

Budget – review budget increase requests

November 9, 2020

3:30 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, County Manager Erik Martin, Becky Butler, Daleyn Coleman, Jonathan Meyer, Warren McLeod, Dianne Dorey, Jake Coppock, Dawn Harris, Katie Conradi, Sandra Peck, Stephen Wilson, Chelsie Wilson, Fionna Velaquez, Andy Caldwell

Guests: Claudia Yaw, Commissioner-elect Dr. Lindsey Pollock, Commissioner-elect Sean Swope; Citizens Budget Committee members Paul Crowner, Bill Serrahn and Frank Corbin

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Becky Butler noted that the commissioners had requested that the \$100,000 for the Lewis County Seniors be included in the preliminary budget. She also noted that the commissioners also approved increases for electeds' salaries but had not yet approved additional funding to cover the increases.

Becky provided an overview of the 10 increase requests.

Warren McLeod reviewed staffing schedules, call logs, call-back pay, extra help budgets, etc., related to his request for a Coroner's Office increase. Warren noted that staff members perform highly skilled, sometimes dangerous work and that the pay is close to minimum wage. Daleyn Coleman said HR received the documents for review earlier in the day.

Indigent Defense - Superior Court: \$174,750 for attorneys' contracts

Increase per-unit pay to \$1,000.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved increasing the per-unit payment to \$1,000.

Superior Court: \$122,000 for operations

Costs in Superior Court Indigent Defense covers professional services for Criminal / Family Law and Guardianships.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the request.

Superior Court: \$9,020 for Court Commissioner's salary / benefits

The court commissioner's salary is not on the salary grid, but statewide court commissioners' salaries are generally tied to a percentage of the judges' salaries. Superior Court is asking that the court commissioner's salary be increased as the judges' salaries are increased -- as set by the state. Superior Court would like the Court Commissioner's salary tied at 85 percent of the judges' salary going forward.

Commissioner Jackson suggested approving the increase and tying the increase to the judges' salaries.

Commissioner Fund noted that the commissioners had avoided tying the increase to the judges' salaries in an effort to maintain control of the salary increase.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase and approved tying future increases to the judges' salaries.

Indigent Defense - District Court: \$120,000 for increase to attorneys' contracts

County Manager Erik Martin said attorney David Arcuri has requested per-unit pay of \$400 for District Court's Indigent Defense team. Erik suggested a staggered five-year approach to increase the amounts gradually annually. Erik said David Arcuri also has asked that the county assign additional units for DUIs and domestic violence cases as well and to add an additional unit for cases that go to jury trial.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the five-year approach to increases.

The commissioners said they'd like further discussion about the additional units.

Assessor: \$21,350 for professional services and for a boot allowance

Cover costs (mostly maintenance and support of office software as well as contracted preparation of real property revaluation notices and share of countywide aerial landscape imagery) that have been increasing by 3 percent to 4 percent annually. Also, during recent collective bargaining agreement (CBA) negotiations, a request was made to provide a new benefit of \$150 per year as a boot allowance for the Assessor's nine appraisal employees.

Becky Butler noted that Pictometry has built-in annual increases that aren't built into the budget appropriations.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the boot allowance as well as the professional services increase.

General elected offices: \$78,000 for salaries / benefits

The Citizens Salary Commission submitted a recommendation to the BOCC to increase Electeds salaries by 10 percent (excluding the Sheriff and Judges). Increases to the commissioners' salaries went into effect automatically, and the BOCC has absorbed the increase in the 2020 and 2021 budget.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase.

Emergency Management: \$100,000 for operations

The 2021 DEM budget increase will primarily be used to fund the FTE Coordinator position. Law changes in 2017 have mandatory requirements for DEM to meet by 2022, including participation in the 2022 statewide Cascadia Earthquake Exercise. Staffing levels must be increased in order to meet the program requirements by 2022 or Lewis County may not be in compliance with Federal laws.

Andy Caldwell said Emergency Management needs additional help to stay caught up with state and federal mandates.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase.

Coroner: \$357,613 for salaries / benefits for five new positions (two Senior Deputy Coroners and three Deputy Coroners)

Warren said he'd like five deputy coroners. Becky noted that the Coroner would save roughly \$50,000 in casual help with the addition of five FTEs. She said five FTEs would be a net increase of roughly \$300,000 to the budget.

Jonathan Meyer said the PA's Office would commit some funds to help cover costs associated with controlled substance deaths, which account for roughly 10 percent of the Coroner's Office's cases.

Commissioner Stamper suggested approving 1.5 new positions, with a review mid-year.

Warren said the deputy coroners pay for their five-year certification (\$500) and uniforms out of pocket.

Commissioner Stamper suggested approving 1.5 new FTE positions, with a review mid-year that could lead to the increase to two FTEs.

Commissioner Stamper asked for documentation regarding certification costs.

Commissioner Stamper suggested having the county pay for the certification. Daleyn Coleman noted that reimbursement for the training already is a county policy.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved two new positions – using the funding the PA discussed for .5 position – effective Jan. 1, 2021, with a review mid-year.

Jail: \$22,857 for medical contract costs

The costs for NaphCare services increase each year.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase.

WSU Extension Services: \$18,138 for contract services

Increase of operations for contract with WSU Extension Services.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase.

Lewis County Senior Services: \$100,000 for Senior Nutrition

Already earmarked in preliminary budget.

Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Fund and Commissioner Jackson approved the increase.

Citizens Budget Committee members Paul Crouner, Bill Serrahn and Frank Corbin weighed in on the commissioners' decisions.

Erik Martin said Public Health & Social Services has submitted a request to unfreeze a position for an additional employee to help with records requests and code enforcement cases.

Taxes

Becky said the commissioners have a choice regarding property taxes since the implicit price deflator (IPD) fell short of 1 percent:

- Take the IPD of 0.602 percent.
- Declare substantial need and take the additional 0.398 percent.
- Bank the capacity and save it for another year.

Becky said she'd like a decision by Dec. 7. She said a decision must be made by Dec. 12.

Communications 2021 budget

Erik said the county has met with the Combined User Committee (CUC). He said the plan was to impose an increase of 5 percent over 2020 rates. However, he said, many users have indicated they face budget freezes or possible cuts.

The CUC considered – but ultimately declined – a 2.5 percent increase. Instead, the group voted to recommend a 1 percent increase over 2020 rates.

Erik said the group discussed the possibility of a public safety tax to cover costs.

Becky said the Department of Natural Resources has indicated a sale in Timber Trust II has provided a one-time bump totaling roughly \$500,000 for the county. Becky said forest-board yields will come in higher than estimated. However, she cautioned that forest-board yields are predicted to decrease over the next few years.

Coronavirus Relief Funds

Becky said the county still is looking at a Nov. 30 deadline, while Public Health & Social Services is still looking at a Dec. 30 deadline.

Becky said Breeze was unable to complete its project and is turning back \$100,000. She discussed possible ways in which to reallocate those funds before the deadline, including holding onto the funding to cover COVID-19 response, noting that Commerce has indicated that public safety salaries are eligible for CRF allocations.

Meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.