

All-Day Budget Meetings

September 30, 2024

10:30 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Meja Handlen, Kate Chatterton, Linda Mastin, Preston Pinkston, Matt Jaeger, Daleyn Coleman, Tina Hemphill, Josh Metcalf, Erika Katt, Mindy Brooks, Tara Snelson, Sarah Hensley, Doyle Sanford, Brad Clark, John Abplanalp, Linda Mastin, Doug Carey, Judge Wade Samuelson, Judge RW Buzzard, Court Administrator Monique Shedd, Gary Fredricks

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

Guest(s): Lorie Spogen, Rachel Hunt

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

Human Resources (10:30 a.m. start time)

Office / department representatives present: Interim Director Matt Jaeger and Deputy Director Daleyn Coleman

Budget: Preliminary budget came in \$41,000 over the limitation. HR would need to reduce staffing by 0.5 FTE, from 4.0 FTE to 3.5 FTE, to meet the limitation. The cuts would affect internal services, which would could increase employee recruitment and retention, which affects taxpayers through higher costs associated with training, payouts, etc., related to turnover.

Matt said staffing is designed to remain at 4.0 FTE when the county hires its new HR director, who also will oversee the PDR department. Matt said the Deputy Director position will be eliminated when the new Director is hired.

Public Works (11 a.m.)

Office / department representatives present: Director Josh Metcalf and Deputy Director Tina Hemphill

Funds covered:

- Emergency Management
- Roads
- Flood Control
- Cowlitz River Basin Subzone

- Solid Waste
- Packwood Airport
- South County Airport
- Middlefork
- Vader Water
- ER and R
- Rock pits and quarries
- Community Development Block Grant

Josh provided the following highlights:

- Public Works is overseeing 65 total grants totaling \$37 million
- Most of the 2024 road projects were covered by grants
- Reductions:
 - Eliminated one FTE from Department of Emergency Management
 - Placed on hold various roads, airports and water utilities projects that would require a county match for funding
- Changes
 - Increased costs due to the reclassification of engineering positions
 - Operation costs have increased
 - Labor and material costs have increased
 - Apprenticeship requirements
 - Unfunded mandates regarding permit review time
- Challenges
 - Declining revenues
 - The commissioners directed Public Works staff to reach out to Centralia to see if the city would like to implement cost savings by re-instating its interlocal agreement with the county, under which the city would return under the county's emergency management umbrella.
 - Workforce vacancies
 - Costs associated with Cost Allocation Plan (CAP)
 - Increased costs
 - Annual transfer
 - Regulatory changes
- Reductions would affect chip seal efforts.
- Public Works will continue to review upcoming projects based on funding availability.
- Vader Water
- Staff is reviewing user fees to ensure the users are covering their own costs.

At 11:57 a.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 1:30 p.m.

Community Development (1:30 p.m. start time)

Office / department representatives present: Community Development Director Mindy Brooks, Deputy Director Sarah Hensley, Lead Permit Tech Brad Clark

Mindy Brooks provided the following highlights:

- Community Development processes development permits for compliance with federal and state laws.
- The department employs 17 employees who serve in three divisions: administration, planning and building.
- Funding sources include:
 - Permit fees, which cannot be used to cover staff or administrative costs linked to anything not associated with processing permits.
 - General fund covers director, office manager, senior long-range planner, public records, Boundary Review Board, etc.
 - Fund balance, which is a reserve for multi-year permit processing and can help during economic downturns.
- 2025 projections
 - 2025 revenues expected to be \$2.2 million and expenses expected to be \$3.15 million
 - 2025 deficit estimated at more than \$500,000 above and beyond current General Fund transfer, which covers Director, Deputy Director and Senior Long-Range Planner positions

Mindy said she is proposing the county implement the following fee increases for cost recovery:

- 11 percent increase in fees for building permits
- 102 percent increase in fees for Planning permits
- Plus \$57 per-application administrative fee
- Yearly increases to permit fees to keep pace with cost-of-living increases, tying them to the Consumer Price Index or increases to the county's collective bargaining agreements.

Mindy said Community Development has seen the number of permits has decreased as development has slowed recently.

Mindy said Community Development is requesting an increase in General Fund support from \$250,000 to \$384,000.

Capital Projects (2:06 p.m. start time)

Department representative present: Capital Projects Manager Doug Carey.

Doug reviewed the various types of funds, their estimated fund balances and their funding sources.

Doug noted that two capital positions have been eliminated. He noted the two employees were hired to fill vacancies in Facilities.

Doug said challenges include rising costs and restricted uses.

Public Defense (2:35 p.m. start time)

Office / department employees present: Budget Administrator / Risk Director Becky Butler

Becky provided the following overview:

- Counties are required to provide defense for anyone considered indigent at any point in the court process in all cases in which the right to counsel attaches.
- Expenditures far outpace funding from the state. For 2025, the deficit tops \$2.06 million.

At 2:56 p.m., Commissioner Brummer recessed the meeting until 3:30 p.m.

District Court (3:30 p.m. start time)

Electeds / representative present: Judge Wade Samuelson, Judge RW Buzzard, Court Administrator Monique Shedd

Judge Samuelson said District Court would be forced to cut the probation clerk position, which provides administrative support for probation officers, should budget cuts be demanded. Judge Samuelson requested the BOCC abandon proposed cuts to District Court's budget and instead increase it to allow District Court to unfreeze a probation clerk position.

Judge Samuelson and Judge Buzzard lamented the inability to recoup fees, etc., from defendants.

Judge Buzzard noted that any budget reductions would disrupt revenues.

Becky discussed the potential use of the opioid settlement funds.

The judges said there were no downsides to having the small cities provide their own court functions. They noted that costs for interpretation services have increased.

WSU Extension (4:07 p.m. start time)

Department representative present: WSU Interim Extension Director Gary Fredricks

Gary Fredricks discussed the projects and education WSU provides locally.

Becky said she will review the proposed budget to ensure it reflects the portion being paid by Solid Waste Utility.

Usha Saldeva Brooks noted mathematical errors in the sheet outlining volunteer hours.

Meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.