

All-Day Budget Meetings

October 2, 2024

9:00 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Budget Services Administrator Becky Butler, Mindy Brooks, Meja Handlen, John Abplanalp, Bradley Clark, Sarah Hensley, Sherri Dokken, Tara Snelson, Bryan Hall, Rae Sisson, Javier Mejia, Rae Sisson, Doug Carey, Gabe Anzelini, Matt Jaeger, Amanda Price, Alex Murray, Jared Larson, Linda Mastin, Rodney Reynolds, Justin Stennick, Jenn Libby-Jones, Larry Grove, Tom Stanton, Graham Gowing, Grace Jimenez, Shelly Stewart, Rodney Reynolds, Vanessa Ruelas, Rudy Rodriguez

Citizens Budget Committee members: Tim Wood, Paul Crouner, Usha Saldeva Brooks, Jerry Villareal, Bill Serrahn (10:30 a.m.)

Guest(s): None

Recorder: Tammy Martin

Public comment: None

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

Department representative(s) present: Meja Handlen, John Abplanalp, and Kendra Garrison

Meja said there are eight divisions of Public Health and Social Services (PHSS). Administration, Animal Shelter, Code Enforcement, Community Services, Division Services, Environmental Health, Social Services, and Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Public Health and Social Services has 56 positions they fund with 51 being FTE and 5 being casual. There are 11 vacant positions and 4 frozen positions that are being held as place holders.

Professional services, salaries and benefits, interfund rates, county cost allocation plan (cap), and other costs such as travel and training total \$11.6 million. Meja said the primary source of revenue is grant based.

John Abplanalp said staff is proposing a small increase for processing birth and death certificates. The current rates are set by the state and do not cover the internal costs associated with processing those requests.

Meja said Environmental Health covers drinking water, food safety, septic systems and water testing. Meja said there has been an increase in water testing after the rate increases. Meja said it is important that services provided by Environmental Health are being paid for by the processing/testing fees being charged. If this should change and they see a decrease in testing, services would be reduced.

John said WIC is a federally grant funded program. If grant funding isn't enough to cover services, they rely upon general fund revenues. Grant amounts vary each year based on clients served. WIC is not required to be under county government.

Code Enforcement is PHSS's largest user of the general fund. Code Enforcement went from 5 staff to 2 staff and the shelter manager was reduced to a supervisor. The Animal Shelter sees large costs associated with veterinary services and microchip services. Meja said the largest impact at the animal shelter has been the low adoption rate. John said there is a restricted fund balance from donations for the animal shelter.

Meja pointed out that there have not been fee increases for the last several years and if there were yearly increases, the increase won't seem so large. Meja presented the rate increase asks for Environmental Health:

- Drinking Water 50 % increase
- Onsite 100% increase
- Food 36% increase
- Lab 45% increase
- Solid Waste variable increase

Meja said these increases would cover costs for 2025 associated with the services provided based on this year's numbers.

Commissioner Brummer recessed at 10:06 a.m. until 10:30 a.m.

IT (10:30 a.m. start time)

Department representative(s) present: Gabe Anzelini, Matt Jaeger, Amanda Price

Matt Jaeger said IT supports over 30 departments. Matt said they have 16 FTEs. Matt said IT has \$3,165,584 in revenue and \$3,165,512 in expenses, leaving a surplus of \$72.

Matt said there was a security contract that was not renewed for 2025, helping save costs as well as retirements also have allowed IT to hire new employees at lower costs. These savings have allowed IT to absorb COLA increases.

Matt said the anticipated 5% increases in technology contracts, especially for security tools and licensing, highlights the need for careful budgeting as these expenses grow. If equipment costs continue to rise, Matt's suggestion to either increase Equipment Replacement and Revolving (ER&R) collections for 2026 or extend the lifespan of existing equipment could help manage those costs. Both strategies may help mitigate the financial impact and ensure that the organization can maintain its operational efficiency while adapting to rising expenses. It will be important to monitor these trends closely and adjust plans as necessary.

Facilities (11 a.m. start time)

Department representative(s) present: Alex Murray and Jared Larson

Alex Murray said operation costs and COLAs created a total increase of \$274,300 to the Facilities budget. Alex said Facilities is currently operating with fewer FTEs than 2008. Alex said an electrician has been laid off effective Oct. 1. Alex found through his study that office furniture builds is the number one labor cost for Facilities. Clogged toilets at the jail are the second largest cost. Alex is suggesting charging rates to support services. Alex is also suggesting policy to reduce services for furniture support, surplus management and climate control. The proposal would be that jail services would be subject to administrative offices only, custodial services would only be available from 4:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., and Facilities would no longer conduct biohazard/blood born pathogen cleaning or standard toilet unclogging in the detention portion of the jail.

Alex is proposing after-hours fees will to be assumed by the department that made the call, support the senior centers according to the lease agreements, increase grant request amount to accurately cover expenses for the Historical Museum. Custodial services will be for communal areas.

Alex proposed the grounds care to be picked up by the Parks Dept. This would save \$57,000. He is working with Motor Pool to surplus an electrician's van. The Facilities dumpster is no longer available for general use. He is proposing moving a Tech 2 position being dedicated to the jail and paid for by the 1/10 of 1% sales tax for jail and correction facilities. This would free up \$108,000 to be used for essential operational expenses.

E911 / Radio (11:30 a.m. start time) started at 11:34 a.m.

Department representative(s) present: Jenn Libby-Jones, Justin Stennick

Jenn Libby-Jones said E911 is not funded by the general fund. Jenn said 911 is predominately funded by user fees and a phone tax. This year's focus has been on staffing, training and morale. They are looking at changes in the ILA model would become a user group. There is a 911 sales tax proposed to the public, but the business model has been planned in case the sales tax increase is not approved.

The CUC sub-committee has performed its analysis, and the user rates will be submitted to the CUC at the next meeting. There is proposed savings due to vacancies within E911.

Jenn said radio services is fully funded through interfund rate. Matrix consulting recommended moving Radio back to the Communications budget. This has 2 FTE. Matrix also recommended changing to internal support agreements. The assets for Communications are complex and capturing the cost breakout is approximately a 60/40 split between department costs and communications costs should they choose to use internal support agreements.

Jenn said 911 is in the middle of replacing radio equipment. This is being funded by grants. Core 911 equipment is currently part of their rates. Jenn said there will be ER&R costs to pay for radio equipment in the future and this will be a large impact to the users and the fees they currently pay. Jenn said the 911 tax will allow for new equipment and services for more efficiency.

At 11:55 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

Auditor's Office (1:30 p.m. start time) started at 1:32 p.m.

Elected and office representative(s) present: Larry Grove, Tom Stanton, Graham Gowing, Grace Jimenez

Larry Grove said his office provides administration, licensing, accounts payable, election services, auditor and financial services. Larry said to meet the proposed budget reduction, his office is freezing a vacant licensing position for four months, reducing supplies and not allowing overtime to cover the remaining deficit.

Larry said that licensing is a highly complex activity and while this position is vacant for four months, it is a very valuable position and much needed. Larry said there is no other way to meet the budget reduction. They receive funding from the Department of Licensing to fund the position for the remainder of the year.

Becky Butler said the cost allocation plan affects all departments but will assist going forward. It's a structural change for Lewis County that will provide a long-term benefit to the general fund.

BOCC / County Administration (3:30 p.m. start time) started at 2:02 p.m.

Department representative(s) present: Becky Butler

Becky Butler outlined significant adjustments in budgeting and resource allocation. Becky said allocating salaries and benefits to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to meet expenditure request. There isn't a significant budget for travel or supplies. County Administration has seen a reduction in staffing. Each employee has picked up additional tasks. Becky said County Administration includes the County Manager and half of an administrative assistant position. Ryan Barrett said the PIO specialist, the Housing and Infrastructure Specialist and Office Manager have been eliminated.

Becky asked for follow up to look at Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) payments and penalties.

WSAC, WACO, Board of Equalization, LEOFF I, Lodging tax/Tourism promotion and Distressed Counties are all smaller departments under the BOCC umbrella.

Becky said there is close to \$2 million in fund balance for tourism promotion. Funds are placed into a special revenue fund and any monies within this fund can only be used for tourism promotion, operations, and marketing. Rudy Rodriguez described how the 2024 funds were utilized.

Becky Butler said there are unemployment threshold and other metrics a rural county must meet to be eligible to receive Distressed Counties funds. The amount of funding received is based on sales tax collections.

Noxious Weeds (2:30 p.m. start time) 2:34 p.m.

Department representative(s) present: Charles Edmonson

Charles Edmonson said Noxious Weeds provides a variety of services and partnerships. They are currently working on eradicating the Brazilian Elodea. They provide stewardships, tool lending, site consultations, and tansy disposal. Charles said the current fee of \$8 per parcel. Charles said that county and state lands can now be assessed the noxious weed assessment. Becky suggested that as the

ordinance associated with the fee schedules changes, it could provide a good opportunity to reevaluate and possibly adjust the fees associated with it.

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.