

## All-day budget meetings

October 11, 2023

9:00 a.m.

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

Citizens Budget Committee members: Tim Wood, Paul Crowner

Guests: Tom Rupert of LeMay (3:16 p.m.)

Recorder: Tammy Martin

**Public comment:** None.

### Treasurer's Office

**Elected present:** Arny Davis

**Treasurer's Office employees present:** Rodney Reynolds, Shelly Stewart

Arny Davis said his office anticipates expense increases for professional services and communications. The Treasurer's Office is asking for a \$5,000 budget increase to pay for the cost of services incurred from a 5% increase to Manitron and any additional postage increase in 2024. Arny said his staffing has not increased in the last 12 years and he said this is due to the updates in technology.

Rodney Reynolds said interest for 2023 will come in around \$3 million to \$3.2 million. This will be a bonus to the 2024 budget, but Arny said the money should not be relied upon as it is never a guarantee.

The Treasurer's Office concluded its discussion at 9:25 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 9:27 a.m.

### Assessor's Office

**Director present:** Ross Nielson

**Assessor's Office staff present:** Lynn Richard, Chris Lanegan

The Assessor's Office is asking for a \$68,500 budget increase. Ross Nielson said that after examining past practices of the previous Assessor, positions were left continuously open, allowing for funds to be moved around. Ross said due to the reorganization of his office, that option is no longer available.

Ross said new software to determine short-term rentals has been invaluable and will help provide real data correctly. Ross estimates \$40,000 for a two-year contract. Ross said based on uses of the program, they can negotiate the contract for a lesser fee.

Ross provided the following details about proposed increases:

- **Professional Services:** The budget for professional services in 2021 was more than \$93,000 higher than 2022. Software maintenance Fees, plus CoStar and Granicus is covered by the value listed.
- **Communications:** Addressing newer smartphones and data use for appraisers in the field, this is the new cost. This has been an efficiency. Each phone can also be used as a camera. Data usage has increased, but this has allowed for work to be done in the field, limiting time to finish tasks in office.
- **Travel:** The Assessor's Office has had an extremely limited travel and training budget. Ross said appraisers are required to have a minimum of 15 hours of training.
- **Repairs and Maintenance:** Primarily addressing shortfall of Ricoh contract amount. Part of this is due to the use of copiers as printers, which is typically a cost and maintenance savings, but will be recognized in the IT bill to some extent.
- Note that supplies also include uniforms, which also includes boot allowance, and the amount has increased based on CBAs. In addition, even with reducing the uniform requirements (no more shirts supplied), 2022 was a low year for this expenditure, with 2023 estimated to be \$1,200 higher than 2022.

Ross said his office is trying to avoid moving money around to cover shortfalls. They will be fully staffed will likely have less discretionary funds.

Ross explained the benefits of new software. Ross said his office is currently using 25-year-old software. Ross feels this could fail and become more costly. Ross has investigated 3 companies to determine if the software would work for Lewis County. The biggest cost associated with new software is the conversion from old software to new software. This is a multi-year process to convert. Ross said Lewis County is currently one of three counties using the same antiquated software.

Commissioner Swope asked to see each cost broken down by request. Commissioner Swope also asked for the types of training that would be attended for the 2024 year.

Ross estimates \$224 million in new construction costs for 2023. Currently, there doesn't appear to be an impact to the Roads' budget because of the Winlock annexation.

The Assessor's Office concluded its discussion at 10:07 a.m.

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

The meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.

## **Auditor / Elections**

**Elected present:** Larry Grove

**Auditor and Elections staff present:** Grace Jimenez, Graham Gowing, Tom Stanton

Larry Grove said the Auditor's Office touches each department and office within Lewis County government. Larry said the current staffing only works because of the quality people employed by his office. The Auditor's Office audits vouchers and payroll, but also deals with anything that is legally recorded including elections, records, and licensing.

Grace Jimenez said the Auditor's Office has a total budget increase request in the amount of \$32,500.00. Grace said the office has one actuary to audit pensions that costs approximately \$15,000 and the office hires a CPA. These are required professional services. Grace said federal funding has increased 10 times post-Covid. Grace said Financial Services is requesting \$30,000 to continue the employment of the extra-help senior financial analyst, Amanda Migliaccio. Amanda was hired in December 2022 by the Auditor's Office to assist with financial reporting and with the Budget Office for Broadband accounting and grant management. Amanda currently works approximately 60 hours per month for the Auditor's Office and 20+ for Broadband. She assists with multiple projects in the Auditor's Office including capital asset tracking, financial reporting review, and grant management assistance. She plays a key role in assisting other departments in grant reporting/management. Grace said the Auditor's Office is requesting a budget increase in salaries to continue Amanda's employment. Amanda has over 10 years of experience working in the Auditor's Office and the expertise to assist with year-end financial reporting.

Financial Services is also requesting \$2,500 for training. The training budget based on 2022 actuals is less than \$800. In 2022, many conferences and trainings were still remote or cancelled. The Auditor's Office is requesting \$2,500 to allow one employee from the financial services department to attend the Tyler Technologies Connect Conference in Indianapolis, Ind., in 2024. This is an in-person conference that provides in-depth training on the Munis ERP system. Other County employees that attended in 2023 have encouraged the Auditor's Office to send an employee to attend training specific to payroll and finance.

Tom Stanton from Elections said 2024 will see a Presidential Preference Primary. This is a once every four-year election event and not optional. The cost of the election will be approximately \$100,000. The entire costs associated with the primary will be reimbursed by the Secretary of State's Office.

Larry said he does not make a request unless it is absolutely necessary. Any additional budgetary impacts would impact statutory required positions. Tom Stanton said the licensing agent position could be frozen. Commissioner Pollock suggested hiring part-time or reaching out to a retired employee looking for part-time or temporary work.

The Auditor's Office / Elections Office concluded its discussion at 10:57 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:58 a.m.

## **District Court**

**Elected present:** Judge Wade Samuelson

**District Court staff members present:** Monique Shedd

Judge Wade Samuelson said District Court is asking for a budget increase in the amount of \$47,254.00 for pro-tem fees or for court commissioner fees. Judge Samuelson said District Court has the opportunity to stay in the black due to infractions. Judge Samuelson said if an item goes to collections, infractions would be written off as bad debt resulting in a loss of revenue. Wade said District Court's budget request is labor driven. Judge Samuelson said District Court has a total budget increase request in the amount of \$48,000. He said the lack of legal contribution to pay fines and fees are out of his control and that has not decreased the amount of caseload.

Commissioner Brummer asked if the change of services provided to Morton, Mossyrock and Toledo. Judge Samuelson said while they lose revenue, they have also lost expenses required to defend those cases. He feels it would be a wash and minimally affect District Court.

Commissioner Swope asked if there would be mandatory budget cuts, how would that impact his office. Judge Samuelson said people on probation would fall through the cracks due to the lack of staffing. Judges are limiting the usage of pro-tems and are utilizing a judicial needs assessment to best manage the District Court Office. They use a court commissioner because it is a much lower rate. By limiting the pro-tem, this has saved District Court close to \$48,000 a year.

District Court concluded its discussion at 11:28 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 11:32 a.m.

## **E911 / Radio Services**

**Director present:** Jenn Libby-Jones

**E911 / Radio Services staff members present:** Justin Stennick

Jenn Libby-Jones presented a slideshow outlining the Combined User Committee (CUC) and cost studies. Jenn is proposing a six-month extension for the current interlocal agreement. There is a structure change being reviewed and that would be July 1, 2023. Current budget savings are due to unfilled dispatch positions, but the overtime for the year is at 175% usage and is eating at any savings. Jenn said the goal is to have finalized rates and a proposed budget by October 19, 2023, and before the Board for final review before the organizations could adopt.

Jenn said Radio Services is 100% interfund funded. There is a proposed increase for 2024 of \$49,875, which includes salaries and wages, an additional vehicle, training, and leases and utilities. Jenn said a second vehicle is important if techs are needed at multiple sites at the same time. Jenn said if cuts to the amendment were necessary, costs associated with training and travel could be reduced.

Jenn sees funding as a challenge for the future. There is an emergency communications sales and use tax on the ballot and should this not pass, user fees and allocations will need to be changed. Communications is controlling expenses due to governance changes, maintaining competitive salaries and benefits as well as equipment and maintenance fees.

E911 / Radio Services concluded its discussion at noon.

The meeting resumed at 1:30 p.m.

## **Prosecutor**

**Elected Present:** Jonathan Meyer

**Prosecutor staff members present:** Brittani Bonahoom

There was no budget increase request. Jonathan Meyer said the largest single source of revenue is from Washington State. This is a passthrough contracted through Family Support Services. On the criminal side of the Prosecutor's Office, the Crime Witness Victims Fund. Revenues are sometimes received through forfeited property seizures. The largest expense at the Prosecutor's Office is salaries and benefits. This is the first full year in the attempt to go paperless. Jonathan said most of the cases affected by the Blake decision have been processed and the remainder will be processed on an as needed basis.

Commissioner Swope asked clarifying questions about involuntarily committed persons/ITA program. Jonathan said Lewis County is required to offer assistance, but this is reimbursed. Commissioner Swope asked how budget cuts would affect the PA's Office. Jonathan said they are currently cutting where they can. Electronic discoveries have decreased paper costs within the office.

The Prosecutor's Office concluded its discussion at 1:54 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 1:58 p.m.

## **Public Works (1 of 2)**

**Director Present:** Josh Metcalf

**Public Works staff members present:** Tina Hemphill, Geoff Soderquist

The Reynolds project is a local area project and is a partnership project combining six projects. This received federal funding. Josh Metcalf said Public Works is working on additional funding for the projects. Josh said they are underspent for 2023. There are currently 13 positions open. There are FEMA projects still open from 2009. They are still receiving payments from FEMA from these projects. Becky Butler said there is a separate fund balance. Josh spoke about Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funds. The primary challenges are staffing the positions within engineering. The timeline starts once the money is obligated and this causes projects to be contracted out to meet the timelines. Josh estimates chip sealing to be caught up within the next 3-5 years based on the amount completed each year. Josh said there is more repair needed to the roads that have had delayed maintenance. Josh said there are 220 area bridges. Each year with fish passage replacements, this adds to the bridges being maintained within Lewis County. Josh said Lewis County has the most federal funding out of the state. This takes more time to manage state and federal monies, but this creates a benefit by being more eligible to receive more funding.

Josh said he is in favor of taking 1% bank capacity. This would offer capacity to cover any cost increase of fuel and paint.

Josh said there are no revenue generating assets at Packwood Airport. The main costs are associated with mowing. Airport operations and capital-related projects require an annual transfer from the

general fund. This general fund transfer request supports Packwood Airport operating costs and to fund grant matching requirements of FAA agreements necessary for capital related project costs. We are requesting an increase in transfer to cover the sponsor share of the FAA grant.

The South Lewis County airport is facing similar projects. Airport projects are typically funded through FAA grants requiring a sponsor share (ex. 10%) toward the project costs. The current funded project includes the update of the Airport Master Plan narrative report and Airport Layout plan with maximum project costs of \$354,900 (90% FAA and 10% Sponsor share) The federal grant agreement number is 3-53-0156-012-2022 with a 4-year budget period. WSDOT grant GCB 3726 with a maximum obligation of \$17,740 contributes to the sponsor share for this project. The remaining 5% is the County's share.

The fuel system has outlived its life expectancy and needs replacing. There is also a mowing contract as well. They are looking at new hangar developments.

Josh said there will be operational increases of \$16,000 for the Packwood Airport and for \$15,000 South Lewis County Airport. This will cover primarily budgets and salaries. Commissioner Pollock asked about selling the airport. Josh said there are agreements with FAA that create issues with selling the parcels. Tim Wood asked if maintenance of the airports could be performed by Lewis County. Josh said the costs associated with hiring labor to mow and the equipment is almost equivalent.

Josh said material and equipment, and part availability for Motor Pool has contributed to the largest costs associated with the supply budget. Josh said Motor Pool partners with local area dealerships and parts stores for supplies. Josh said maintenance is the largest cost to maintain Lewis County's fleet. He said upgrades are made when available to cut down on maintenance costs associated with worn equipment. Josh said delaying replacements could be possible if budgets need to be cut.

Public Works concluded its first discussion at 3:01 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 3:16 p.m.

## **Public Works (2 of 2)**

**Director Present:** Ross McDowell, Rocky Lyon

**Public Works staff members present:** Tina Hemphill

### **Request for increase in transfer from the general fund based on the following:**

Ross said additional resources are required due to the City of Centralia withdrawing from the Emergency Management services, effective fiscal year 2023. Becky asked if rates were adjusted due to the change. Tina said there is a proposal for an increase in payment for services based on a preliminary per capita rate of \$5.73 and population of 65,675.

Ross said the Emergency Management Coordinator position would not be funded for 2024. This option would significantly impact the division's ability to engage in community outreach and the ability to respond during an event such as fire or flood. The salary/benefit deduction would amount to \$85,580. Additional reductions would be necessary. Commissioner Swope asked if the position could be shared

with the Preparedness position. Meja explained the differences between each position, but there is some leeway to maximize dollars and there is talk needed for certain deliverables.

Ross talked about grant matching requirements for EMPG and Hazard Mitigation Plan update and the Impact of transfer of Safety Program back to HR. He estimated an increase in expenditure of approximately \$55,000.

Rocky Lyon explained the different funds that pay for services at Solid Waste. Rocky said there is \$100,000 to pay for code compliance programs per the MOU and there is a matching grant with the Health Department for the 2024 budget. Rocky said there is a household hazardous waste program that covers the removal of hazardous waste from the transfer station. Rocky said there has been a larger increase in supply costs and waste removal. Rocky also said there is a need to replace the water heater. The estimated cost of the water heater is \$32,000. Rocky said the litter program utilized inmates in the past but doesn't any longer. Rocky said a grant was applied for and received to fund a litter program and that covers the cost for a litter crew three days a week and a litter vacuum.

Rocky said the recycling program has an expected increase for the purchase of two additional recycling boxes.

Rocky said the Landfill has an increase to repair the flare system that incinerates the gases from the old site. The largest portion of the budget is at the Transfer Station and the projected increase is due to salary and wages. Rocky said there has been a decrease in the volume of disposed items and has seen an increase of items being recycled. Rocky said if rates don't increase, they will have to use reserves to cover any deficit. He said that is not the goal because there is new equipment needed and a new facility that will be built within the next 5 years.

Tina Hemphill discussed the Middlefork water and sewer system and the Vader water system. Tina said a system plan update is required by the Department of Health. Tina said this will help with the water study and rate study. Tina said there have not been any rate increases but will be necessary to repair infrastructure. Middlefork water and sewer system has automatic meter readings, and this helps with the time it takes to process readings. Tina said a system plan update is needed to change the rates. Tina said there is an expected add of 186 connections to the Vader water system. There are increased costs that have been incurred to upgrade components of the system. A rate study is also necessary for rate increases for the Vader water system.

Commissioner Pollock asked if the Vader water system could be taken back by the City of Vader. There has been considerable conversation and at this time, the city wouldn't be able to take back the Vader water system.

Tina said she would get the \$300,000 revenue variance information to Becky for the Citizens Budget Committee.

Public Works concluded its second discussion at 4:28 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 4:30 p.m.

## HR/Risk PDR

**Director Present:** Amber Smith and Steve Wohld

**HR/Risk PDR staff members present:** Daleyn Coleman and Casey Mauermann

Amber Smith said there is a proposed increase for 2024 of \$160,562.00. Amber asked the BOCC to consider funding Indigent Defense fund with the amount requested. The estimated year end for this fund is \$1,865,000 plus there is a 5% increase to the district court attorneys for 2024.

The indigent defense fund ensures defendants have access to an attorney when they cannot afford to pay for one on their own. The result of insufficient funding is that the county risks defendants not being prosecuted for their crime and the criminal's cases are dismissed, and ultimately more crimes may be committed.

There was a debate about the actual poverty level benchmark. Amber thought it was 150% and Commissioner Swope thought it may be 125% for one of the automatic qualifiers for indigency.

The revenue forecast for 2024 is anticipated to increase slightly to \$103,435, a \$3,435 increase over 2023 revenue.

Amber would like to increase the number of attorneys on contract, getting the current workload to be managed in 1.2 FTEs, and establishing a case weighting system in the District Court. Long-term goals include creating a public defense.

Daleyn Coleman said HR/Risk had several goals for 2024. Short-term goals included maintaining the quality of services while expanding into those areas still unfulfilled. Long-term goals included finding the most cost effective and user efficient HR software systems.

Risk's short-term goal was to establish a digital case management system for tort claims and worker's compensation cases. Risk is looking to fully integrate and train the division to take on safety work as well as to develop strategies for faster and less costly resolution of cases. Long-term goals include creating processes that help foster safer work environments and working with legislative changes to consider tort claims and halting the expansion of PTSD claim eligibility.

Meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.