

The Hokah City Council met for the last time in 2016 on Dec. 6, clearing the way for a property tax levy virtually unchanged from last year.

The levy breakdown includes \$220,933 for the general fund, a \$21,000 allocation for the library and \$53,650 for the wastewater treatment plant bond. City administrator Rod Blank said that the council worked hard on holding the line on taxes, allowing an “increase of only 2 to 3 percent over the last 10 years.”

The council also ratified a master subscriber agreement for Minnesota Court Data Services. Under the agreement, the city attorney’s office can order bulk data downloads from the state court system, even confidential data as long as it pertains to the specific case.

Before the meeting, Blank explained how the new system will benefit the city. The city attorney “does everything except felonies,” he said. If he is involved in issuing drunk-driving charges, for example, he needs access to those files. Blank noted that the city attorney for La Crescent already uses a similar arrangement and said the system could also be used for background checks.

Council member Rebecca Albrecht reported that the Thursday after-school program at the library has been heavily used by children. The library was recently awarded an Arlin Falck grant totaling more than \$4,000, with much of the funds going toward the purchase of new commercial-grade computers and support for the children’s program. Albrecht also said that library hours have been extended on Saturday from 9 a.m. until noon to accommodate working families.

The council also sent 10 names to the county auditor for delinquent utility accounts totaling more than \$11,000. Blank explained how he actually discounted one bill in order to encourage people who are in arrears to pay. He also noted that people often choose to wait until the end of the year and pay delinquent accounts along with their taxes.

In other news

The council signed an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to clear snow on Hwy. 44 from its junction with Hwy. 16 to Third Street. The state will pay for the plowing and loading and Hokah will be responsible for hauling and disposal.

Council members noted that traffic has slowed now that Hokah has an officer on the street. Voting unanimously, the council directed the police department to provide a report of its activities at future council meetings as a public service.

A few police responses include: 13 assists with other agencies, four traffic stops, and four traffic crashes with property damage. In addition, police responded to four theft complaints, three medical emergencies and one arrest for forgery.

Blank also announced that the Minnesota Department of Health recognized Hokah with its Water Fluoridation Quality Award for maintaining consistent levels of fluoride in its drinking water.

Top vote-getters in the Nov. 8 elections Matt Vetsch (Incumbent) and Cindy Pfiffner, along with re-elected Mayor Mike Walsh. They will all be sworn in at the January meeting.