

Budget Update

November 17, 2020

3:31 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Sheriff Snaza, Tim Fife, Tina Hemphill, Bill Teitzel, JP Anderson, Scott Smitherman, Chris Panush, Special Services Chief Kevin Engelbertson, Undersheriff Wes Rethwill, Chief Morningstar of Morton and Mossyrock PD, Willie Painter, Riverside Fire Chief Mike Kytta, David Arcuri, Steve Wohld

Guests: Napavine Police Chief Chris Salyers, Larry McGee, Paul Crouner, Commissioner-elect Sean Swope, Chehalis Fire Chief Ken Cardinale, Chief Stacey Denham

Recorder: Rieva Lester

County Manager Erik Martin proposed a recommendation about the law side of the Combined User Committee). He said the county had proposed a 5 percent rate increase to help cover capital needs. However, he noted that COVID has strained area governments' budgets. Therefore, he said the law group has recommended the BOCC set rates at 1 percent over the previous year's rates.

Chief Morningstar of the Morton and Mossyrock Police Departments urged the county to consider the 1 percent increase due to unforeseen costs – and unknown future costs – linked to COVID-19.

Sheriff Snaza echoed those sentiments.

Riverside Fire Chief Mike Kytta said he shares the law groups concerns. He noted that changes in property taxes begs a change in methodology. He praised the progress that has taken place but also noted that it may be wise to provide relief.

Erik urged the commissioners to weigh the group's request for relief but also consider the maintenance, repairs and replacements that must take place over the next five or 10 years.

Commissioner Jackson said Rep. Ed Orcutt has expressed an interest in helping find funding.

Erik noted that there is a sales tax option available to pay for infrastructure. Commissioner Fund noted that it would take a coordinated effort to present to the public.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the CUC law group's request to set rates at 1 percent over the previous year's rates.

Becky noted that for property taxes, the county is limited to the lesser of 1 percent or the rate of inflation as per RCW 84.55. An exception to this is found in RCW 84.55.0101, where it states that if inflation falls below 1 percent, the county may adopt a resolution of "substantial need," allowing the county to increase the levy or bank the excess capacity up to the full 1 percent. Since the rate of inflation on the implicit price deflator (IPD) for personal consumption expenditures over the past 12 months is below the 1 percent threshold, she said the county can:

- Declare “substantial need” and increase the levy up to the full 1 percent
- Declare “substantial need” and bank the capacity for future use
- Do nothing and levy between 0 percent and 0.602 percent

OTHER FUNDS

Tim Fife said the loss related to the funding is equal to the county skipping paving of two miles of roads. Tim said his recommendation would be to declare substantial need and levy the additional amount.

Becky said Josh Metcalf had supported declaring substantial need, levying 0 percent and banking the capacity. Tina Hemphill said that would be her recommendation, too.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson said they support declaring substantial need, levying 0 percent and banking the capacity.

Erik recapped the commissioners’ previous decision to provide an increase – with escalators – for District Court indigent defense attorneys. David Arcuri said the group had not had a per-unit pay increase since 2008. He said he’d like the commissioners to consider providing additional units for some cases: two additional units for a jury trial and an additional unit for a bench trial.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson agreed to provide a \$120,000 increase to the 2021 budget for District Court to cover the proposed increases.

David Arcuri left at 4:10 p.m.

JP Anderson and Bill Teitzel asked for approval to increase their budget for roughly \$60,000 to hire an Environmental Health Office Assistant, a position that was frozen 10 years ago. Bill Teitzel discussed the need for the position.

Commissioner Jackson made a motion to approve the addition of the Environmental Health Office Assistant in Public Health & Social Services.

Commissioner Fund seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Jackson left at 4:26 p.m.

JP Anderson said area schools are requesting funding for help with Chromebooks, cleaning supplies, cleaning staff, etc.

Commissioner Jackson returned at 4:29 p.m.

Becky reviewed the timeline for the 2021 budget.

She noted that Solid Waste positions and increases for non-represented employees will create changes to the final.

Erik outlined a proposed restructuring at Solid Waste, which would include eliminating a lot of overtime and eliminating some casual positions and adding two new positions – one immediately and the other in July 2021. He said the 2021 budget impact would be \$22,000, with no impact on the general fund.

Commissioner Fund made a motion to approve two Operations Specialist I positions – one in January, the other in July.

Commissioner Jackson seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

Erik discussed drug seizure funds, which the Sheriff's Office has accessed for SWAT activities. He said the Sheriff's Office has not reached an agreement with the PA's Office to use those funds and therefore is asking for a \$20,000 transfer from the General Fund, if needed.

Becky said the JNET and drug seizure funds would be used to help offset the coroner position.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson said the BOCC would provide the monetary support if the need arises.

Becky reviewed timelines for the Coronavirus Relief Funds.

Willie Painter of the Lewis County PUD said the PUD has allocated more than \$98,600 to help residential customers pay their PUD bills. Becky noted that the county had set a mid-November deadline for submissions for the PUD grant.

Becky noted Breeze turned back roughly \$100,000 of the CRF grants allocated to the company for broadband. She said the BOCC could choose to provide additional funding for:

- Utility assistance
- Broadband
- 3.0 grants

Commissioner Jackson said he would like to provide additional funding for the Chamber.

Commissioner Fund said Lewis County Together is conducting a survey to determine how to help restaurants and others. She also suggested providing additional funding for United Way.

Commissioner Stamper discussed a need at the Toledo School District.

Commissioner Stamper said he'd like to see the county give the Chamber an additional \$10,000 and to give additional funding to the PUD.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the following:

- \$10,000 for the Chamber
- \$10,000 United Way
- \$16,000 for schools

Meeting ended at 5:12 p.m.