

Budget Update

November 10, 2025

2:31 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Brummer, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Chris Baum, Don Blair, Natalie Mauermann, Angie Hodge, Undersheriff Kevin Engelbertson, Chief Chris Sweet, Chief Rick Van Wyck, John Abplanalp, Ross Nielson, Geoff Soderquist, Anders Pollman, Grace Jimenez

Guest(s): Jacob Moore

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Public comment: None.

Employee medical, dental, vision and life insurance rate sheets and administrative policies: Angie Hodge and Becky Butler provided an overview of questions for the commissioners regarding county insurance:

For extra help (casuals)

- Employees who are hired as casuals are not eligible for insurance benefits from the county. However, they will become eligible if they work for at least 6 months and one day for at least 80 hours per month, with no break in service.
- If they become eligible for insurance benefits, and sign up for coverage, 100% of the premiums will be paid by the employee via payroll deduction. This does not cost the county anything but allows these employees to self-pay for insurance.
- Returning seasonal employees would be considered to have a break in service after one month of no work, so they will not be offered insurance until they work for at least 6 months and one day at a minimum of 80 hours per month.

The commissioners said they are in support of the proposed rules regarding extra help (casual) employees as outlined.

Angie outlined proposed changes regarding employer contributions / rate sheets.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to rescind and replace board decisions made regarding employer contributions for rate sheets on Oct. 27 and Nov. 3, 2025. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to adopt the revised 2026 rate sheet as presented. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to allow “permanent part-time employees” (non-rep or AFSCME) to receive 100 percent of the dental and vision premium contributions from the county and

a pro-rated amount toward their medical insurance based on the number of hours they are hired to work compared to that of full-time employment. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Becky and Angie discussed the costs associated with having a third-party administrator for insurance.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to increase the HR budget by \$150 per month to cover costs associated with the third-party administrator. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Public Defense contracts

Chris Baum said he is proposing the commissioners increase Juvenile Court caseload pay from \$400 to \$800. Becky noted that Superior Court contracts have seen a much lower increase. Chris Baum also discussed concerns regarding indemnification language in the proposed contract. The commissioners said they will revisit the topic Nov. 17.

2026 Budget Preliminary Budget Review

Becky said it appears Opioid Settlement Funds will not cover all costs for 2026. She presented the commissioners the following options:

- Continue with preliminary as presented and make adjustments in Q1 2026 once settlement amounts are known.
- Use Mental Health funds to cover the shortage.
- Reduce programs for 2026.

The commissioners directed staff to use Mental Health funds as needed to proceed with preliminary approvals for jail medical, the two deputies and Youth Advocacy (YAC) and to revisit the topic in Q1 2026.

Assessor professional services budget request: Becky said the BOCC approved \$155,000 for SaaS for the new tax system and that the Assessor's Office has requested an additional \$104,000 to cover professional services. The commissioners said they will revisit the request on Nov. 17. The commissioners asked Assessor Ross Nielson to determine whether the proposed increases include tax. to begin providing quarterly updates regarding the new software.

2026 tax levies

The commissioners directed staff to move forward with the following:

- Collect all new construction.
- Collect refunds.
- Do not take the 1 percent increase for Roads or General Fund.

Utility rates and 2026 budget

The commissioners discussed the ongoing subsidies for the Vader and Middle Fork water systems, noting that rates have not been increased in years.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to approve a transfer of up to \$60,000 for actual costs associated with the Middle Fork Water System. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Commissioner Pollock made a motion to approve a General Fund transfer of up to \$1500,000 for actual costs associated with the Vader Water System for 2026. Commissioner Swope seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The commissioners said they will review potential rate changes for Middle Fork and Vader after January.

Risk Pool rates

Becky provided a recap of Risk Pool's huge rate increase. She said the commissioners had already increased rates by 70 percent but that the amount does not cover the actual increase. She said the commissioners could:

- Drop excess layer.
- Consider raising the deductible.
- Seek coverage elsewhere.

The commissioners directed Becky to:

- Maintain the excess layer.
- Maintain \$100,000 deductible.
- Increase general fund rates to reflect increased rates.

Budget presentation: Becky invited the public to the 5:30 p.m. Nov. 12 informational budget meeting.

Meeting ended at 3:47 p.m.