

Natural gas board increases budget by \$33,000

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DAYTON — The Tongue River Valley Joint Powers Board has increased its budget for fiscal year 2015 by approximately \$33,000 over last year's budget, indicating that the board seeking to bring natural gas to Dayton, Rancheater and areas in between is gaining steam in its mission.

The board is also entering its first full year in operation.

Last year's original budget of \$6,000 was used for operational expenses like advertising, bonding and consulting services as the group organized and began seeking the best options for bringing in natural gas. In April, the Board of County Commissioners matched the original \$6,000 budget with a contribution of \$6,000 and promised another \$4,000 if the same amount could be raised from individual donations.

This year's budget — a total of \$39,000 in proposed revenue and \$25,300 in proposed expenses — includes \$4,000 from the county and the matching \$4,000 from individual contributions, which continue to come in, board Chairman Peter Clark said.

The remaining \$31,000 in revenue came from the town of Rancheater, the town of Dayton and Sheridan County School District 1, which are the three entities in the joint powers board.

Clark said \$20,000 of projected expenditures is slated for professional engineering fees. The board is currently in the process of putting together a request for proposal to hire an engineering firm to design the route of the pipeline and figure out needed rights of way and easements.

At Tuesday's budget hearing and meeting, representatives from WWC Engineering and Vista West Engineering offered advice on how to best prepare an RFP in order to limit the scope and cost of the project, Clark said.

Under new business, Clark informed the board that he has a meeting scheduled Aug. 1 with the Wyoming Pipeline Authority to discuss possible funding and partnership.

Clark has also spoken with the United States Department of Agriculture office in Torrington about possible funding options, and the board will begin working on the application process for the USDA. However, before applying, the natural gas board needs an engineering survey, an environmental study and more, which all cost money.

"It takes money to get money. We're still trying to figure out that little wrinkle," Clark said.

Clark will also set up a phone call with the State Loan and Investment Board to discuss options for submitting another application for a loan and a grant to fund the pipeline. The SLIB board rejected the board's original request in June due to limited funds available for SLIB to allocate.

Looking ahead, the natural gas board hopes to have an RFP for design of the pipeline prepared by its next regular meeting Aug. 27.

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