

Budget Update

June 10, 2025

2:00 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Meja Handlen, John Abplanalp, Linda Mastin, Doug Carey, Sarah Hensley, Grace Jimenez

Guest(s):

Recorder: Tammy Martin

Public comment: None

Becky said Facilities reported over \$700,000 to be refunded to various departments. Becky highlighted that processing these refunds would require a budget amendment, though inclusion in the 2026 budget is another option. Becky said this creates a budget swing if it is included in the next year's budget. Commissioner Pollock and Commissioner Swope agreed that a budget amendment is the most practical solution.

Becky discussed the change order for 4-H. Commissioner Swope made a motion to authorize County Manager Ryan Barrett to sign for the 4-H change order on behalf of the BOCC. Commissioner Pollock seconded. **Motion passed 2-0.**

Becky said there are 14 collective bargaining groups representing some offices/départements within Lewis County that have bargaining agreements up for renewal that will impact the budget. Becky said revenue is expected to remain flat. The 1% increase in property tax or new construction will not be included in the 2026 budget unless directed otherwise. Sales and use tax are remaining flat. There was an increase in January, but the last month saw declining revenue.

Becky said that timber revenue is expected to remain flat based on contracts for a two-year period. Traffic policing could be offset by revenue reductions. Last year offices and departments had a 0% increase and absorbed any additional costs. Facilities will have a one-time adjustment for 2025. Becky said there will be an estimated savings in retirement to help offset step increases.

Becky said she would recommend the BOCC look at a potential increase of 3-5% in operations over the 2025 adopted budget and possibly allow increases of 5% on a case-by-case basis. Opioid fund usage is being looked at as they are one-time funds and must fall within the usage guidelines. Only 20% of the General Fund is operations. Becky said the COLAs and the increase in service fund rates has made it difficult to absorb future costs. Ryan Barrett said 3-5% increases would need written documentation to support any increase. The fund balance for 2024 saw an increase, but the funds will be moved to capital contingency in the Q2 amendment. Challenges to the budget include Indigent defense, BRB, BOE, interpreters, and jail costs. Indigent defense rates will be adjusted due to State and Federal court decisions that resulted in massive settlements. Increased rates from Risk Pool are also a challenge. Becky said there have been positive impacts to the budget to include the increase of traffic infraction

revenue, the retirement contribution decrease, full funding of the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and the implantation of the cost allocation plan.

Meja Handlen emphasized proactive budgeting within her department (PHSS) and noted that cost allocation plan rates have influenced department operations.

Jail medical expenses remain under review, with cost determinations pending.

Becky said there is a meeting with ToledoTel scheduled for tomorrow, with final inspections set for Friday. She also noted that contract 1 exceeded the budget by \$200,000, which ToledoTel absorbed and contract 2 is on track for completion in August, covering 1,082 customers.

Public defense saw changes to the caseload standards. New caseload standards require Lewis County to hire 15-20 additional legal counsel, with 50% of the associated costs funded by state grants. Becky said she and Natalie Mauermann are drafting a defense policy to address these changes, effective January 1, 2026.

Populous will present conceptual designs to the Board on July 1, with the workshop aimed at finalizing design directions.

Jonathan Meyer hired an intern to assist the PA's Office to help with briefs. This salary and the benefits are being paid out of the budget and reimbursed by the state. Commissioner Swope said the grant expires June 30, 2025. Ryan said he would have the PA's office here for a County Manager/Wrap-Up meeting to explain the process.

Meeting adjourned at 2:44 p.m.