

All-Day Budget Meetings

October 9, 2024

9:01 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Becky Butler, Scott Tinney, Marni Larson, Sherri Dokken, Meja Handlen, Jenn Libby-Jones, Kate Chatterton, Arny Davis, Shelly Stewart, Rodney Reynolds, Linda Mastin, Jonathan Meyer, Brittani Halverson, Sheriff Rob Snaza, Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson, Chief Chris Sweet, Judge Andrew Toynbee, Court Administrator Susie Palmateer, Accounting Specialist Stacey Werner, Court Administrator Shad Hail, Ricolena Anders, BJ Kuykendall, Rachel Churchill, Grace Jimenez

Citizens Budget Committee members: Bill Serrahn, Tim Wood, Paul Crouner, Jerry Villareal

Guest(s): Mitchell Roland, unnamed guest

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to add a Parks and Fair budget update at 4 p.m. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Clerk's Office (9:01 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative(s) present: Clerk Scott Tinney and Deputy Director Marni Larson

Details: Scott Tinney said he was able to meet the 5 percent expenditure reduction by leaving one position vacant and through attrition, with a senior employee switching from full-time to roughly .60 FTE. Scott noted that the Clerk's Office cut travel and miscellaneous expenditures budgets significantly the previous year for the 2024 budget.

Scott noted that his office has embraced improved technology to improve efficiencies, such as a recent move to electronic documentation.

Scott noted that his office was short-handed due to illness, injuries, etc., every month the previous year, creating a strain on existing staff.

Scott outlined the steep cuts made to revenues the Clerk's Office receives, noting that the state Legislature gutted the amount of assessed legal financial obligations (LFOs) criminals had been ordered to pay. He said the Blake decision has played a huge role in the revenue decreases.

Treasurer's Office (9:31 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative(s) present: Treasurer Arny Davis, Banking & Investment Officer Rodney Reynolds, Chief Deputy Treasurer Shelly Stewart

Details: Arny Davis outlined challenges his office would face if it were required to reduce staffing. He said he would have to cut a counter position and direct the Banking and Investment Officer to stop his work on investment income.

Arny said implementation of a new tax software system will increase staffing needs.

Arny said he feels new construction revenues are continuing to grow.

Becky Butler explained funding the county receives from Tacoma Power and timber sales.

At 10:01 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 10:30 a.m.

Prosecuting Attorney's Office (10:30 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Prosecuting Attorney Jonathan Meyer and Office Administrator Brittani Halverson

Details: Jonathan Meyer discussed savings in response to a law clerk and an investigator who are attending law school and will be able to work under Rule 9.

Jonathan said costs associated with his office's case management system will increase substantially in 2025. He noted that his office has coordinated with the Sheriff's Office to ensure the county isn't paying twice for the storage of body camera footage.

Jonathan shared the following budgetary details:

- PA's Office will realize some cost savings due to an upcoming retirement.
- Working with legislators in an effort to increase reimbursement rate for case processing fees.
- Working with legislators to increase reimbursement rate for defense counsel.
- Interpreter costs have increased substantially.
- The state's proposed caseload standards would lead to cuts in case filings.
- The \$136,000 reduction to the 2025 budget is feasible.
- The state has done away with the Crime Victim Assessment Fee, which has slashed the offset for crime victim support.

Assessor's Office (10:56 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Assessor Ross Nielson and Chief Deputy Lynn Richard

Details: Assessor Ross Nielson said his office is leaving a vacant position unfilled in order to meet the budgetary reduction. He said further cuts could affect the process for new construction.

Ross said he is requesting additional funding for maintenance fees and professional services. He noted that there will be an overlap on software as the office switches to new technology.

Ross said he is requesting additional funds to contract with an individual to review commercial appraisals.

Lynn Richard said preliminary totals show that new construction is down roughly \$35 million since the previous year.

Ross explained how valuations are set. He also discussed the implementation of new software, which will provide savings once rolled out, and the process by which an individual would be able to become an industrial appraiser.

Coroner's Office (11:30 a.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Coroner Warren McLeod and Chief Deputy Director Samantha Schaffer

Details: Becky noted that Warren has withdrawn his requests for additional funding for positions. Warren said he is requesting additional funding to cover professional services, such as toxicology tests, x-rays, next-of-kin searches, external views and autopsies.

Warren said the county has saved several thousand dollars by providing its own transportation for decedent removals.

Warren outlined accreditation and certification requirements.

At 11:48 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

Sheriff's Office (1:31 p.m. start time)

Elected and representative present: Sheriff Rob Snaza and Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson

Details: Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson said the Sheriff's Office will face a \$1 million shortfall if it is required to reduce its budget as requested. He said the department would be forced to cut eight positions, including a detective position, two deputy positions and five corrections officer positions. Undersheriff Engelbertson said the Sheriff's Office could potentially save \$100,000 at the jail through Medicaid reimbursements.

Undersheriff Engelbertson and Sheriff Snaza discussed costs associated with 24-hour life-saving care provided by Naphcare. They noted that the Sheriff's Office is looking at using opioid settlement funds to cover the costs.

Sheriff Snaza said there are 10 vacancies in the jail and four vacancies in patrol. He discussed employee burnout caused by the overtime needed to cover shifts.

Sheriff Snaza said he will gather data about the services Naphcare provides.

Sheriff Snaza discussed liabilities with having reserve officers patrolling on their own.

Undersheriff Engelbertson and Sheriff Snaza discussed the benefits the Cradlepoint additions have made.

Sheriff Snaza said the Sheriff's Office pays \$700,000 annually for 911 services. He noted that passage of the proposed 911 tax would offset a bulk of that cost.

Superior Court (2:30 p.m. start time)

Elected and representative(s) present: Judge Andrew Toynebee, Court Administrator Susie Palmateer, Accounting Specialist Stacey Werner

Details: Susie Palmateer said the budget limitation would require Superior Court cuts totaling roughly \$87,700. Susie noted most of Superior Court's costs are outside of the office's controls.

Susie and Judge Toynebee discussed the costs associated with family law. They noted that they have selected a new court commissioner.

Juvenile (3:15 p.m. start time)

Office representatives present: Court Administrator Shad Hail and Probation Manager Ricolena Anders, Office Manager Susan Wickert, Detention Manager Vanessa Conwell

Details: Shad Hail said meeting the budget limitations would force Juvenile to lose two probation officer positions, one of which could be funded through ARPA dollars.

Shad noted that while costs have skyrocketed over the past 10 years, the state has not increased funding.

Shad outlined the following:

- One of the most senior probation officers just retired and another is retiring
- Several other senior employees have retired or are retiring
- New staff is inexperienced
- Proposed budget cuts would
 - Increase risk and liability exposure
 - Decrease ability to meet statutory obligations
 - Decrease ability to respond and force reactive responses instead of proactive responses
 - Increase staff burnout and create retention challenges

Parks and Rec / Fair (4:02 p.m. start time)

Department representatives present: Parks and Recreation Administrator BJ Kuykendall and Business Manager Rachel Churchill

Details: BJ Kuykendall provided a quick overview of the sites the parks department oversees.

BJ outlined the following:

- Outside partnerships and the use of park hosts have helped Parks and Rec save costs.
- 4-H barn will be completed in 2025.
- Engineering for equestrian center will be completed in 2025.
- Use of volunteer work helps the fair keep costs low.
- Carnival, gate admission and vendors provide the bulk of the fair's outside revenue.

BJ outlined the following cuts to meet the proposed budget limitations:

- Eliminate the fair manager position and a ground tech I position to meet proposed budget cuts.
- Reduce extra help for fair work.
- Eliminate overtime.
- Reduce supply expenses by 25 percent.
- Reduce repairs and maintenance by \$8,500.
- Reduce miscellaneous costs by \$6,000.
- Reduce Motor Pool to a \$10,000 level.
- Collect credit card fees.

BJ noted that the ambitious vision to expand to year-round camping at the fairgrounds did not come to fruition.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.