

The Washington County Council spent quite a bit of time talking about Delaney Creek Park and its more than \$200,000 in debt.

Of that amount, \$55,726.66 is the result of a tax rate change that left that account in the red.

While the group discussed several options on how to take care of the debt, but no decisions have been made.

In the past there had been a tax rate in the budget for Delaney but that had been zeroed out.

There was some discussion about having Attorney Mark Clark and secretary Michelle Fleenor run some numbers about what effect reinstating that tax rate would have.

The thought is, that tax rate could be reinstated to pay down the \$55,726.66.

“... We have the ability to go back and take that tax rate from zero to what ever rate you want to assign it,” said Council Attorney Mark Clark. “Now that will have impact on your other tax rates and how much you bring in overall.”

Councilman Mark Manship asked if the council could get an estimate at some point about what a various tax rate would generate in income.

“That way we can make an intelligent decision whether we want to go ahead and fund it like we have been or whether we may chose to go back to that tax rate,” Manship said.

County Auditor Sarah Bachman said she didn't see a problem in getting some numbers to go over, but admitted that they may have to make some assumptions on some unknowns.

“If you plug in a penny for example and it brings in \$25,000, it's going to take off that amount from your county general,” Bachman said.

Manship's thought is to leave a very low tax rate in that line item to pay down the \$55,726.66 in that other fund.

“If we are going to continued down the path that we discussed about loaning the park the money to get out of the red; so that when they bring in a dollar, they know they brought in a dollar and they are not going to have to pay it to someone else immediately, then we are going to have to give them away to pay that pack,” he said. “On the \$55,000 we have to do something because there is no way to pay that back.

“I think it's something we need to look at in next year's budget. It's really encouraging to see an operating profit at the park.”

Park Board President Lester Sowder and Jerome Losson presented the council with the financial report from 2011.

Total net sales was more than \$217,000.

The park made a profit, according to Losson of \$6,714.47.

Losson started the year in the hole \$25,000. If that wasn't there, the park made a profit of \$31,000.

“The feedback I am getting is that we are going to do a lot better this year,” Losson said.

“We've made a lot of improvements at the park.”

Losson said there are two people who have expressed interest in leasing the restaurant.

The estimate on the tax rate will likely be presented at the council's regular meeting on March 5.

Manship said taking care of the \$55,726.66 will free up some other funds to take care of the other \$148,937.

Council President Ben Bowling said there had been some talk about taking the money from the

Riverboat Fund, but he said there is a lot of uncertainty tied to that money.

“ . . . The amount we get has been steadily declining over the last few years,” Bowling said.

In other business, the council approved an additional appropriation of \$1,468 for a raise for Washington County Sheriff's Claude Combs. The raise brings Combs salary to \$76,368.

The council also approved an additional appropriation for \$6,950 from the Rainy Day Fund for codification or updating of the county codes.

The money will be used to bring the county's codes up to date.

The update will not include the work being done by the plan commission. The county will codify the codes once a year.

The council approved the request for the additional appropriation, with only Merwyn Fisher opposing.

“I think we've waited this long, we might as well wait until we get the new ordinances written and just do it all at the same time,” he said.

Manship said he thinks it is a necessary step.

“At this point all the codes that have been passed to this point can be codified,” he said. “If someone wants to go to the courthouse to find out what the county codes are, we will have a place for them to do that. I don't think it's good to let that go another year. It shouldn't have been allowed to go as long as it has.”

In the past there was a line item in the county budget for the codification of county codes, but was never used and it was taken out.

The council did discuss putting the line item back in as there is a need to keep the county codes more current.

The council discussed having a meeting this year in Little York. The council discussed June 4 with executive session at 6:30 p.m. and the regular session at 7:30 p.m.