

THE COURIER-TIMES

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COUNTY BOARD LEAVES LEVY FOR RIVER WORK OUT OF NEW BUDGET

River Committee and Mt. Vernon Citizens Protest Omission of Mill Levy in Budget for 1924; Budget to Be Adopted at Hearing Monday of Next Week; Current Expense Fund Levy is Less Than Last Year

The county commissioners in adopting a preliminary budget for county expenses omitted the mill levy raised last year about \$22,000 to be used for river survey work and preliminary work toward solving the problem of flood protection on the Skagit river. The county river committee, of which H. L. Willis acted as spokesman, together with a delegation from the Mt. Vernon Commercial club, waited on the commissioners on Wednesday and made an effort to get a mill levy included in the budget, before it comes up for final hearing and passage on Monday of next week, October 1.

Chairman Van Buren of the board told the river committee that the temporary budget had been adopted and that it would be illegal to place an additional item in it at this time. While admitting that they should have seen the commissioners sooner, Mr. Willis said he hoped the mill levy for the river work could be added in some way. He and the others were informed that this could not be done.

Big Fund on Hand

Mr. Van Buren stated that the commissioners felt that with \$20,000 from the amount levied last year, still available, that there was no need for an additional mill levy this year, to add more money to the fund. He said that about \$2,000 was spent last year for the federal government engineer who made a flood survey of the river some time ago, after the big flood. Mr. Stewart, this engineer, has not yet submitted his detailed report to the commissioners. The reason for this, it was explained, was that he resigned from government service soon after finishing his work on the Skagit river, and had been employed by a private firm in the east. He has been making out his report as rapidly as he could under the circumstances.

Mr. Willis asked the commissioners to employ a competent engineer to prepare detailed plans for the best way of handling a flood control scheme. The county, when it has a definite plan to submit, will then be in a position to ask for federal aid, he said.

Mr. McKinstry, former county engineer, said he represented a committee from the Mt. Vernon Commercial club and stated that he thought the mill levy for river work, was to remain an annual affair, without arguing over it every year. He said that the Mt. Vernon Commercial club wanted the county to help in getting better protection along the river in and above Mt. Vernon. He told of the necessity of wing dams above the bridge, to stop the formation of the sand bar, and of the danger in other places, and intimated that he expected the county would use some of the river improvement fund for this purpose.

Mr. Van Buren stated that if any of the \$20,000 was used, it would be spent first on the bridge under the draw at this bridge, but under another span and that the entire bridge might go. A jetty will probably be built there with the money in the fund. McKinstry said that the Mt. Vernon bridge was also in serious danger. Mr. Willis asked that an engineer be employed to work on the matter of flood prevention, which was of vital interest to the entire county.

The County Budget

The commissioners took no action in the river matter, except to say that they could not include an additional one mill levy at this time. The temporary budget for 1924 provides for raising a total of \$147,007.87 by taxation for the current expenses of the county and various county offices. Last year the budget for 1923 provided for a total of \$168,923 for this purpose, a sum considerably larger.

The amount to be raised for 1924 would be about \$20,000 more than this year, except that the cash surplus of the county on Jan. 1, of \$39,944 is deducted this time from the amount needed for county expenses in the budget. Heretofore this could not be done.

Most of the county officials asks for more money than they did for 1923. There is a saving in the general tax of \$22,000 as the mill levy for the river work is omitted, but there is an item of \$71,700 providing for \$11,700 interest and \$60,000 on the principal of the courthouse bonds; and the road districts show a con-

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siderable increase according to the estimates.

As the entire budget is subject to revision at the hearing on Monday, the final figures for the various departments will be published next week. The county officials have printed copies of the temporary budget on hand now to be mailed to any taxpayer who requests them. This is in accord with the law. Up to the present time only three requests for copies of this preliminary budget have been received. The usual crowd of interested taxpayers is expected at the budget hearing on Monday.