

**WALDO COUNTY 2015 BUDGET COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
OCTOBER 17, 2014**

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members, Peter Curley, Richard Desmarais, Bill Sneed, James Bennett, Harry Dean Potter and Fred Rollins. Also present were County Commissioners William D. Shorey, Amy R. Fowler and Betty I. Johnson and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

Call to order: Commissioner Shorey called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and dispensed with introductions since all present knew one another.

NOMINATIONS FOR 2015 BUDGET COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

****J. Bennett moved, R. Desmarais seconded to nominate as FY2015 Waldo County Budget Committee Chairman. Passed by all except Bill Sneed, who abstained. Passed by 5.**

B. Sneed asked for the following:

1. The 2014 budget
2. The Jail Budget

After brief discussion, it was decided that the next Budget Meeting will be Saturday, November 15, 2014 at 9:00 a.m.

2015 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Fowler explained that all the personnel lines for 2015 are higher than normal due to an additional two-week pay period in 2015.

Commissioner Shorey explained that the 2015 COLAs average 1.5% for 2015. The Sheriff's Officers are budgeted at 1% in accordance with their union contract and non-union employees are at 2%. Also, it was noted that different employees are reaching pay step increases at different times. Commissioner Shorey noted that there are three unions: The Communications Center Unit, The Deputy Sheriff's Unit, and the General Government Unit.

J. Bennett said he was confused – some pay increases were between 6 and 9% and one at 14%. W. Shorey noted that three employees were receiving pay increases beyond the COLA to bring their wages more in line with those positions throughout the state.

1010 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY:

It was noted that both employees in this department were hired the same year, so they are both reaching pay step increases.

There was brief discussion about one of the gas generators not quite meeting the need and being tested quite a bit.

1015 DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

There was some question regarding the percentage of increase in the P/T line. The Commissioners explained that a new P/T Victim/Witness Advocate has been hired and the original VWA was on a fixed income and retired this year. This increased the amount to be paid to that position.

The Budget Committee asked for updated and corrected sheets for the District Attorney's budget with the blue Commissioners column filled out, as the ones in their binders were incomplete. A. Fowler reviewed the totals, indicating that the Commissioners had not changed any of the numbers so the totals were the same as the department request.

1020 COMMISSIONERS:

B. Sneed said that he was curious about the \$208,875.00 departmental request for Technology that was not showing in the Commissioners column. He wondered if the Commissioners were funding it or not. W. Shorey explained that the Commissioners had decided to take the funds from the Technology reserves instead. B. Sneed said he could see the Technology Reserve was around \$217,000.00 and guessed that the Commissioners planned to drain that for 2015.

W. Shorey said that after the budget is enacted, the undesignated funds will be down to \$700,000.00. When the County gets close to \$1 million, the Commissioners like to drain that down and save the taxpayers money.

D. Potter asked if the reserves are part of undesignated funds. A. Fowler explained that last year the Commissioners had funded technology from the operating budget but this year they would take money from the reserve accounts. D. Potter asked if reserves were created with unspent money from the previous year's budget and A. Fowler explained that while the word "surplus" is not used anymore according to the auditors, unspent operating money becomes undesignated funds, and the commissioners can place undesignated funds into reserve accounts. B. Sneed explained that he thought the County's reserve accounts were similar to those of Stockton Springs.

W. Shorey noted that this budget was \$175,000.00 lower than the 2014 budget. P. Curley said this sounded reasonable to him.

1025 TREASURER:

It was noted that some lines in the Treasurer's were lower than 2014.

1030 FACILITIES:

W. Shorey explained that in Superior Court the boiler is being controlled manually to keep the costs down, and it seems to be working. He stated that the Facilities Manager is always working hard to keep costs down.

It was observed that the elevator in the Superior Courthouse must have needed some major repairs. B. Arseneau confirmed that a citizen had used it improperly and a lot of damage resulted.

There was a lively discussion about electricity and oil costs in general. It was observed that electricity is slower to respond to reductions than oil is.

There was brief discussion about considering a conversion to Propane, but after seeing what occurred recently in a local school, which resulted in increased costs instead of savings, W. Shorey was recommending not converting until the propane availability in the State of Maine changes.

The Budget Committee asked for the Facilities Manager to come speak with them on November 15th, as they had a few questions for him.

1065 REGISTRY OF DEEDS:

The Commissioners explained that they decided the pay for the incoming Register, who is running unopposed, should be less than the long-time Register who had been there over 30 years. They had adjusted the salary accordingly in the budget.

1070 REGISTRY OF PROBATE:

W. Shorey noted that the Register of Probate is receiving an increase of \$3,000.00 in the salary because this had been overlooked for years and this will help put that salary more in line with those statewide. He stated that it should have been done years ago and was long overdue to an individual who works very hard and is an excellent employee.

1075 SHERIFF:

W. Shorey explained that vehicles are being funded from the Reserve Accounts instead of the operating budget. The current Sheriff has had a vehicle lease arrangement with the County, which has not been met with enthusiasm by the Risk Pool, so the incoming Sheriff will have a County-owned vehicle.

There was brief discussion about gasoline and oil constantly fluctuating and that four to six weeks from now, the picture may be clearer.

The Budget Committee said they would like to speak with the incoming Sheriff, as it would be nice to get to know him a little.

1076 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER:

The Commissioners explained that they spoke with the Director and decided to reduce some of the requests. A new tower is going up in Stockton Springs that should greatly enhance the communications.

A. Fowler added that the Commissioners are very conscious of the firefighters' needs but did not approve the request to purchase "Rip and Run" equipment as they did not believe they could justify it this year.

It was noted that the large increase in the Recorder Maintenance/Materials line was funding that was accidentally put in the wrong line. However, it is needed to balance the total budget and the line that it was supposed to be put in. W. Shorey explained that O. Smith could explain it better.

B. Sneed commented that it still looked as though there was difficulty with the over-time line. W. Shorey noted that it was still in the black last year and he believed it would be this year, as well.

The Budget Committee agreed that they would like to meet with Director Owen Smith to go over some of their questions.

1080 ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:

B. Sneed said he noticed that Eastern Maine Development Corporation stated in their material that they reviewed the shore land zoning ordinance but he and the other selectmen had gone through every piece of paper they could find in the office but they could not see that EMDC ever contacted them. He could not understand what they were claiming there. Other Budget Committee members commented that they had not heard from them, either.

1090 AUDIT:

A. Fowler said, "It is what it is." There was no further discussion.

2000 TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE INTEREST:

W. Shorey said he believed the increase in the request reflects the belief that the interest rate will likely go up this year. The Treasurer may also be concerned that some towns may not be able to pay property tax assessments to the County in a timely fashion and the County needed to be prepared for this.

2005 WALDO COUNTY EXTENSION:

B. Sneed said that with recent university budget cuts, the Extension office is absorbing about 10% of those cuts. He said he could certainly understand any increase in the request.

2025 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

A. Fowler explained that the County's decision to self-fund health insurance for its employees had really paid off in savings. It has been highly successful and the request had been reduced from the previous year.

B. Sneed asked if MEPERS was a bill that just couldn't be predicted. B. Arseneau explained that MEPERS has been increasing the employer portion each year and now they are increasing the employee portion. Factoring that with extra pay period, it all adds up.

2035 WALDO COUNTY SOIL & WATER DISTRICT:

There was no discussion needed on this budget request.

2045 RESERVES:

W. Shorey explained why there was no request for funding for the Reserve Accounts in the operating budget at this time. The Commissioners are looking to sell the 100-acre property that

they currently own. He said that the Commissioners shouldn't need to ask for funding from operating budget for a few years particularly if this land sells.

W. Shorey commented about the recent meeting held for the Waldo County Selectmen regarding Economic Development and the possible need for the County to request funding for economic development in the near future.

J. Bennett mentioned that KVCOG will be going from town to town for funds. He said he has called to find out which towns belong to KVCOG but has not received an answer yet. It was thought that many of the Waldo County Towns belong to them.

B. Johnson commented that Waldo is a very divided County because some of the towns are part of Eastern Maine Development Corporation, some are with MCEDD and others are part of Kennebec County. It makes it very difficult having the County so divided.

B. Sneed asked if there were any more questions.

D. Desmarais asked what is going on with the jail. A. Fowler said a lot will depend on who is elected, particularly as Governor. The jails were capped at \$62 million. It is costing \$82 million to run the consolidated system now. Waldo was capped at \$2.8 million, which was higher than normal. Waldo cannot ever convert back to a full jail. It could convert back to a 72-hour-hold. It would cost as much to run a book-and-bail as it would a 72-hour hold. Also, the whole purpose of corrections is to reduce recidivism. Programs do cost money. Waldo's reentry has been very successful. Initially the County housed more state inmates than county inmates, at a much lower cost for years. Now there are more county inmates than state inmates in the reentry.

W. Shorey explained that Waldo's MCRRC has the best situation in the entire state. The only problem is that other counties have argued that it would be good to close the reentry and let the \$1.2 million go to the system to fund others in the consolidated system. It costs about \$667,000.00 to run the reentry and about the same to run the 72-hour hold. The remainder has to go to the Board of Corrections, and that money is supposed to go toward housing Waldo's inmates in other jails.

P. Curley wondered if the jails were returned to the Counties, how that would affect Waldo. B. Sneed said that it has cost Waldo County less even though the consolidated system isn't perfect. The largest increase in the budget was related to transportation costs for sending inmates to other jails. So, it could be expected that the costs would come back to the County.

W. Shorey said these conversations have been happening all over. He believed that the County of Waldo could negotiate something with the other jails, because the BOC is not giving them the money they need to run their facilities.

In summary, the Budget Committee stated that they would like to meet with the following on November 15, 2014:

1. The incoming Sheriff

2. The Facilities Manager
3. The Communications Director
4. The District Attorney on Saturday, November 15, 2014.

The Committee agreed that if anyone else felt that they should meet with the Budget Committee, they could be scheduled on the agenda so that they would not feel that they had been overlooked.

****B. Sneed moved, J. Bennett seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by *Barbara L. Arseneau*
Waldo County Clerk