

Randy Riggs
City Manager

rriggs@newtonkansas.com
p: 316-284-6002
f: 316-284-6090

201 E. Sixth, P.O. Box 426
Newton, Kansas 67114-0426

November 2015

City Commissioners and Citizens of Newton,

As the fiscal year comes to a close, we reflect on our accomplishments and challenges, on decisions made and opportunities to be considered. There is much vital work needed to be done as we move forward for our citizens. It is our responsibility as elected officials and City staff to make decisions that insure a healthy and vibrant community--not just for today, but for tomorrow. And for our grandchildren's tomorrows.

Following are indicators in 2015 that informed the 2016 Newton City Budget process.

- The local property tax rate has remained generally flat, and City Commission kept the mill levy flat again for 2016. (An exception was the 2015 increase for enhanced emergency response transmission radios, which are now in use.)
- Sales tax revenues increased 4.9% in 2014, while 2015 collections to date project a substantial increase, perhaps as much as 12% over budget, going into 2016.
- The \$24 million Waste Water Treatment Plant upgrade project is advancing as scheduled. It was the decision of the City Commission that should the project come in under budget, as now anticipated, sewer rates will be revisited and perhaps revised during 2016.
- The City of Newton was rewarded for its fiscal stewardship and management when Standard & Poor maintained our credit rating of **AA+**. This rating stature provides the City of Newton access to lower interest rates and greater opportunities, as appropriate, for bonded projects and developments.
- Total construction permits and new home construction in Newton and Harvey County continue generally flat to increasing slightly.
- A location has been secured and an architectural firm hired to begin designs for a new police station. No specific start date or cost is available at this time.
- Relatedly, Newton Police Department released its detailed analysis of crime rate and crime hot spots in Newton. A strategic and focused emphasis on community policing that is both responsive and pre-emptive is underway, but additional officers are needed to effectively implement the program.

- Commissioners approved an increase in the local Guest Tax from 6% to 8% effective 01/01/2016. Proceeds will be used to expedite payment of Meridian Center bond and interest payments, with projected savings to the City of \$500,000 over **10 years**.
- City Commission approved a resolution of support to partner with a private developer to build moderate-income multi-family housing complex at 24th and South Kansas. This is part of a broader strategy to strengthen desirable housing in the Newton community.

The 2016 budget approved by the City Commission is our plan, a roadmap for the City of Newton. This non-expansive budget will allow us to deliver basic community needs and services, while responding to the fiscal restraints of a changing, and at times volatile, broader economy. We must always be prepared fiscally and with adequate staffing, for the disruptions and surprises that define the new ‘normal’ in our community and world.

Let us not lose sight that our local government works, and it works well. Every day, every week, every month, services are delivered at our doorsteps, and needed amenities are initiated to enhance and sustain our community.

The 2030 ReNewton Comprehensive Plan, identifies 12 key values intended to help elected officials and City staff assess community priorities, needs, and desired amenities. Citizen-led projects continue to emerge in response to the ReNewton vision for an *expanded tax base and enhanced community amenities that preserve the community’s richness of character, heritage, and way of life*. Examples include:

- Newton YMCA, part of the Wichita Metro YMCA organization, broke ground in May 2015 on a \$15 million facility to be completed fall 2016. Commercial development near this state-of-the-art facility is anticipated. (ReNewton Values: Healthy Living, Community Development, Livability)
- The Bicycle Master Plan was approved, following an admirable and model effort by engaged members of the community. (ReNewton Values: Healthy Living, Innovations in Transportation)
- Historic Fox Theatre Main Street renovation project is successfully galvanizing as a private/nonprofit/public partnership (ReNewton Values: Revitalized Downtown, Social Cohesion, Livability)
- Guidelines to allow outdoor seating and merchandise sales on public sidewalks in the Downtown District were approved. (ReNewton Values: Revitalized Downtown, Social Cohesion, Livability)
- In another public/private venture, the local Farmer’s Market and a private greenhouse will co-locate at a site owned and maintained by the City Parks Dept. (ReNewton Values: Healthy Living, Town Character)
- A Sports Complex Initiative task force, appointed by the Newton Mayor, is exploring market need for a community/regional sports complex, which would likely be a cooperative effort of multiple private and public sector investors.

(ReNewton Values: Healthy living, Livability, Cultural Diversity & Social Cohesion, Community Development)

- Seven additional historic sites, three commercial and four residential, were added to the local historic register. (ReNewton Value: Preserving Town Character)

Current indicators reflect movement toward a more positive economic climate, though there is certainly room for continued strengthening of the local economy. Federal and state legislation will have a direct effect on the revenues and expenditures of local governments, private investment, and community growth.

Commissioners and staff will work with other elected officials, private investors, and the general public to help insure the rich traditions and quality of life Newton enjoys will continue for generations to follow.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randall K Riggs". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Randall K Riggs
City Manager

This Page Intentionally Left Blank