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# Property tax hike ahead for Norfolk

## Budget leaves out riverwalk, comedy event



DARIN EPPERLY/DAILY NEWS

**MONDAY WAS** the first day on the job and first city council meeting for Al Roder, Norfolk's new city administrator. He replaces Mike Nolan, who resigned in May. Roder comes to Norfolk from Northfield, Minn., where he was also city administrator.

# City council offers its support but no money for river group

The NorthFork Development Foundation is out.

So are the Norfolk Community Health Care Clinic and American Comedy Festival.

## CITY COUNCIL

All three groups had sought funds from the City of Norfolk. None made the cut Monday under the

city council's budget plans that would trigger a tax increase.

The council did pass a resolution expressing support for the foundation, which wanted \$80,000 to help pay for a study of developing a three-mile riverwalk along the North Fork River through downtown.

## More inside

■ The City of Norfolk is applying for another round of funding to build 38 more houses in the Meadow Ridge subdivision across from Northeast Community College. **See page 12**

■ A new city ordinance will set up a plan to safeguard the city's water supply into the future. **See page 12**

The resolution notes that the city is "unable to provide financial support to the (riverwalk project) since the mayor and city council have previously identified replacement and expansion of recreational facilities as the highest priority of the city."

It goes on to say the city is willing to

assist with grant applications and possibly participate on the riverwalk committee.

The medical clinic asked for \$50,000 and the comedy festival \$7,500 from the city. A request for funds to help reopen the Pilger rest area along Highway 275 also was turned down.

Groups that would receive funds are the Norfolk Area Recruiters, \$17,000; Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, \$23,516; Handibus, \$30,000; and Elkhorn Valley Economic Development Council, \$47,032.

Future funding for Norfolk Area Recruiters, which had received \$25,000 last year, was recommended at \$10,000 for fiscal 2010 and \$5,000 for fiscal 2011 by a council subcommittee.

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## Tax hike

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The council shot down a tax increase for the Norfolk Airport Authority, which had sought \$450,949. Instead, it voted to keep the current tax rate of 2.3 cents per \$100, which yielded \$258,289. The airport authority still would collect \$11,623 more because of higher property valuations.

A council subcommittee "felt this levy rate was sufficient for airport operations and will allow the airport authority to fund the local share of federal projects," according to a staff account of the subcommittee meeting.

The funding requests up for approval would trigger an increase in the property tax rate for fiscal 2008-09, the first hike in several years by the city. A council subcommittee recommended the increases following meetings Aug. 8 and Aug. 14.

A city budget seeking \$267,906 more in property taxes is now on the table.

Budget additions, including another firefighter and street maintenance worker, would raise the property tax requirement from the current \$1.16 million to \$1.43 million. That's an increase of about 23 percent, including the projected 4.5 percent jump in property valuations.

The actual tax rate would go from 11.2 cents to about 13 cents per \$100 of valuation — up 17 percent.

Norfolk's property tax levy has been the lowest of all first-class cities in Nebraska for the last five years.

With the increase, it means the owner of a \$100,000 house would pay about \$20 more as the city's share of the total property tax bill, said Randy Gates, city finance director.

The total city budget would amount to \$52 million, including sales tax revenue and funds from other sources. A public hearing on the proposed budget with the additions is slated Monday, Sept. 15.