

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

Every department of a local government entity has needs, and in order to meet those needs, there must be money in place.

Unfortunately, not all of those can be met at once, as there is not enough money to meet them, so a department must prioritize what it most urgently needs to get done in a given year.

Seward County officials took a step in that direction this week as department heads met with commissioners and administrator Mary Bloomer to talk about what goals each department has for 2009's capital improvement plan.

Bloomer said when she and commissioners talked with the department heads, she threw in "everything but the kitchen sink"

during Monday's and Tuesday's meetings.

"We talked about technology," she said. "We talked about rural fire.

We talked about the Activity Center."

Bloomer said a great deal of the discussion centered around the Activity Center, the fairgrounds and its surrounding facilities.

“There’s a lot out there that we’ve talked about over the last couple of years – projects from electricity to what we might want to do about development out there in the RV area and the electrical things that have been added on what we want to do as far as expansion out there, what we can do to facilitate the 4-H kids,” she said.

Officials also discussed what they might want to do about the drainage project at the fairgrounds and trying to get water to flow away from the ag building.

“We talked about what we might want to do about facilitating air conditioning out there now that we put the meeting rooms out there on the west end of the ag building,” Bloomer said. “Maybe changing the restrooms out there. We talked about what we might be able to do for the acoustics. We talked about maybe some sound proofing. We talked about maybe extension on the new windows.”

Bloomer said prioritizing is being looked out for things such as electrical, water and sewer along both Fairgrounds Lane and 11th Street.

“Maybe sprucing that up, putting in some trees and expanding that,”

she said. “Obviously, we can’t do that all at one time, so we’re going to have to prioritize all of those and phase it out.”

Bloomer said each of the county’s departments has things they would like to do, and some of those are coming up in their three-year cycles.

“Some of them are needing some vehicles,” she said. “Some of them are needing computers. Maintenance is looking at how to get the appropriate equipment to keep and maintain the new facilities, for cleaning, sweepers for all of them.”

Another project being looked at in the area of the fairgrounds is gutting the rock house and bringing it back to use.

“Maybe bringing the Red Cross back into that,” Bloomer said.

County officials are likewise looking at courthouse security issues, along with minor equipment each department needs to upgrade. Bloomer said with many of the departments moving into the new administration building, most departments don't have any large equipment issues.

She said probably the biggest issues are with the Seward County Landfill, as supervisor Mike Tabor looks to upgrade items such as loaders, pickups and dozers.

“Some of these are in his lease program,” Bloomer said. “His hauling program is taking off, and he's going to have additional roll offs, some of them through yard trucks. He's going to have expand on purchases for those.”

Another project being looked at is a small remodel to the county's health department, according to Bloomer.

She said only a draft version of this year's CIP has been made so far.

“What I'm going to try and do is incorporate some of the projects that they talked about and try and set it into a priority for them by year,” she said. “They'll look at it again and prioritize, and they'll approve it probably in the next (commission) meeting in February.”

Road and bridge supervisor Tony Herrman is also looking to make some changes for this year's CIP.

“Tony’s looking at maybe an experimental mixture for rock,” Bloomer said. “Asphalt’s so expensive now. He’s going to look at possibly a different mixture and see if the board wants to contemplate a different mixture.”

Bloomer said some of the items for the fairgrounds and its surrounding facilities have been talked about in recent years, and they will be used to help officials develop a good plan for that department.

“It will help them probably develop some of the things that they want to do to incorporate for the 4-H and for the kids that they maybe talk about with CIP, but when fair time comes, it’s ‘Oh, we meant to do that,’” she said. “Now is a good time to help plan it.”