

## Memorandum: Budget Committee Recommendations Summary

**Date:** October 29, 2024

**To:** Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)

**Subject:** Summary of Budget Committee Recommendations

This memorandum summarizes the key recommendations made by the Budget Committee during the meeting on October 28, 2024. Please note that this summary captures the overall recommendations but is not exhaustive of all suggestions provided. Committee members present at the meeting included Bill Serrahn, Usha Sahadeva-Brooks, Tim Wood and Jerry Villareal. Paul Crowner was unable to attend due to a prior scheduled vacation.

Reporter: Becky Butler

### 1. FTE Reductions – Assessor and Treasurer:

- Reinstate the FTE reductions initially planned for these offices due to the implementation of the new tax and assessment system.
- The committee advises a thorough post-implementation review to assess staffing needs as efficiency is realized with the cloud-based system.

### 2. Juvenile Position:

- Restore the Juvenile position, as any reductions affecting employee or public safety should be avoided.
- **Opioid Settlement Funds:** The committee recommends utilizing these funds, where eligible, to offset costs in this area. Funds for juvenile detention programs or staffing need to align the initiative with the state's opioid remediation strategies.

### 3. Correctional Officer Positions:

- Reinstate three corrections officer positions to ensure staff and inmate safety within the jail.

### 4. Detective Position – Sheriff's Department:

- Reinstate one detective position to handle the department's investigative load and maintain public safety.

### 5. District Court Position:

- Reinstate the District Court position to ensure service continuity.
- **Opioid Settlement Funds:** As outlined under the Washington "[One WA MOU](#)," opioid funds may be eligible to support probation services for individuals with substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health issues

### 6. Senior Services Allocations:

- Review current senior program allocations and discuss budget constraints with the Lewis County Seniors at the next meeting.

**7. Veterans Services Program Review:**

- Evaluate the Veterans program to eliminate duplicate services and focus on acting as a liaison to federal benefits where available. For example, if the federal government offers funeral benefits assist with the proper documentation to Veterans Affairs before using local funds.

**8. WSU Extension Services:**

- Explore further reductions in the WSU Extension Services program while maintaining the 4-H program.

**9. Levy Recommendations:**

- **Property Tax Levy:** The committee recommends the BOCC adopt the **full 1% allowable increase** in property tax, plus any banked capacity available.
- **Levy Shift:** If necessary, consider a shift from the Road Fund to the General Fund to sustain public safety services. The committee understands this comes with a cost of deferred road maintenance and reductions in transportation projects.

**10. Public Safety Tax Ballot Measure:**

- Encourage the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to collaborate with the community and stakeholders to propose a public safety tax initiative.

- 11. Opioid Settlement Funds:** Evaluate opportunities to use opioid settlement funds within eligible public safety programs, including behavioral health services, jail operations, and substance use treatment initiatives.

The following are questions the Committee has submitted for the budget staff to review and respond to. Questions were written and submitted by Tim Wood.

## Committee Questions:

1. During the Sheriff's Office discussion, there was a mention of minimum staffing levels - are these established internal to LC, or are they established WA state/Federal requirements? If these cannot be met, what are the possible consequences and/or required actions?
2. What are the anticipated ongoing costs associated with the Randle substation?
3. LC 'Night by Night' Shelter is scheduled to open soon. What are the anticipated ongoing operational expenses associated? Are these costs new/additional to current budget expenses, or will they simply consolidate current efforts into a single location? What are the anticipated capital costs of 'finishing out'/fixturing/equipping the shelter? I believe (please correct me if I'm wrong) this effort was required by WA state legislative action. Are there cheaper alternatives which can be effected which would meet these requirements? Can we tour this facility? If this is NOT mandated, should LC consider delaying activation of this facility to help meet forecasted budget shortfalls?
4. We've discussed a tour of the Juvenile Facility - can this be arranged prior to the end of the budget process?
5. There was a mention in the *Chronicle* recently of a September 30 memo to the BOCC regarding the budget, forecasts & potential shortfalls - can we get a copy of this please?
6. If the Committee agrees after discussion, would it be appropriate for the Budget Committee to recommend that the BOCC consider proposing a new assessment to put to the voters for a Public Safety levy, to fully fund the Sheriff's Department at levels determined to be appropriate by the Commissioners in consultation with the Sheriff & any other LC employees/citizens as determined by the BOCC?

PUBLIC HEALTH

7. The department provided 2023 numbers for the various sub departments during our initial meeting. I would like to see historical numbers back a few years earlier if possible, as well as for the 1st 3/4 of 2024 just completed. If possible and not terribly inconvenient, any thoughts the department has on what the full year numbers might be for 2024.
8. Just to confirm, Public Health makes a strong effort to find, review, and apply for any and all available grant funds?
9. Can we please receive a full size copy (or an electronic version) of the PH PowerPoint used during our meeting on 10/2? I am particularly interested in the Org Chart page.
10. What are the potential risks/downsides of moving funding from fund 1520 to cover the anticipated Animal Shelter shortfall of \$32,000?
11. Can we confirm that all excess county properties have been evaluated as to their effectiveness to serve as the 'new' Animal Shelter?
12. Please have Public Health confirm that all proposed fee increases cover 100% of the associated costs. If not, what modifications should be made?
13. Based upon the trailing 12 months, what 'revenue' differential would have been experienced by PH?

IT

14. What is the term of all existing/under negotiation IT contracts? Any analysis available to evaluate negative financial impacts of pending/anticipated changes?

#### FACILITIES

15. Within the Facilities memo to the BOCC & other LC Departments which summarized all the anticipated changes Facilities has suggested will be required to be made to meet the Commissioners' instructions, are there any additional changes they anticipate? Would it be too much trouble to also receive a review of what steps they took during 2024 to meet those reductions, and whether these were successful or unsuccessful? (NOTE: This might be valuable information for any department to provide if it is not too onerous).

16. It was indicated that "Operational Technology" has increased their workload - the 'sales pitch' behind implementing additional technology is supposed to be a reduction in labor. Why are we adding new 'stuff' that increases our labor needs?

17. Why is Facilities overseeing Insurance Premiums? Wouldn't it make more sense for all insurance related matters (with the possible exception of health insurance) to be consolidated in Finance, or Operations?

18. Why did Facilities ".... ability to capture inflation costs of 2% in 2024- 2025" amounting to roughly \$81,000 (source: Facilities memo to BOCC & Departments 9/1/24) happen? Can this be avoided in 2025?

19. How many/where located are Facilities' customer facing positions? Can these be reduced by reducing days and/or hours of operations?

20. How often does Facilities review all service contracts within their purview, for the possibility of reductions/eliminations/rebidding?
21. Does Facilities annually review whether, as LC employees salary levels increase within the labor agreements, the use of outside vendors would be more fiscally conservative?
22. What is the CFP Committee? Why does it exist? Who sits on it? What impact, if any, on the Facilities Department expenses (or revenue?) does this entity have?
23. What will the costs (savings?) of freezing Capital Projects be?
24. Office Moves/Surplus/Equipment Relocations expenses are being restructured, and will now be based upon MOU's? Presumably this will be done at actual cost offset amounts, without a markup. Is this another function which might be done less expensively using a Temp Labor position?
25. It was indicated that the Jail Support position(s?) will now be transferred to the Sheriff's Budget, "through 10/1% funds". What are these funds?
26. IF Facilities stops providing the Jail with Biohazard & Blood Borne Pathogen cleaning services, what will the increase cost to the Jail be? Would Facilities anticipate that this would involve hiring and/or training a Sheriff's employee, or outside contract?
27. Regarding the Historical Museum, the Facilities proposal suggests that annual maintenance support will be limited to the amount of the annual rent the Museum pays. What has been the actual

expense associated with this building over the last few years? (Related: Should the Museum's rent be increased?).

28. Facilities suggests they will no longer provide landscaping services to LC buildings - does Facilities anticipate that this will reduce or increase the overall expense of this work to the county?

29. Facilities referenced 'Deferred Maintenance Issues' in their 9/13 discussion - what are these? Estimated current expense? Cost to continue the delays?

30. In the Facilities handout they used a 'plug' number of 2% inflation. What was the actual inflation experienced over the course of 2024 vs. the same period of 2023? Assuming that the actual inflation figure was higher than 2%, should their presentation be redrafted to reflect what was actually experienced? How would this impact their forecast 2025 Budget?

31. With the opening of the new Community Development Building, shouldn't Facilities have experienced a reduction in necessary time spent by moving to a newer, modern building? Reduced demand for their services?

32. Facilities has proposed the elimination of some internal services previously provided. However, if these services will still be required, isn't there a risk that this actually results in an overall increased cost to LC through the use of outside vendors? Please evaluate.

33. IF the above mentioned reductions are net positive to LC, do the forecast staff reductions fully reflect 100% of these tasks?

34. Shouldn't the "Jail-dedicated Tech 2" expense already be reflected in the Jail Budget (isn't that the purpose of the Interfund transfers)?

35. I strongly support the creativity associated in testing the Pilot Vending Program - this type of forward looking should be encouraged throughout all government departments. However, my experience leads me to be cautious when evaluating the 'real' effectiveness of any new 'labor saving/dollar saving' program for hidden costs, or unintended consequences. These could include (but not be limited to) future price increases exceeding our current experience, future expenses for rental, leasing, or maintenance associated with the equipment, long term vendor reliability, etc. which could lead to future higher expenses than normal.

#### COMMUNICATIONS

36. Please confirm whether the Radio Services Support Rates truly reflect our actual costs), and whether this is a new program. If these do NOT cover our actual costs, these should be redrafted to reflect those actual costs, and this analysis of actual costs should be done annually and modified accordingly.

37. Radio Support Services Rates are mention for the Sheriff's Office, Public Works, & the Coroner. Please confirm these also exist for any/all other departments, not limited to Roads, Public Health, etc. (any/all non-phone related communications).

38. If we assume the 911 Bond Measure fails, what is the forecasted impact to Communications in 2025? Similarly, is it possible to forecast any positive impact of the 911 measure passing?

39. IF Communications is required to meet the stated budget objective of holding to 2024's Budget line items, how would that impact Communications?

40. Is it possible to consider some sort of internship or work-study program with area High Schools and/or the college which could benefit the Comms Dept?

41. A notation was made regarding no Homeland Security grant is anticipated for 2025. How can LC better make use of any/all possible grants for this department?

TREASURER

42. The Treasurer's Office should be complimented on their ongoing efforts to gain a relatively high return on Lewis County's funds, while keeping these funds safe. Just a thought - can LC offer these services to other adjacent counties for a small management fee?

43. Can we confirm that all charged services to the Junior Taxing Districts have been increased to reflect the associated costs LC experiences in providing these? This should include any forecasted labor increases for 2025 associated with these services.

44. The Treasurer's Department, and Lewis County in general, should be complimented on their apparent strong commitment to maximizing Lewis County's (and the associated Junior Taxing Districts) Investment Yields. Is there any advantage to the Treasurer recommending similar adjustments to where/how the money is 'stored', as the Treasurer's Department has undertaken recently which should result in even higher interest yields?

45. The department's report indicated that the State Auditor's Office conducted a 'lean management audit' roughly 5 years ago. Once the 2025 Budget is in place and active, I would recommend requesting an updated audit.

46. What are the risks, if any, of implementing the Treasurer's plan to add an incremental \$127,000 through modification of our banking arrangements with Umpqua?

ASSESSOR

47. Can revised assessments be paused for 2025? If so, what would the estimated cost of this be, versus any potential savings.
48. Is it possible to receive, without undue stress, a historical record (last 5 years?) of required appraisals, plus any forecast for what 2025 will look like?
49. What is the department's experience with successful property tax appeals in recent years?
50. Can the implementation of the software upgrade be delayed? Actual \$ costs of such a delay, as well as 'opportunity' costs?

AUDITOR

51. What is the actual number (or average number) of "off-site" audits annually?
52. The department forecast a Supply line item reduction of \$4600. What steps have already been taken, and what new ones will be taken, to achieve these savings? Shouldn't these be implemented today?
53. What is the actual number (or average number) of "off-site" audits annually?

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#### COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

55. The handout reflected a discrepancy - the Description shows an Expenditure Limit of \$426,142, however the Proposal Summary reflects \$424,992. Which would be correct?

#### CLERK

56. How are the filing fees established? Do these reflect the actual costs associated with each? If not, what would the process be to modify these fees for 2025?

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

57. What impact, if any, does the department anticipate, meaning fewer projects considered, or projects delayed, if the recommended fee increases are implemented?

58. The department indicated they were looking for a roughly \$400,000 General Fund ask. What are the recent historical numbers?

#### HUMAN RESOURCES

59. Can any LC Human Resource functions be performed by outside vendors? If yes, would this reduce LC Costs?

60. What is the historical record for the number of HR employees versus the total LC staff?

61. What are the job functions of the 'Casual Help'? Eliminating this expense would reduce the impact of the suggested cuts in FT staffing.

#### PUBLIC WORKS

62. It was indicated that there were currently 10 open positions in Public Works. If any of these positions have been open for over 12 months, should these be eliminated?

63. My notes are unclear, but it may have been suggested that a rate revision recommendation for 2025 are not covering actual costs. If so, why not? If this is the case, what would the benefit to LC be if these DID reflect actual costs?

#### AIRPORTS

64. This may have been a topic last year - but has LC investigated/evaluated any financial benefit to the county in expanding the rental space available at the 2 airports?

65. Are the historical useage numbers for LC airports available?

#### CAPITAL PROJECTS

66. Can the Budget Committee get a copy of the presentation from 9/30?

67. Can we also request a quick review of what REET 1 & REET 2 are?

68. WSU

69. We need a revised/corrected handout.

70. Do all WA counties have a similar relationship with WSU?

71. There was some discussion/conversation regarding an MOU from Solid Waste' - What/Why?

GENERAL

72. Who negotiates labor agreements for LC & the BOCC?

73. Is there any citizen oversight of LC salary levels?

74. Have all furniture/equipment purchases been frozen? What about 'discretionary' purchases?

75. What is the 2025 estimated increase in LC salaries (as a %, rather than actual \$, as that number could be artificially reduced by open positions/terminations).

76. Has LC ever considered/evaluated whether any efficiencies of scale could be had if LC were to take on all road maintenance in the county, consolidating equipment & personnel (primarily from the 2 largest cities in the county), thus providing savings not only to LC, but also to the cities?

77. What are the current capital cost projections of the night by night shelter? I'm sure it's been considered (but just in case) - is there any opportunity for private investment to aid in funding this project?

78. What is the historical out of pocket costs to LC for homeless housing, including YTD 2024, and projections for 2025/

79. Would it be possible to clarify the differing uses of both the (potential) bond issue as well as the use of ARPA funds, for the 911 system?

80. Has LC seriously considered a wider posting of open positions, particularly those which could be filled remotely, by advertising in regions with an overall lower cost of living (& therefore potentially reducing labor costs)? Or would prevailing wage issues prevent any cost savings?

81. Are grants evaluated/applied for within each separate department? Is there any potential for savings by consolidating this function within a single department?

82. As the slowing economy impacts jurisdictions across WA, the West in general, and even other regions, is there any way to determine whether reductions elsewhere may provide opportunities for LC (capital equipment, even personnel).

83. What would the near term/long term consequences be (& possible \$ savings) of postponing the scheduled vehicle & equipment purchases for all of 2025?

84. Not certain whether LC has a policy regarding limiting printing (and the large quantities of paper generated during our Budget Meetings may well be an anomaly), but based on at least some of the

documents we received, any existing policy should require double sided printing when at all possible.

85. Can/should all LC grant writing be consolidated in a single department for consistency/maximizing grant \$? If not, can LC increase the number of successful grants it receives by holding an in house training using those personnel who are most successful in receiving grants for their departments?

86. Please ask all departments to determine what impacts to public service, overall job performance, & most importantly, revenue/expenses if LC were to mandate a hiring freeze.

DRAFT

Lewis County  
 2025 - Proposed Prelim - Program  
 Download generated on 10/29/2024

Funds Filter  
 Expenses Filter

GENERAL FUND  
 OPERATING TRANSFERS

	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2024 Estimated Year End	2024 Budget	2025 Prelim Budget 9-30- 2024
TRANSFERS-PUBLIC HEALTH	621,000	784,000	0	713,511	649,385	482,243
TRANSFERS-COMM DEV	400,000	355,000	0	400,000	400,000	250,000
TRANSFERS-DEM	262,510	220,935	0	372,626	372,626	343,275
TRANSFERS-2015 DEBT SVC	253,441	253,843	251,393	251,393	251,393	0
TRANSFERS-2020 DEBT SVC	201,132	198,504	200,226	200,226	200,226	0
TRANSFERS-SWWF	111,835	108,986	0	217,971	217,971	217,971
TRANSFERS-SC AIRPORT	120,000	169,344	0	184,332	184,332	184,332
TRANSFERS-SOLID WASTE	147,600	147,600	0	147,600	147,600	147,600
TRANSFERS-FLOOD CONTROL	58,500	62,000	0	65,000	65,000	65,000
TRANSFERS-AS DONATION	261,590	0	0	0	0	0
TRANSFERS-PACKWOOD AIRPORT	21,946	33,576	0	66,424	66,424	66,424
SHERIFF-TRAFFIC POLICING	73,319	0	0	0	0	0
JAIL-PRISONER CARE	36,660	0	0	0	0	0
TRANSFERS-LAW LIBRARY	7,000	7,000	0	7,000	7,000	7,000
TRANSFERS-DISPUTE RES	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,578,532</b>	<b>2,342,788</b>	<b>451,619</b>	<b>2,628,083</b>	<b>2,563,957</b>	<b>1,765,845</b>

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