By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Seward County commissioners are expected to vote on a proposed budget for 2014 at tonight's meeting, and local taxpayers could be seeing an increase in the county's mill levy.

After seeing a slight drop in 2013, next year's budget shows an increase in the levy of nearly 2 mills. The new rate would be 36.637 if passed by the commission, up from the current 34.808.

Over the past three years, Seward County's valuation has been decreasing. In 2012, the assessed valuation of the county came in at just less than $283 million. That figure dropped to just more than $278 million this year, and for 2014, the numbers show a valuation of nearly $265 million.

As is the norm, the county's general fund makes up most of the mill levy. The 2014 levy for the general fund is 29.533 under the proposed budget.

Expenditures have also risen some in the past three years, going from about $22.65 million in 2012 to the proposed amount of nearly $29 million for 2014.

A large portion of that increase is an increase in the county building fund. Expenditures for that account are expected to more than quadruple in 2014, going from $200,000 this year to $920,00 next year.

The county's equipment reserve will also likely see a significant jump in the coming year. The 2013 estimate for expenditures is about $250,000. The proposed budget shows more than $1.1 million for 2014.

Expenditures for the county's rural fire district have likewise risen in the past three years. After going from nearly $437,000 to $455,000 over the past year, under the proposed budget for 2014, the district is estimated to jump nearly 60 percent in expenditures next year to about $722,000.

The mill levy for the rural fire district, though, will see a slight decrease if the proposed budget is passed. This year's levy for the district stands at 3.325, and the 2014 rate is estimated to be 3.197.

Prior to voting on the budget, a public hearing will be opened. During the hearing, constituents may come forward to address any concerns about the budget.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. today in the commission chambers in the Seward County Administration Building.