

## **2021 Budget Meetings**

**October 14, 2020**

**9:31 a.m.**

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Budget Services Manager Becky Butler, Tailor Albright, department / office representatives (listed with each discussion start time)

Citizens Budget Committee members: Paul Crowner, Frank Corbin, Bill Serrahn, Bill Marshall, Laura Berg

Guests: Claudia Yaw, Rylie Blair

Recorder: Rieva Lester

### **Roads Fund 1170**

Discussion start time: 9:31 a.m.

Department representatives: Public Works Director Josh Metcalf, County Engineer Tim Fife, Accounting Manager Tina Hemphill

### **COVID-19**

- Revenue impacts: Josh Metcalf said COVID closures have led to a sharp decrease in motor vehicle tax as events are closed and businesses shift to telecommuting.
- Challenges: Josh said Secure Rural Schools funding remains uncertain. He said the lone silver lining was that some projects ended up costing less than anticipated due to a drop in oil prices.

Josh noted that Public Works anticipates an increase in retirements in 2021.

Tim Fife said the most up-to-date models show that the county is on pace to collect only roughly 85 percent of its estimated gas tax revenues for the year.

Tim provided an overview of the annual construction program, the total for which he said will be much lower than the previous year since there will no longer be costs associated with big projects such as the Mickelsen Parkway project.

Tim and Josh reviewed 2020 projects as well as projects planned for 2021 as part of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Josh noted that Salzer Valley Road will need emergency repairs.

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue: \$24,167,942
- Expenditures: \$26,821,256

Discussion ended at 10:23 a.m.

## **Public Works – Solid Waste, Water-Sewer utilities, Airports**

Discussion start time: 10:33 a.m.

Department representatives: Solid Waste Manager Greg Gachowsky, Public Works Director Josh Metcalf, Accountant Kristen Buckman

### **Solid Waste Utility – Enterprise Fund #4010**

#### **COVID-19**

- Revenue impacts: County had to absorb credit card fees since that was the only way users could pay.
- Challenges: Pandemic led Thurston County landfill to close, and Thurston County's customers started using Lewis County's facilities. Pandemic also has led to an increase in online shopping, which in turn has increased the amount of refuse created.

Greg Gachowsky discussed increases to the amount of tonnage over the years, noting that the per-ton fee is actually less than it was in 1994. He said tonnage has increased annually but staffing has remained unchanged since 2008. He said savings linked to casual employees and overtime would nearly cover the cost of two new FTEs.

Greg reviewed capital costs, including the purchase of a new roll-off truck, two 40-yard boxes and a front-loader. Greg said the county will realize huge savings when it purchases a mobile unit office instead of renting a mobile unit, for which it has been using portable restrooms.

Greg reviewed increased costs to the transfer station, including those associated with contaminated recycling.

Greg discussed plans for a mid-year rate increase to offset increased costs to the transfer station. Greg said he would further discuss the staffing and rate increases during the Oct. 26 Solid Waste Disposal District Meeting.

In response to Citizens Budget Committee questions, Greg discussed the possibility of charging out-of-county clients a higher fee, noting that the logistics would make it difficult.

#### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$3,219,490
- Expenditures \$3,087,238
- FTEs – 16.65

## **Solid Waste Disposal District #1 - Enterprise Fund #4150**

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$8,271,000
- Expenditures \$8,040,848
- Overall summary/goals/challenges short & long term:

Department representatives: Public Works Director Josh Metcalf and Accounting Manager Tina Hemphill.

Discussion start time: 11:28 a.m.

Josh Metcalf provided overviews of the following funds:

## **Vader Water Utility - Enterprise Fund #4200**

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$341,010
- Expenditures \$319,314

## **Middle Fork Water/Sewer Utility – Enterprise Fund #4100**

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$127,500
- Expenditures \$229,145

## **South County Airport - Enterprise Fund #4070**

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$557,053
- Expenditures \$532,103
- Overall summary/goals/challenges short & long term

## **Packwood Airport - Enterprise Fund #4050**

### **2021 Preliminary budget**

- Revenue \$500
- Expenditures \$30,323
- Overall summary/goals/challenges short & long term

Josh reviewed updates taking place at the airports, including new regulations and the need to replace a fueling station tank. He also discussed the possibility of creating a for-rent space, noting that the group would have to weigh the costs versus potential revenues.

Josh reviewed the water-sewer systems, noting that the county continues to negotiate with Water-Sewer District 2 to address needs at the Middle Fork system. He outlined repairs taking place at the Vader system.

Discussion ended at 11:54 a.m.

### **Noxious Weed**

Discussion start time: 1:02 p.m.

Department representative: Bill Wamsley

Bill Wamsley provided an overview of revenue shortfalls that led the county to fund the Weed board through a special assessment. Bill said Noxious Weed is not requesting additional funding for 2021.

Bill discussed outreach to help citizens with the costs of combating invasive species and ways in which individuals can manage existing cases.

Bill said he has not heard of anything to indicate that Secure Rural Schools will be stalled.

### **COVID-19**

- Challenges: Limited ability to attract casual help.

### **2021 preliminary budget**

- Revenue: \$406,305
- Expenditures: \$326,342
- FTEs – 2
- Overall summary/goals/challenges short & long term

Discussion ended at 1:32 p.m.

## **WSU Extension Services**

Discussion start time: 1:32 p.m.

Department representatives: WSU Director Gary Fredricks, Forester Patrick Shults

Gary Fredricks provided an overview of WSU services. He discussed the volunteer efforts that make the programs a success. He noted that WSU is asking for basically the same funding as 2020 but that 2020 had included only partial funding for two positions.

### **2021 Preliminary Budget:**

- Revenue: \$17,000
- Expenditures: \$233,580

Discussion ended at 1:55 p.m.

## **Assessor**

Discussion start time: 2:05 p.m.

Office representatives: Assessor Dianne Dorey and Chief Deputy Assessor Dave Campbell

Becky noted that three years ago the process for Open Space fees was changed. The applications are collected in one year and recorded the following year. Dianne said she would like a revolving account or another such process in place to better address those costs.

Dave Campbell said the Assessor's Office is requesting two increases: the first is a large request for professional services to cover maintenance and support of software programs. He said the second request is for a boot allowance of \$150 per appraiser per year for boots.

Dianne said increases were built in to the contracts for professional services. She said the budget increase would help pay for Pictometry, Ascend, the increased costs to print "reval" notices, etc.

Becky noted that oftentimes contracts will have built-in increases that the various offices and departments must pay but that those offices and departments don't necessarily get additional budget capacity for those contract increases.

Dianne said the addition of the 1.2-million square-foot Lowe's Distribution site near Winlock likely will provide roughly \$120 million in new construction values, which would add about \$175,000 in new tax revenue.

Dianne said 2022 will include state-assessed utility value for the windfarm.

Dianne said \$17 million in total taxes could be at stake once Lewis County's lawsuit with Hampton Lumber goes to trial. She said the case stems from 2015. She said she will be asking for roughly \$10,000

for expert testimony, etc. Dianne said the case is being heard in Thurston County in February 2021. She said Hampton has paid its taxes under protest since 2015.

Becky said she will set a meeting in November to discuss the bank capacity since inflation is less than 1 percent.

Discussion ended at 2:38 p.m.

### **2021 Preliminary Budget:**

- Revenue: \$26,000
- Expenditures: \$1,945,721

### **Coroner**

Discussion start time: 2:56 p.m.

Office representatives: Coroner Warren McLeod, Chief Deputy Director Dawn Harris, Deputy Sandi Peck, Chelsie Wilson and Jason Bateman.

Becky Butler said the Coroner's Office is requesting an additional \$357,000.

### **COVID-19**

- Revenue impacts: Warren said the Coroner's Office has conducted roughly 75 COVID tests on decedents and that none have come back as positive.

Warren said the county is receiving a grant for a new autopsy table.

Warren provided an overview of his professional services budget, which includes autopsies, removals, toxicology tests, etc. Warren said the number of removals has increased dramatically to an average of more than 20 removals per month.

Warren outlined the duties, experience and pay of deputy coroners. He noted that deputy coroners are listed as casual employees. Warren said deputy coroners undergo specialized training and should be full-time regular county employees. He said area fire and law enforcement personnel have submitted letters of support regarding his request. Warren said he has been working with Daleyn Coleman and Becky Butler to develop a proposal for creating five FTE positions. He noted that HR helped score the positions, noting that the two senior deputy positions would be a Grade 17 and the three deputy coroners would be Grade 16.

Warren said the county is seeing an increase in back-to-back calls and simultaneous calls.

Warren said the extra help budget would be reduced from \$54,000 to roughly \$6,000 if the new positions were approved.

Warren said the number of deaths hasn't necessarily increased. He said the types of deaths that require his office to respond have increased.

Warren said his minimum ask would be four three fulltime positions.

Dawn Harris said the Coroner's Office bills for roughly 2,000 casual hours annually.

Bill Serrahn said it appears adding two fulltime employees would cover the hours needed.

Warren noted that Prosecutor Jonathan Meyer submitted a letter of support in which Jonathan said the PA's Office may be able to provide \$50,000 to the Coroner's Office annually, thanks to drug seizures.

Warren said deputy coroners buy their own uniforms, pay for their own phones and often drive their own cars.

### **2021 Preliminary Budget**

- Revenue: \$46,614
- Expenditures: \$530,986

Meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.