

All-Day Budget Meetings

October 18, 2023

9 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Swope, Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, County Manager Ryan Barrett, various representatives from the offices and departments reviewing their preliminary budgets, Nic Scott

Citizens Budget Committee members in attendance: Tim Wood, Paul Crowner, Jerry Villarreal

Guest(s):

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None

Public Health and Social Services - FPHS (9 a.m. start time)

Representatives: PHSS Director Meja Handlen and Deputy Director John Abplanalp

PHSS employee present: Kendra Garrison

Meja Handlen said she has reached out to the state to determine whether FPHS would cover the entire cost for water testing.

John said fees cover roughly half of the costs associated with Environmental Health programs. Meja proposed a fee increase to make programs self-sufficient.

The commissioners directed staff to work on a fee proposal that would cover the costs of the water-testing program.

Public Health and Social Services – Code Enforcement

Representatives: PHSS Director Meja Handlen and Deputy Director John Abplanalp

PHSS employee present: Kendra Garrison

Meja said Code Enforcement receives 76 percent of its funding from the General Fund.

The group discussed fees and fines associated with Code Enforcement. Becky Butler said she has reached out to Solid Waste to review its MOU with Public Health and Social Services.

Meja reviewed department vacancies.

Meja discussed ongoing discussions regarding merging Emergency Preparedness positions.

At 10:07 a.m., Commissioner Swope recessed the meeting until 10:30 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.

Sheriff's Office - Corrections (10:30 a.m. start time)

Elected present: Sheriff Rob Snaza

Sheriff's Office employees present: Chief Dusty Breen, Undersheriff Wes Rethwill, Chief Chris Sweet, Captain Chris Tawes

Request: \$522,150

Chief Chris Sweet reviewed 2022 actuals compared to projected salaries for 2024.

Chief Sweet said Corrections is requesting a \$347,153 increase to cover increased costs associated with the county's Naphcare contract for jail medical services. Chief Sweet said Naphcare has saved 12 inmates' lives year to date.

Chief Sweet said Corrections is requesting a \$174,997 increase to cover increased food service costs, which are linked to the Consumer Price Index.

Sheriff Snaza discussed troubles with overtime linked to staffing shortages. He said he is working with the Guild to consider hiring casual employees to staff the control room. Sheriff Snaza said he also has worked with the Civil Service to lower the hiring age to 19, which would be more in line with the state patrol and the military.

Chief Sweet discussed a one-tenth of 1 percent Mental Health Tax request of \$166,250 to maintain mental health services provided by Cascade. The group discussed the prevalence of substance abuse disorders and single-cell use.

Chief Sweet said the county houses state Department of Corrections inmates for up to a week at a time.

Chief Sweet said he anticipates requesting an additional increase for daily bed rates for outside contracts for 2024 and then a recurring increase thereafter.

The group discussed the delicate balance of budgeting for Corrections to ensure costs are covered.

Sheriff's Office – Operations and

Elected present: Sheriff Rob Snaza

Sheriff's Office employees present: Chief Dusty Breen, Undersheriff Wes Rethwill, Chief Chris Sweet, Captain Chris Tawes

Request: Chief Dusty Breen said the Sheriff's Office is requesting \$559,664 to cover two additional operations deputies.

Chief Breen said the county's population has grown by 10,000 residents – roughly 13.14 percent – since 2010. He said call volumes have increased roughly 5 percent in that time.

Chief Breen said LCSO has a ratio of 0.85 deputies per 1,000 residents in unincorporated Lewis County. He said the national average is 2.4 law enforcement officers per 1,000 residents.

Request: Undersheriff Rethwill said the LCSO is requesting an additional \$4,338 to cover maintenance fees for the Spillman modules the LCSO uses. Undersheriff said the county has contracts for modules for the jail, for sex offender data, for civil data and for forms.

Request: Chief Breen said the LCSO is requesting an additional \$31,284 to cover equipment for patrol vehicles. He said the amount would cover Sector Printers and mounts, scanners, radars, Cradlepoints and Cradlepoint antennas.

Becky said she will follow up with Motor Pool regarding vehicle outfitting.

Chief Sweet said he would like to have the mandatory costs linked to contracts, etc.,

Noxious Weed Control Services (11:42 a.m. start time)

Representative present: Charles Edmonson

Request: Help to hire casual help.

Charles said he is exploring renting out space to a related entity to offset costs.

Becky said she is reaching out to HR to determine how to hire casual help.

At 12:02 p.m., Commissioner Swope recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 1:31 p.m.

IT (1:31 p.m. start time)

Elected / Director present: Matt Jaeger

Employees present: Steve Wohld

Matt said automation, including artificial intelligence, centralization and grants help offset costs.

He said challenges include cybersecurity; demands for new services; compliance; data growth and retention; increased operational costs; and operational technology.

Facilities Maintenance (2 p.m. start time)

Representative present: Facilities Manager Alex Murray

Facilities employees present: Jared Larson, Doug Carey, Linda Mastin

Alex reviewed staffing and experience as well as work being performed by the Facilities crew. Alex said Facilities has 11,000 more square feet to cover than it did in years past.

Alex reviewed things creating higher costs for the county, including inflation, janitorial supplies and fuel.

He outlined cost-saving measures that recently have been implemented:

- Implemented work order management software
- Changing dispatching operations and how work orders are processed
- Identify professional services decisions

Alex reviewed cost increases since 2022:

- Fuel: \$30,000
- Utilities: \$100,000
- Professional services: \$72,000
- Insurance: \$230,000

Alex said increased costs will be passed along via rates.

Juvenile (2:25 p.m. start time)

Elected / Director present: Juvenile Administrator Shad Hail

Juvenile employee present: Susan Wickert

Becky noted that Shad was directed to hold to 2023 actuals since the facility was shuttered for construction during 2022.

Shad reviewed the services Juvenile provides as it balances inmate accountability, mental health and substance abuse disorders, rehabilitation and community safety.

Challenges:

- Retirements
- Recruitment
- State changes regarding truancy
- Public confusing Juvenile for Green Hill
- Reduced number of Guardian ad Litem volunteers

Shad said he fears the state will change the age limit of individuals considered “juvenile.”

Shad listed Juvenile’s many partners.

He said Juvenile has secured AOC funding to provide security services.

Meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.