

ALL EYES ON

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Kirksville MO, 63501

Citizens to vote on \$2.27 million bond

BY ELIZABETH KOCH
 Staff Reporter

Kirksville residents will have to pay a little extra to fix their storm drainage problems. Citizens will be voting in the April 6 election on whether to approve a \$2.27 million bond to help solve some of the city's storm drainage issues.

City Manager Mari Macomber said residents would receive an estimated fee of \$2.25 per connection per month on their water and sewer bills to help pay back the bond. The fee would be applied this fall at the earliest.

"This was an opportunity that came up this year [through the] American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which is new," Macomber said. "So, that was not an option before. The city has had two years of record rainfall. ... We take care of the storm drainage when we do street improvements by adding curb and gutter drainage tubes for the streets."

If the bond passes, the next step would be to plan projects and financing and file the necessary paperwork, she said.

"The program itself, [45 percent of] the interest will be subsidized by the federal government, so that's an advantage," Macomber said. "Otherwise, conventional funding would [require the city to] have to pay 100 percent of the funding."

The storm drainage concern was brought to the city's attention after residents be-

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Mayank Dhungana/Index

Many retirees attended the Ameren UE forum Tuesday night and expressed concerns about the rate hike. Because the lack of social security increase last year, residents feared they would be unable to pay the 18 percent higher fee.

Ameren requests rate hike



Mayank Dhungana/Index
 Kirksville citizens wore attire to match their dissatisfaction with the price hike.

MAXIMILIAN ERNST
 Staff Reporter

Ameren UE's proposed rate-hike has agitated many Kirksville residents and renewable energy supporters.

Citizens voiced their concerns Tuesday when the Missouri Public Service Commission hosted a public hearing about a proposed price increase.

On July 24, Ameren UE, the St. Louis-based utility cooperation and sole electricity supplier for the Kirksville area, requested a \$402 million annual price increase, the equivalent of 18 percent of the current electric rates. About 100 people attended the hearing, led by commissioner Robert Clayton, in the SUB Georgian Room. The other four commissioners were absent, but the commissions staff recorded the

"We buy all those crazy light bulbs, energy efficient air conditioning units and such, and after saving a few bucks a month, UE comes along with an 18 percent increase."

-- Jim LeCompte, Kirksville resident

testimonies of more than 20 citizens who testified under oath.

Michael Cleary, communications executive for Ameren UE, said Ameren is giving customers what they wanted.

"When we had some major storms in the past few years, we had hearings just like this with people saying they wanted more reliable service," Cleary said. "So we launched the Power On project, increasing our reliability. So we listened to our customers and responded, but these things have a cost."

Cleary said Ameren had to

make the expenditures first and then ask for a price raise to get the money back. With the economic situation, Ameren is now left with the large amount of money they invested, but never actually had. Cleary also said the rise in fuel cost has been a factor and pointed out that Ameren had cut back on its own expenditures.

Having accepted the last rise of 9 percent in electricity rates in March 2009, local residents and some local business owners, made it clear that in the current economic situation and with

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Child abuse remains high in Adair County

County ranks 95th out of 114 counties in Missouri

BY TAWANDA KANHEMA
 Staff Reporter

Adair County has one of the highest rates of child abuse and neglect out of 114 counties in Missouri, according to a recent report released by Citizens for Missouri's Children, a non-governmental advocacy organization that acts as a watchdog for the rights and well-being of children.

The Kids Count in Missouri 2009 Data Book, a comprehensive report by CMC and 30 other public and private organizations, evaluated the status of children using 10 indicators that gauge the well-being of all citizens under the age of 19.

According to the report, about 48 out of every 1,000 children in Adair County were either neglected or abused in 2008, making it one of the worst ranking counties in Missouri.

County ranks are based on the number of reported cases of child abuse and neglect and county population. Adair County

is 95th out of 114 counties and the City of St. Louis.

Matthew Holt, juvenile services administrator at the Adair County Judicial Circuit Juvenile Division, said his department has been working on several initiatives to improve the living conditions of children and has taken 94 children into protective custody out of 1,571 child abuse referrals.

"Cases of abuse have remained pretty consistent, and we are working very closely with social service agencies to keep families intact," Holt said.

Adair rates improve

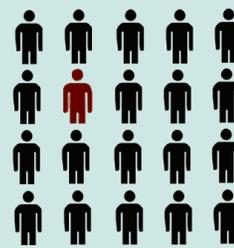
In Adair County, substantiated cases of child abuse decreased by more than 9 percent since 2004, according to the CMC. The number of reported child abuse cases has dropped 26 percent nationally from 2004-09, according to a report commissioned by Congress.

CMC attributes the high prevalence of child abuse and neglect cases to high levels of poverty, a lack of affordable health care and a decrease in the availability of high quality educational opportunities.

"A lot of this has to do with unemployment and the econom-

COUNTY PROFILE for CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Adair County ranks 95th out of 114 Missouri counties, making it one of the worst rankings in the state for child abuse and neglect. However, trends show that since 2004, the rate has improved, according to a 2009 report by Citizens for Missouri's Children.



In 2008, approximately 1 in 20 children were subjected to abuse or neglect, while the state has reported 1 in 30.

ic status of families," said Scott Gee, executive director of CMC. "The availability of jobs is a huge

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County prosecutor says he won't seek third term

ANDREA HEWITT
 News Editor

Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams announced Friday that he will not run for a third term in the November general elections.

"My main motivations were that I really felt that, at this point in my time in the prosecutor's office, I've reached a lot of the goals that I've wanted to," Williams said. "I've also had opportunities presented to me that I want to take advantage of. I put all that together and I looked at what I've accomplished in the office. It was time for me to move on at this point."

Williams said his goals when entering office in 2002 included recovering the reputation of the prosecutor's office, more aggressive prosecution and accountability for offenders. He said he's confident the office has met all the goals, but he's met with some negativity from the community.

"I've had some negative feedback, which you expect as a prosecutor," he said. "If you do your job you are going to make enemies — there's no doubt about it. Sending anybody to prison or keeping someone in jail or to convict someone of a crime and take away certain rights we enjoy — you're go-



Mark Williams

ing to make people mad."

Williams was Adair County's first full-time prosecutor and he said there is justification for continuing with a full-time prosecutor.

"Unfortunately we've had several murder cases," he said. "The state vs. James McFarland was three months into my term [and] was a murder case that we filed. Dealing with the Kirksville mayor [Debbie Masten] case, we've had a couple city councilmember cases, we've had a couple other murder cases we had to deal with — those are the main high profile cases."

"In the Jackie Gleason case we were one of the first, if not the first,

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