

2019 Preliminary Budget Meeting – Prosecuting Attorney

September 13, 2018

9:01 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Fund; Commissioner Jackson; Commissioner Stamper; County Manager Erik Martin; Budget Services Manager Becky Butler; Central Services Director Steve Walton; Prosecutor Jonathan Meyer; Citizens Budget Committee members Kyle Markstrom, Peggy Hammer, Bill Marshall, Tory Graf; Judy Pectol and Robert Berg

Guests: Olga Miller, Lindsey Pollock (9:11 a.m.)

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Unfunded mandates discussed: Interpreters, which used to be paid for by the courts; Superior Court's decision to run both ITA courts simultaneously; Supreme Court's unlimited appeals; indigent defense; expert witnesses for those who've retained their own attorneys

Revenues: \$609,636

Expenditures: \$3,373,400

Request: Additional \$45,000

Full-time equivalent employees: 28.50

Jonathan discussed challenges the PA's Office faces, including:

- ITAs
- Large increase in felony filings
- 36 percent increase in District Court filings
- Increased administrative duties
- Increased costs for interpreters
- Legal witness costs
- Professional services costs, such as costs for expert witnesses

Commissioner Stamper left at 9:08 a.m. and returned at 9:11 a.m.

Lindsey Pollock joined at 9:11 a.m.

Jonathan said he is asking for an additional \$45,000 to cover increased costs to the PA's Office.

TO-DO / QUESTIONS

Questions:

Percentage of PAO's budget funded by State Patrol?

Could technology be used instead of human interpreters? Jonathan said services such as "Language Line" (a phone-in service) are used elsewhere

PA's Office's was involved in recent human trafficking case

JNET funds go to those entities that have role in the operations

Jonathan said the Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) helps pay for the ITA position.

Jonathan said recruitment and retention have been difficult because private practice is more lucrative and neighboring counties often pay more.

Jonathan discussed some of the successful local programs and improvements and cost-saving measures, such as:

- Drug Court, which offers increased recidivism rates and provides savings of \$2.50 for every \$1 spent
- Mental Health alternative, which offers increased recidivism rates
- Technology
- Switch to cheap paper, even for letters from his office
- Using coupons

Jonathan discussed cost challenges, including unfunded mandates, such as:

- Jonathan said other entities have moved away from prosecuting low-level crimes but that his office sees the importance of prosecuting those
- Interpreters, which used to be paid for by the courts
- Superior Court's decision to run both courts – ITAs and SUDs – simultaneously
- Supreme Court's unlimited appeals
- Indigent defense or expert witnesses for those who've retained their own attorneys

Commissioner Stamper left at 9:38 a.m. and returned at 9:41 a.m.

Jonathan outlined the following revenue streams:

- Child support contract, which has to go to the Child Support Office
- Crime Victims grant
- State's reimbursement toward Prosecuting Attorney's pay
- BHO

Becky said some counties have imposed an up-to 3 percent public safety tax.

Jonathan said One Lewis County's litigation will have little impact on the PA's staffing budget but that it certainly detracts from civil deputies' other projects and will increase costs for mileage, supplies, etc.

Kyle Markstrom left at 9:52 a.m.

Becky said Law and Justice accounts for 80 percent to 81 percent of the county's entire budget. Roughly 75 percent of that cost is for salaries and benefits, she said.

Steve Walton discussed interest arb, which gives a different bargaining power to the sheriff's department.

Jonathan said even if the two twice-weekly ITA courts weren't held simultaneously, the PA's Office still would need additional staffing.

Meeting ended at 9:58 a.m.