

3rd Quarter 2017 Issues

Sep 27, 2017

Due to an estimated budget shortfall of more than \$10 million dollars, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) has announced a series of actions to reduce spending immediately. The agency is experiencing continued revenue shortfalls due to loss of federal funds, increased costs of providing services and reductions in annual state appropriation. The furloughs will impact local health departments, including the Pottawatomie County Health Department. In addition, a Voluntary Out Benefit Offer (VOBO) is being prepared to reduce staffing levels statewide. The plan is not yet finalized but will be announced to employees in the coming weeks.

Sep 26, 2017

Pottawatomie County commissioners, following an executive session on Monday, plan to negotiate with the Citizen Potawatomi Nation regarding the Mission Hill property on Gordon Cooper Drive. The Pottawatomie County Health Department, Solara and the Family Justice Center currently occupy the properties at 1900 and 1904 Gordon Cooper Drive. According to a statement on Aug. 22 by CPN Chairman John Rocky Barrett, CPN feels as though the property is not being used for public use. Last month, Barrett confirmed a draft of the potential lawsuit was delivered to the county commissioners.

Sep 17, 2017

Shawnee City Commissioners will gather Monday to hear a presentation about the award of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Community Challenge grant, which is funding the installation of a mini-traffic circle at the intersection of Burns Street and Chapman Avenue. This funding will be used to replace stop signs at the intersection of Burns Street and Chapman Avenue, with one of the city's first residential mini-circles. Mini-circles are raised circular islands constructed in the center of residential street intersections. They reduce vehicle speeds by forcing motorists to maneuver around them and are typically used instead of stop signs.

Aug 21, 2017

Thursday, the Blue Zones Project, Pottawatomie County Steering Committee signed the Blue Zones Blueprint. Blue Zones Project Pottawatomie County is bringing tools to help individuals across the county improve their well-being while implementing the full community transformation initiative starting in the city of Shawnee. This approach is intended to ignite a well-being movement across Pottawatomie County that will positively impact all county residents. This Blueprint serves as a road map for the next three years as the Blue Zones Project works to make Pottawatomie County a healthier and happier place to live, work and play.

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Aug 16, 2017

McCloud Superintendent Steve Stanley confirmed the district has leased land at the corner of Redskin Road and Arena Road for the purpose of building a new Intermediate School. The land was leased through the State of Oklahoma's Land Office on a 55-year lease with the option to renew. The \$10.6 million bond issue was passed in April. Property tax will stay the same for the 2018 tax year as they were during the 2016 season. Residents will see a slight decrease during the 2017 tax year as another bond expires.

Aug 15, 2017

There are lots of new beginnings at Shawnee Middle School this year — SMS Avedis Park is nearing completion, signage is expected to be done next week. Shawnee Public Schools Superintendent Dr. April Grace said Avedis is planning a Kickoff event in conjunction with the middle school's open house, if everything is completed by that time frame. The \$1.5 million Avedis grant helped the middle school with the many-faceted project — furnishing the school system and community with a nature learning center, walking trails, multi-purpose/tennis courts and sidewalks. The district has also done some shifting around of its class schedule. Middle-schoolers will begin classes at 8:10 a.m. and end their day at 3:20 p.m.

Aug 1, 2017

OG&E on Monday announced that it will issue rate refunds to additional customer groups as a result of the conclusion of the company's most recent rate case. In addition to current OG&E customers in Oklahoma, the company will begin refunding money to some former customers as well. Existing customers began receiving refunds in May after OG&E filed its new rates as a result of its Oklahoma rate case. The company will now begin providing refunds to customers who discontinued their electric service during the interim rate period July 1, 2016, to May 1, 2017. The company will also issue refunds to customers who began electric service during that timeframe and who paid a service initiation fee as well as customers who had service disconnected and then paid a fee to reconnect during that period.

Jul 14, 2017

A recent study says Oklahoma is leading the U.S. in higher education cuts over the last five years. The study conducted by Illinois State University shows that Oklahoma's appropriations for education have decreased since 2012 by nearly 18 percent. The Illinois State University study found that appropriations for Louisiana, West Virginia, Alaska, Kentucky, Arkansas and Kansas have also decreased over the last five years. Oklahoma universities and colleges have increased tuition, cut programs, faculty and staff in an effort to make up for those cuts, the Tulsa World reported.
