

## All-Day Budget Meetings

September 30, 2025

9:01 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Budget Administrator Becky Butler, Public Health and Social Services Director Meja Handlen, PHSS Deputy Director John Abplanalp, Business and Office Manager Kendra Garrison, Facilities Manager Alex Murray, Fair and Events Manager Fionna Velazquez, Accounting Analyst Elizabeth Hill, Fair and Events Coordinator Ashley Hamilton, Sheriff Rob Snaza, Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson, Field Operations Chief Rick Van Wyck, Corrections Chief Chris Sweet, Chief Civil Deputy Gabe Frase, Budget Analyst III Rudy Rodriguez, Juvenile Court Administrator Shad Hail and Juvenile Court Office Manager Susan Wickert

Citizens Budget Committee members: Usha Sahadeva Brooks, Tim Wood, Bill Serrahn, Paul Crowner, Michael Blessing

Guest(s): Jacob Moore, Kris Camenzind, Justin Kangas

Recorder: Rieva Lester

**Public comment:** None.

**Public Health and Social Services** (9:01 a.m. start time)

**Director and representatives present:** Public Health and Social Services Director Meja Handlen, PHSS Deputy Director John Abplanalp, Business and Office Manager Kendra Garrison

**Details:** The group examined the cost-effectiveness of upgrading the water lab or suspending water-testing services. They discussed creating a public-private partnership for oversight of the animal shelter.

Public Health and Social Services Director Meja Handlen said PHSS is seeking additional funding to cover:

- One additional FTE Health Services Worker for WIC, with estimated increases of \$108,260 for 2026, \$106,000 for 2027.
- One additional FTE Community Outreach Worker for Developmental Disabilities program, with estimated increases of \$102,000 for 2026 and \$92,000 for 2027.

The commissioners discussed the future of the water lab, noting that it doesn't seem feasible for the water lab to become financially independent.

The commissioners directed staff to move forward with upgrades to the water lab and to continue supporting the water lab with general fund dollars.

At 10:22 a.m., Commissioner Brummer announced the BOCC would take an 8-minute recess, returning at 10:30 a.m.

### **Southwest Washington Fair** (10:32 a.m. start time)

**Director and representative(s) present:** Facilities Manager Alex Murray, Fair and Events Manager Fiona Velazquez, Accounting Analyst Elizabeth Hill, Fair and Events Coordinator Ashley Hamilton

**Details:** Fair staff described the challenges the fair faces, including economic pressures such as minimum wage increases and inflation as well as other hardships, such as theft. Staff said the Fair is proposing a \$1,689,200 budget for 2026.

Discussion ended at 10:50 a.m.

### **Sheriff's Office and Lewis County Jail** (10:55 a.m. start time)

**Elected and representative(s) present:** Sheriff Rob Snaza (via Zoom), Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson, Field Operations Chief Rick Van Wyck, Corrections Chief Chris Sweet, Chief Civil Deputy Gabe Frase

**Details:** Sheriff Rob Snaza, Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson and other key staff provided an overview of the budget for the Sheriff's Office.

Undersheriff Engelbertson noted that the 2025 budget included opioid settlement funding to cover two positions. Staff said the 2025 budget totaled \$21,000,500 and that the 2026 budget is proposed at \$21,000,300, which would maintain the status quo. Staff said they are seeking commissioner approval to continue using opioid settlement funds to cover the salaries for the two deputies whose positions were covered by that fund in 2025. Staff said the Sheriff's Office also is asking for additional funding to cover any potential salary increases linked to changes in the collective bargaining agreements.

Staff said Sheriff's deputies provide coverage for Pe Ell, Morton, Mossyrock, Vader and other area municipalities and noted that the county's calls for service have increased by 588 compared to year-to-date totals from 2024.

The group discussed staffing challenges and noted that being understaffed costs more than being fully staffed due to overtime charges.

Chief Rick Van Wyck discussed the need to replace vehicles in the Sheriff's Office fleet. He urged the commissioners to approve the purchase of six patrol cars, noting the per-vehicle price has decreased \$1,400 since the previous year. He said the price for a fully-equipped vehicle is \$60,000.

Chief Rick Van Wyck reviewed the ER and R vehicle replacement policy from 2023, noting the policy states the following:

- Vehicles should be replaced after seven to eight years of service – 13 LCSO vehicles qualify.
- Vehicles should be replaced after 150,000 miles – 9 LCSO vehicles qualify.
- Vehicles should be replaced based upon dependability.

Chief Van Wyck noted that the per-vehicle cost is shown as \$65,000 when it actually would be \$60,000.

**The commissioners directed staff to move forward with the purchase of six new vehicles for the Sheriff's Office and directed staff to alert Fleet Services Manager Tim Mixer.**

At 11:36 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

**Lodging taxes** (1:30 p.m. start time)

**Representative(s) present:** Budget Analyst III Rudy Rodriguez

**Details:** Budget Analyst III Rudy Rodriguez provided recaps about the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee and the lodging tax application process.

**Capital Infrastructure** (2 p.m. start time)

**Representative(s) present:** Capital Infrastructure Specialist Matt Patana

**Details:** Capital Infrastructure Specialist Matt Patana reviewed revenues and expenditures and recapped projects worked on in 2025, including upgrades to the Winlock senior center, the Packwood senior center, the water lines at the fairgrounds, the 4H Barn and the fair grandstands.

**Public Defense** (2:34 p.m. start time)

**Director and representative(s) present:** Budget Services Administrator Becky Butler

**Details:** Budget Services Administrator Becky Butler said the commissioners are being asked to consider a \$200,000 increase to the Public Defense budget for 2026 in response to the state Supreme Court's rules regarding caseload standards.

Becky noted that Lewis County pays 96 percent of the costs for public defense for those who cannot afford an attorney while the state, which requires indigent defense, pays only 4 percent. She said the state's newly adopted caseload standards will only increase the county's costs moving forward.

Discussion ended at 2:53 p.m.

**Juvenile** (3:05 p.m. start time)

**Representative(s) present:** Juvenile Court Administrator Shad Hail and Office Manager Susan Wickert

**Details:** Juvenile Court Administrator Shad Hail reviewed the services Juvenile provides and the financial challenges it faces, including a loss of roughly \$90,000 in Becca funding from the state as well as an increase in torts and lawsuits linked to changes in the state Legislature. He noted that changes in state law have decreased accountability, leading to an increase in felony referrals.

Meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.