

Budget Update

August 18, 2020

3:32 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Larry McGee, Phil Crocker, Steve Wohld, Becky Butler, Tamara Hayes, Matt Jaeger, Debbie Campbell, Joe Clark, Linda Lee, Suzette Smith

Guests: Frank Corbin, Bill Serrahn

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Becky Butler said Budget worksheets are now available.

Debbie Campbell and Joe Clark discussed their proposal to have United Way collect broadband funding from the county then distribute it to area school districts.

Becky asked if it would be more beneficial to give grants directly to the school districts.

Phil Crocker said he attended a meeting with the area superintendents earlier in the day. He said the group indicated that they do not have the ability to spearhead that type of effort.

Joe said there would be no subcontracting. He said the contracts would be between the districts and the OSPI.

Steve Wohld asked what amount of the \$150,000 would go toward expanded services and what amount would go toward studying who needs service and what service is available.

Joe said the focus would be on identifying the needs, mapping the needs and helping the districts navigate it.

Joe said Commerce is giving OPSI \$8.8 million to pave the way for connectivity for under-served school children.

Joe said he feels the group can provide a broader coverage area because it is working with five vendors.

Becky suggested the commissioners weighing the merits of both proposals, noting that United Way's proposal and Breeze's proposal each offer unique benefits.

Joe said \$450,000 has been committed toward the proposal.

Commissioner Jackson noted that Breeze's proposal would create 300 new connections immediately.

Tamara Hayes said she had concerns about administrative costs associated with the proposal. She said the proposal earmarks 15 percent of the \$150,000 would go to admin costs. Joe said roughly 20 percent of the \$700,000 for the overall project would go toward administrative costs.

Becky and Tamara said Commerce, WSAC, the PA's office and IT have vetted Breeze's proposal. Becky noted that Joe Clark / United Way's proposal has not yet been vetted.

Becky suggested moving forward with Breeze and then possibly circling back to the United Way proposal. She said she wants to know how much would go toward hook-up fees and how much would go toward service fees.

Larry McGee said internet access should be a high priority in the county. He suggested moving forward with both proposals.

Commissioner Fund made a motion to authorize a \$150,000 grant to Breeze immediately for their submittal provided for grants to help residents, including children, with distance learning and tele-working.

Commissioner Jackson seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Fund made a motion to authorize \$150,000 for the Lewis County High-Speed Education Network – contingent on Commerce's approval – and directed staff to look for ways to reallocate CRF funds for the project.

Commissioner Jackson seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Fund left at 4:32 p.m. but joined via Zoom upon her departure.

Linda Lee, Debbie Campbell and Joe Clark left at 4:32 p.m.

Matt Jaeger provided an overview regarding plans for courtroom upgrades. She said the county has applied for a \$490,000 Administrative Office of the Courts grant. Becky asked if the commissioners would consider allocated funding using CRF if the grant is not approved.

Steve Wohld noted that courts across the state are making similar changes, which could put a stress on the supply chain.

Matt said the plan is to outfit eight total courtrooms: four in District Court and four in Superior Court. He said the jail would require a less expensive version.

Becky, Matt and Steve noted that the purchase is on the agenda for the Aug. 24 Business Meeting.

Becky said the county has spent \$1 million toward CRF grants so far and roughly \$176,000 in FEMA funding so far.

Becky reviewed county revenues and expenditures.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.