By Amber Hanneken
Staff Writer

HUGO — There will be a new dog in town after Hugo city councilors approved the purchase of a canine unit for the police department during Tuesday night's meeting.
Police Chief Jon Paul Bozeman said there has been a growing problem of people coming from Antlers and other towns outside of the county to purchase drugs in Hugo. Currently, when police conduct a routine traffic stop and suspect drugs in the vehicle, all they can do is ask to search the vehicle. Bozeman said that without approval from the driver, police can't search an automobile. However, if a police dog is present and signals that it smells drugs within the vehicle, that gives police probable cause to conduct a search. The dog will also be trained in tracking and crowd control.
"I think it will be beneficial to fighting crime in this community," City Manager David Rawls said.
Bozeman said the total cost for the dog and 120 hours of training for the officer and animal would be $11,000, plus food and vet bills over the dog's lifetime. Uniforms would come at no cost from Idabel Police Department and Bozeman has a cage and equipment. Sgt. Josh Williams has volunteered to be the dog's caretaker and take part in the training.
Councilor Layton Cox inquired about whether the department's liability insurance would cover the addition of a canine unit. Bozeman said it would be an affordable addition to the policy once the dog is obtained.
The German shepherd would come from the same training facility that the Oklahoma Highway Patrol uses in Cleveland, Okla. The dogs are 2 years old when obtained by a police department and are usually retired at 10 years old.
"There's a myriad of things these (dogs) will take off the streets. It's really a good thing," Cox said before motioning to approve the purchase. The motion passed unanimously.
The council adopted the budget for 2010-2011 after having been posted in the newspaper and holding public hearings.

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