

# District 1 News

*A Public Service Communication  
From the Office of...*



*Logan County Commissioner Mark Sharpton*

Volume 3, No. 1

August 2007

## **\$ Understanding County Road Funding \$**

"What is county government?" someone asked the other day. The question brought home the realization that sometimes citizens, busy with families and jobs, are unaware of how government works at the local level.

This article addresses some basics about county government and road funding issues, which hopefully will clarify misconceptions such as the following, which commissioners hear from time to time.

**"I pay property tax. Why isn't my road paved?"**

"Ad valorem" or property taxes, **do not** fund road maintenance. The huge majority of property tax, about 87%, goes to schools. The County Health Department receives about 2.5% and the County General Fund, which provides for courthouse utilities and upkeep, supplies for the jail, and salaries for elected officials, receives about 10%.

Money to maintain roads is derived not from property tax, but from fuel tax, motor vehicle collections and gross production tax (the tax on oil, gas, asphalt and ores).

This money is collected throughout the state and sent to the Oklahoma Tax Commission. The Tax Commission then distributes the money to the state's 77 counties, using a complex formula developed by the legislature.

Once the County receives its portion of this "Highway Cash," or road maintenance money, it is divided among the commissioner districts. The commissioners apportion their district's share into various accounts to cover employee salaries, equipment lease rentals, insurance, FICA, retirement, travel, and maintenance and operations costs.

For example, in May 2007, Logan County received \$242,181.98 in Highway Cash from the Tax Commission. The money was divided within the three districts as follows:

**\$96,872.79 or 40% went to District 3**  
**\$76,771.69 or 31.7% went to District 2**  
**\$68,537.50 or 28.3% went to District 1**

After expenses were deducted from each district's budget to pay for the accounts listed above, the amount of "maintenance and operations" money left was minimal. Of the \$68,537 District 1 received, \$21,637 was available for road maintenance. (cont. pg. 2)

Want to know more about roads?

You are invited!



**Tuesday, Nov. 6, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Oak Cliff Fire Department**  
**(Bryant and Simmons)**

State Representative Jason Murphey and County Commissioner Mark Sharpton will host a forum to update residents on roads and available funds for future improvements. Michael Patterson from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation will also be on hand to answer questions.

Approximately 60% of District 1's projected annual maintenance and operations budget is used to purchase fuel and rock. The remaining 40% is used for asphalt, utilities, signs, parts and services.

From January through June, fuel for equipment operation in the District cost a whopping \$55,097 and rock purchases totaled \$38,035.

Considering that a recent bid cost for roadway paving is \$113,933 for one mile of 3" asphalt overlay on a 22' road, you can see that major road improvements and maintenance present a challenge. Stabilizing a road base prior to paving adds an additional \$80,000 to the overall cost.

Thanks to alternative funding through the Rural Economic Action Program (REAP), a CDBG grant through the Department of Commerce, federal and state funds and donations from citizens and Homeowners Associations, (permitted by Oklahoma Statute 60, Chapter 9, Section 390), **District 1 has been able to pave approximately 30 miles in the last 4 1/2 years, in spite of limited "Highway Cash."**

If you have questions about road funding or other issues concerning county government, feel free to contact Mark Sharpton, Chairman, Logan County Board of Commissioners, at 282-3581.

Citizens are always welcome to attend Commissioner meetings held at the Courthouse Annex, 312 E. Harrison. Time is set aside during the first meeting of the month for citizens to be heard. Those who wish to speak on other meeting dates should call 282-3581 two days prior to the meeting and ask to be placed on the agenda. Meetings begin at 9:00 a.m., except for the final meeting of the month, which starts at 10 a.m.

### Meeting Schedule

August	September	October
Mon. Aug. 6	Tues. Sept. 4	Mon. Oct. 1
Wed. Aug. 15	Fri. Sept. 14	Mon. Oct. 15
Mon. Aug. 20	Mon. Sept. 17	Wed. Oct. 31
Fri. Aug. 31	Fri. Sept. 28	

## Where Did That Money Go ?

When citizens voted for the fuel tax years ago, the money was intended for roads. However, over time, funds were diverted by legislators into other accounts, such as the Oklahoma Aeronautics Revolving Fund, the State Transportation Fund, the Education Reform Revolving Fund, the General Revenue Fund, and to funds for tribes, cities and towns.

This left counties with approximately 1/3 of fuel tax collections with which to maintain and build roads. For example, in 2002, counties received only 30.66% of the gasoline tax, or \$26,431,473 out of \$82,163,419. Currently, over 40% of the money from vehicle registration fees is diverted for non-transportation purposes.

This is why it is important to have advocates in the legislature who understand rural area needs. The following letter from current Representative Jason Murphey indicates his understanding of the problem counties face in regard to funding.

#### Dear Commissioner Sharpton:

*"During the legislative session, I appreciated your assistance as I worked to craft legislation to reverse the policy of using motor tax dollars on non-road related items and to advocate for returning more of that money to county roads.*

*"I also shared your concern about the inequity of how state government funds counties that do not have high traffic areas the same as it funds counties undergoing urban growth. That is why I proposed legislation that rural areas which border larger counties should be funded at a more significant rate.*

*"As Chairman of the Board of the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments and as a member of the Association of County Commissioners of Oklahoma, you have the opportunity to lobby officials for the reform-minded ideas we share.*

*"In the challenging struggle of reforming state government, I consider your input and experience invaluable. I am committed to assisting you in every way possible to secure necessary state funds for paving Logan County roads."*

Sincerely,

State Representative Jason Murphey



## Property Tax Relief

In an effort to bring about property tax reform, Commissioner Sharpton is calling on the Oklahoma Legislature to expand Homestead Exemption for homeowners.

Sharpton says that for years the exemption has not risen to match the increase in inflation. As such, it is failing to address the ever-increasing expansion of property tax bills.

Sharpton also believes the legislature should lower from five percent to one percent, the rate at which assessors currently increase property tax assessments. His view on property tax was shaped by talking to homeowners across Logan County.

"People are frustrated when their property tax increases every year," he said. "I am calling on the legislature to make Homestead Exemption match the rising rate of taxes in order to make the exemption meaningful."

## Announcing... Road Improvement Projects



The calendar is full for major road projects in District 1. Recent rains set us back while we performed urgent roadway repairs, but in spite of delays, we hope to complete several major improvements this fall. Most will be funded through \*REAP grants, donations or county road funds appropriated through ODOT. Our "to do" list includes the following.

**Canyon Rd.** - One mile of asphalt overlay from Broadway to Hogan Rd. (\*grant to Cedar Valley)

**Pennsylvania Ave.** - One mile of asphalt overlay from Hwy 33 to Whitehouse Rd. (\*grant)

**Academy** - One-half mile of asphalt from 19th Street south (\*grant)

**Simmons Rd.** - One and one-half miles asphalt overlay from Coltrane to I-35 (CDBG Grant)

**Forrest Hills** - One mile of asphalt from Broadway to Bryant (Developer Donation)

**Broadway** - One-half mile of asphalt from Hwy 33 north (\*grant to Cedar Valley)

(continued next column)

**Kelly Ave.** - One mile of asphalt from Simmons Rd. to Charter Oak Rd. (\$ through ODOT)

**Charter Oak** - One-half mile of asphalt from Kelly Ave. west (\$ through ODOT)

Other projects include roadway striping for portions of Western Ave., Coltrane and Broadway.

## \$150,000 Grant Awarded for Simmons Road



On June 29, Commissioner Mark Sharpton received notice through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce/Office of Community Development, that a \$150,000 grant was approved for a 3" asphalt improvement on Simmons Road from Coltrane Road to I-35.

The grant was officially accepted by the Commissioners at their July 2 board meeting. Total projected cost for the improvement is \$167,446.

Sharpton said the District had submitted applications for sections of Simmons Road twice previously but had been denied. "This one came as a nice surprise," Sharpton said.

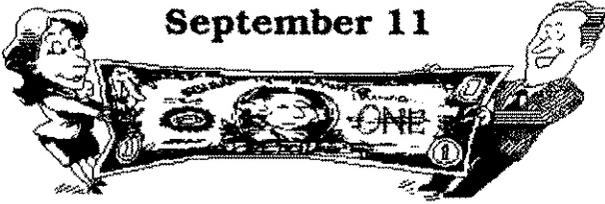
Qualifying for the grant meant doing door to door surveys, which were conducted by District 1 staff. In order to meet the grant criteria, the Department of Commerce required that 51% of the beneficiaries had to qualify as having low to moderate income.

"We appreciated the cooperation of citizens in the area who provided information for our survey," Sharpton said. "We know it seems invasive to knock on doors and ask people about their income level and the number of people in their household, but once we explained our intent to pave the road, most were pleasantly cooperative."

Sharpton said work on Simmons is tentatively scheduled to begin in late fall. He is also working with local residents and the Philadelphia Church of God in a cooperative effort to pave Simmons Road from Coltrane to Bryant.

The CDBG grant is the fourth grant awarded to the District this year.

## Sales Tax Election September 11



County residents will have the opportunity on September 11 to choose whether they wish to recoup some of their tax money. Logan County Commissioners met June 4 and discussed a proposal by Logan Medical Center to reduce the hospital sales tax by one-quarter cent.

Hospital officials appeared before the board on May 21 to propose returning a quarter cent of the one cent sales tax the hospital currently receives. Dennis Ochs, hospital board chairman and former Logan Medical Center Administrator Shawn Morrow indicated at the May meeting that the hospital board of trustees had a long-term plan to become less dependent on the sales tax.

The hospital will make its final bond payment of \$250,000 in July 2007, retiring all of Logan Medical Center's long-term debt.

Commissioners Mark Sharpton, Monty Plearcy and Kevin Leach voted to accept the hospital's proposal to take the issue to a vote of the people and call an election.

Sharpton said, "We have an opportunity to give the people back what is theirs. I would like to see us move further in that direction as the hospital becomes more fiscally sound."

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**District 1 News** is privately published and funded by Commissioner Mark Sharpton. Our office is located at 2315 S.W. 19th, Guthrie. An "open door" policy is in effect and visitors are welcome. You may reach us at 282-3581, or e-mail [marksharpton@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marksharpton@sbcglobal.net).

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