

Commissioners Comments

By Terry A. Stevenson

We're getting into what is usually a very busy time of year for commissioners, budget time. Although, as I look back over the last couple of months, it's hard to remember anytime that has been busier.

We have some budget challenges facing us pretty much like we did last year. Our revenue projections are still not crystallized into very certain numbers. At best, it appears that we may be even with last year. It's not that we're facing drastic cuts, but we still are looking at making some tough decisions.

Fortunately, we have been able to enter into an agreement with Caterpillar for a lease/purchase agreement on five new motor graders with payments being the same as they have been previously. We have lots of road miles that need our attention constantly.

Speaking of roads, the legislature passed a bill this last session to provide \$6 million for roads in counties impacted by oil drilling. This bill was especially designed to help counties in the Niobrara oil play area. The legislature designated the State Land and Investment Board (SLIB) as the agent to distribute the money. The counties had until April 29 to submit applications. Platte County had their application in on schedule. On May 12, SLIB met to consider distribution. Three counties were awarded some money, but Platte County was not. There is still \$1.2 million left, and we have been invited back for a meeting on June 2 to make our case again.

The Board was looking for information that demonstrated actual damage on roads. While we have some road damage already done by oil exploration in Platte County, the biggest need we have is to prevent damage, particularly on paved roads, which are very expensive to repair or replace. We are working to gather evidence to show that if we don't take preventative action we will have one particular stretch of Pioneer Road that will suffer extensive damage. We will see what happens on June 2.

I should also mention the Centennial activities that are ongoing around the county. The Centennial committee has gathered a list of events planned and has brochures available. It has been great fun participating in the planning of the centennial. It is also quite enjoyable to look back at what things were like in years past in the county. Several of you have mentioned how much you like the Centennial Moments spot on the radio and you continue to enjoy Patsy Parkin's weekly look back to the events of a century ago.

I think I'll leave it at that for the time being. You can look forward to a column by one of the other commissioners next month.