as part of a memorial park to honor the “Rainbow Division,” the 42nd U.S. Infantry Division, composed of National Guard units from 26 states and the first to arrive in France in World War I. This dedication occurred two years after Rosedale, a separate city, consolidated with Kansas City, Kansas. The arch sits atop Mount Marty, and it is lighted up at night, making it highly visible to the surrounding community.