

WALDO COUNTY 2016 BUDGET COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 14, 2015
Maine District Courthouse – 103 Church Street, Belfast

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members, Bill Sneed (Prospect), Peter Curley (Stockton), Richard Desmarais (Searsport), Gabriel Pendleton (Islesboro), Penny Sampson (Unity), Dean Potter (Palermo), and Arthur Durity. Also present were County Commissioners William D. Shorey, Amy R. Fowler and Betty I. Johnson, County Treasurer David Parkman, Deputy Treasurer Karen Trussell, County Clerk Barbara Arseneau and Deputy County Clerk Marilyn Saucier to take minutes.

Call to order: Chairman Bill Sneed called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and all present made introductions.

2016 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT - 1030

Facilities Manager K. Nealley introduced himself and explained that he oversees heat, electricity, etc. for county buildings, and listed those buildings. The facilities budget also includes a few tower buildings. His budget is down about \$7,000.00, in part due to favorable oil prices. He explained the process for requesting bid proposals and Commissioner Shorey is very involved and knowledgeable regarding oil prices and trends. It is difficult to determine what the future brings in the Middle East.

Last year was an extremely cold year. The former Sheriff's Office has no insulation in the walls, and there were two freeze-ups there. The boiler was shut down and the water was drained, since it is not inhabited, and this resulted in savings. He explained that the County was awarded a Brownfields EPA Cleanup grant and will be applying that toward abatement of that property as well as the Old Jail and Barn. Once those are abated, they will look for how to reuse them.

He listed several projects that had been done to update the tower buildings.

There was a remodel/renovation in the Registry of Deeds to deal with security concerns, including a swinging door to separate the public from the staff, new desks, etc.

The roof is a really steep pitch inside the stairwell area at the back of the Superior Courthouse and the existing chairlift has been out of service since the summer. There was one juror who had to be excused from serving because they could not get to the second floor where the courtroom is.

B. Sneed asked what was on the second floor and was told the courtroom, law library, etc.

In the Reentry Center, automatic doors needed to be installed. One goes to the Recreation Yard and the other allows access from the cafeteria. If there is a fire, these doors automatically open. This was done to meet Fire Marshall standards.

K. Nealley has been exploring lighting. LED lighting tubes can be purchased for about \$15.00 and this would be four times the longevity, plus they burn a lot cooler and the light is not as harsh as it used to be. He is hoping to replace a lot of the lighting in the District Courthouse and elsewhere.

He has also replaced lighting in the Communications Center, where they are open 24/7.

He used a substantial amount of his fuel budget for 2015 during February and March and hopes to “limp” by on his budget this year. It was a rough start last year, after the first of January but as of this fall, it is going well so far.

B. Sneed showed the committee the Appropriations Budget, explaining the “YTD” column as being year to date expended. He illustrated with D. Rowley’s EMA budget.

K. Nealley asked if there were any questions. R. Desmarais asked if the County was considering heat pumps for any of the buildings. K. Nealley said he had looked at it for the old Superior Court building but in older buildings it is really difficult to retrofit. He wasn’t sure it was justifiable with the price of fuel currently. He has explored it – he just hasn’t identified a place that he could use those. There are places that have central air including the courtroom, clerk’s office and judge’s chambers. The public area does not have this feature and is heated by the central heat plan. The problem is that when they are occupied, it is 100% in all areas of the building, five days a week. He has programmed all the thermostats to reduce heat during times the buildings are not occupied.

B. Sneed thanked K. Nealley for coming. K. Nealley excused himself, as he had training in Rockland to attend.

SHERIFF’S BUDGET – 1075

Present were Sheriff Jeffrey Trafton and Chief Deputy Jason Trundy. Sheriff Trafton noted that he was a little distracted with the conditions that are currently going on in Paris. While it likely wouldn’t impact Waldo County, it is still a concern.

Sheriff Trafton introduced himself. He explained that he knew that the law enforcement budget is expensive but understands as he was serving as a state trooper in 1984 and the Sheriff’s Office was the dominant force, and he was working extremely hard as a state trooper, which the State Police no longer does. A recent article showed that Sheriff’s Deputies are very tired from working so many shifts. The Sheriff’s Offices are being asked to step up more again as the State detectives will no longer be handling any other calls than their cases. As of yesterday, there has been 7000 calls for service for the Sheriff’s Office. This is being done with 10 patrol officers and two detectives. He has not asked for more staff in 2016, but will be in the future. He commented that the situation with the State Police staffing is in worse shape now than when he left 10 years ago. He explained that while the Sheriff’s budget is costly, the County is getting their money’s worth.

B. Sneed noted that the salary of many of the staff was lower than 2015 and asked if this was related to the union. He was reminded that there were 27 pay periods in 2015 and usually there are only 26.

W. Shorey explained that vehicles for this department were purchased from the reserve account so technically the budget, with its request for two new trucks, which means the budget is really only about \$10,000.00 higher. There were questions regarding the purchasing of the vehicles and what is needed.

B. Sneed asked if the outfits inside these vehicles can be reused in the new vehicles. Some can be – when they went to trucks, the equipment in the Crown Victoria's could not be used. Some of the trucks can be outfitted with pre-used equipment.

J. Trafton explained that the blue LED lights are very costly and wear out.

D. Parkman explained that typically every year there were three (3) vehicles budgeted. Last year this was funded from the reserve accounts but are being returned to the Sheriff's budget this year. It was noted that only two are requested, not three.

A. Durity asked about staffing.

R. Desmarais asked about a figure and asked if there was a typographical error. J. Trafton explained.

J. Trafton explained about the video cameras, including body, glasses and hat cameras.

R. Desmarais inquired about grants. J. Trafton explained that there are some that can be applied for, within reason.

There was brief discussion about gasoline for the vehicles.

A. Durity asked how overtime was incurred. He asked if this was because someone calls out and someone has to fill in, or extra workload.

J. Trafton explained that 12 of the personnel slots, patrol, has to be filled. If someone is sick, on vacation, or at training, this incurs over-time. If a bad accident occurs, an officer can easily be there additional hours dealing with this. Coming to court is usually over-time. They end up testifying at DOT hearings on their day off and must be paid over-time.

R. Desmarais explained that he has seen many patrol vehicles in front of the courtrooms and asked if there was a way to reduce this. J. Trafton said the D.A.'s Office and courts have gotten better about communicating and working with them and that has reduced the need to be there. They have to be careful, if the officer doesn't show up, the case can be thrown out.

A. Durity asked if there were an extra deputy, would the over-time reduced by \$50,000.00. J. Trafton explained how the deputies are assigned to patrol areas. If people are training or on

vacation, they may run shorthanded to keep overtime down. If there was another deputy, it might reduce some overtime but not by much. The more deputies, the more cases that are generated.

B. Sneed looked back at previous budgets and staffing. He said it was almost like buying fuel, if they don't arrest people, there is likely less overtime. J. Trafton said they don't always know how many part-time deputies they have. The requirements for part-time are the same as full-time and it takes a while to get them. They have two reserve deputies – one is a game warden, and the other just finished training in Unity and he is being used a lot as his rate is less than longer-term deputies. J. Trafton is looking to bring on more reserve deputies. Unity College is the best source of reserve deputies. It is always short-term though because when they graduate, they move on.

P. Sampson said that she could see a “kinder, gentler” presence with the deputies and their presence in the community has increased and is appreciated.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY – 1010:

Present was EMA Director Dale Rowley, who said EMA was quite busy with training, etc. There were two Emergency operations last year. EMA responded to a forest fire this year, have gone out to structure fires, etc. There are currently over 100 volunteers with EMA.

Every town now has a facility with a backup generator. D. Rowley said he is looking at a Homeland Security project. Many towns don't spend down their grants and the money is returned. He keeps a wish list and applies for those things with money other people didn't spend.

D. Rowley explained radios and the review process, which can take hours. They are working on transfer switches.

B. Sneed asked why EMA has tower operations. D. Rowley responded that EMA has more repeaters than the Communications Center and when they send invoices to the State, 50% is reimbursed by the State.

D. Rowley explained that his budget includes increasing the Deputy Emergency Management Agency Director's hours from 37.5 to 40 per week. EMA has had a two-person office for many years. They are doing more grants, the workload has increased, etc. His budget does not include full-time or part-time.

D. Rowley mentioned that he reprograms radios for towns, which saves them money as he does it free of charge. He assists with the Town's radio licensing. EMA has educated themselves and do this for the towns, at no charge. This is a way to use grant money to get people on board to do work for towns.

Mapping was explained including what is generated and what are distributed. A part-time grant person does mapping for hazard mitigation, emergency plans, etc.

EMA brings in \$120,000.00 in grant money each year. D. Rowley explained that they cannot obtain as many grants as previously because they just aren't available.

Vehicle maintenance is up a little, but there have been other cost savings applied as they can find them in the budget.

The entire EMA budget is reimbursed by the Federal Government at 50%. He also recently learned that EMA can convert soft match (volunteer time) money and this puts the funds back into those volunteer programs.

The radio guys have a truck that they can respond with now that is "mega-equipped." EMA has a command truck.

R. Desmarais commented that Bud Rivers in Searsport is getting his own office and is a very knowledgeable and active person.

P. Sampson commented that Unity finally got an EMA Director and asked how new town directors are brought up to speed.

D. Rowley detailed monthly meetings, in which supper is served, and other courses that are offered. Through a grant, he got each local EMA Director an iPad and has trained them on those. Now they can send pictures from the field; can pull up weather info, etc. This adds a lot of capability in the field.

R. Desmarais asked D. Rowley if he had a list of local businesses with hazardous waste. D. Rowley explained that he did, and mentioned a few local businesses he is working with, including a local business with Belfast. There was more discussion on charting, etc.

P. Sampson asked about what services were provided by Waldo County to Unity Plantation. Unity Plantation is not in Waldo County but is in Kennebec County. D. Rowley explained that Fire and EMS covers Unity Plantation and Kennebec County pays money to Unity to help cover them and EMA gets some of their reports and information. Waldo has a really good working relationship with Kennebec.

COMMUNICATIONS CENTER BUDGET - 1076

Before Communications Director Owen Smith reviewed his budget, Sheriff Jeffrey Trafton asked if he could speak briefly. J. Trafton said he's worked with many dispatch centers and the WCRCC is the lifeline to the deputies on the road and they do the best job of any communications center he's ever worked with. They are always very responsive.

B. Sneed asked J. Trafton if the Waldo County Sheriff's Office does if they do any work for Unity Plantation. He responded no, that is handled by Kennebec County.

O. Smith said they are a 24/7 operation. There are 16 full-time dispatchers. Now there two floater positions that have reduce the over-time expenses. When a position became vacant this year, a floater took on that vacancy until another person could be trained so that was a savings.

O. Smith explained that WCRCC is a 9-1-1 PSAP. He explained how dispatching is done for law enforcement, EMS, EMA, Fire. During snow storms, it can get very busy at the Center.

Dispatchers are required to train in EMD, etc. They are certified by the National Academy and licensed by State EMS. The dispatchers are certified 9-1-1 operators and within a year must be teletype trained for NCRC, etc. He explained what new dispatchers can do and cannot do.

There is a rigorous training for new dispatchers, 12-14 weeks and sometimes a bit longer. The can determine in that time period whether the individual will be able to perform the job or not. Dispatchers must be able to multi-task, take information off the phone and translate into useful information. They are facilitators, take information, and process it out to other agencies.

B. Sneed said the biggest change in the Communications Center Budget has been the effort to reduce the over-time line and that O. Smith and Commissioners have worked hard to bring this down.

O. Smith explained how the floater process was presented to the union. Part-timers have still be negotiated in the union contract but it is difficult to get them because the training is the same for part-time as full-time and it is difficult to keep them. He mentioned that they “did battle” with the union to keep this option.

A. Durity asked about the dramatic increase in towers. O. Smith explained what was included in that budget and it was for wear down of equipment. This year there was something funky happening in Liberty and it can be difficult to chase this and takes several trips before the problem can be determined.

R. Desmarais said that there are problems in Frankfort and he knew meetings were going on, which included Commissioners and wondered when they can expect this to be fixed. O. Smith responded that they are looking at several sites and options. It is not a constant thing – some days there is an issue, somedays there isn’t. He said they haven’t yet got the resolution in West Frankfort that they would like but noted improvement in Searsport, Stockton, etc. If they end up building a tower site from scratch, it could take a bit.

R. Desmarais said there are limited volunteers, especially in West Frankfort. If they don’t get the tone, they don’t get the message and it is a problem. O. Smith said he has tested many times successfully and didn’t want to get into this too much but he is working on it.

B. Sneed asked about it being on-and-off. O. Smith said he tested one day and in the morning was O.K. and in the afternoon it was not working.

B. Sneed and R. Desmarais both commented that occasionally they can get stations from far away very clearly. B. Sneed noted that these are radios, they are not a landline and this needs to be understood.

O. Smith said they are working vigorously to fix the problems and have funding to do so.

TREASURER'S BUDGET – 1025

Present was Treasurer David Parkman to report the financial condition of the County and review the budget request for 2016. The reserve accounts are starting to build back up after the construction of the new Public Safety Building. It is up around \$800,000.00 now. Budgets have leveled off. The County is in really good financial situation and the audits have been very good, as well.

D. Parkman noted that the only change in Treasurer's budget is bank fees and checking charge at \$550.00.

RESERVE BUDGET – 2045

B. Sneed explained the Reserve accounts and noted that no funds were requested from the operating budget for 2016.

JAIL BUDGET - 1050

The Jail budget was briefly discussed. D. Parkman commented that he was happy to see it in the budget binder because it wasn't looked at by the budget committee very closely since the State took over jails in 2008. The Jail is still in the last six months of the budget. It will move to a calendar year like every other department. He said the Sheriff at the time did an excellent job separating out all expenditures related to the Jail, including health insurance, and other areas and made sure they were the Jail's share of the budget. There is about \$200,000.00 on the Jail account and that leaves a cap of \$2.8 million.

B. Sneed asked if anyone wished to discuss the Jail. He mentioned that Jail only uses so much funding and wondered what happens to the balance.

A. Fowler said that much of this is still up in the air with the legislature. She explained that Waldo County was capped at \$2.8 million. The Jail is now a 72-hour hold/Reentry Center. It roughly costs \$600,000.00 for the County's personnel to run the 72 hour hold. There is an additional \$600,000.00 to run the Reentry – inmates who have become residents at the facility from other county jails. This does not add up to the \$2.8 million. All Waldo County inmates have to be housed elsewhere. The county had to pay board to other counties to board the inmates. This was done by Waldo County submitting funding to the BOC and BOC would disperse the funds. Thankfully, while they watched the system crumble, Waldo County is in a very good place. Instead of waiting, the County negotiated with Two Bridges Jail in Wiscasset where currently the County is contracted at \$1.2 million for Two Bridges to take Waldo County's inmates. Right now many jails refuse to take inmates because they don't get reimbursed for it according to the way the legislation is written. So, that is where the rest of the expenses go. There is current legislation being worked on to lift the cap. The state returned the jails to the counties, but legislature kept a cap on the budgets. Currently, the cap for Waldo County is \$2.8 million and has to be according to the law. The legislation being worked on now is to try to remove the cap. Waldo County does not anticipate an increase in the Jail budget in the near future. Most counties are not in the great condition that Waldo County is.

D. Parkman said that Waldo used to pay \$90.00 per inmate a day but the BOC dispersed the funds at \$23.00 per inmate per day. This contributed to many counties running out of money.

The law was passed in June of 2008 and Waldo's budget at \$2.8 million. It started in July, not January so Waldo County ran the Jail from June 30 to Dec 31 on no money. The six months is nearly completed and starting this coming January, the audit should show it about even and the difference should be made up. It is \$1.2 to run 72 hour hold, \$600,000.00 to run the Reentry, and \$900,000.00 to pay for boarding inmates.

B. Sneed explained that prior to this the Jail budget used to go up went up \$500,000.00 to \$700,000.00 every year and was the single highest department that increased every year. A. Fowler clarified that this increase was boarding costs.

A. Fowler reminded the Budget Committee that one year Waldo didn't have the money to pay board until the following year.

D. Parkman said the Jail budget \$2.1 million when it was taken over. It really was \$2.8 million to run it.

W. Shorey said when they went to Two-Bridges to negotiate, Two Bridges agreed to take Waldo's inmates. The average population was 45.7 a year at Two Bridges. During that time, there was a tiff in the state about how to count prisoner days. When Waldo County signed that contract, those prisoners were counted as Waldo's prisoners. Then the state also included the clients in the Reentry Center as prisoners, as well. This was a good thing for Waldo County.

Regarding interest, D. Parkman said that the Jail was separated out, so he tried to borrow from the Jail side first as the money was already raised. When you see the Interest line, \$15,000.00 on the General fund side and there is an additional \$20,000.00 on the other side.

INTEREST BUDGET – 2000

D. Parkman said that the Budget Committee could reduce that to \$12,000.00, as he believed there would be more on the Jail side.

****G. Pendleton moved, A. Durity seconded to reduce the Interest Budget - 2000 to \$12,000.00. Unanimous.**

AUDIT BUDGET – 1090

D. Parkman stated that he is very happy with current auditor with Brantner, Thibodeau and Associates. They are very thorough and get it done in a professional manner, and completed in a timely manner.

D. Parkman pointed out that there is no money allocated in the Federal Audit line because the grant funds have not been as high as previous years.

The Budget Committee recessed for a bread at 10:28 a.m.

The Budget Committee reconvened at 10:42 a.m.

REGISTRY DEEDS – 1065

Register of Deeds Stacy Grant was introduced by B. Sneed, who stated that she has worked in the registry for 19 years and started as Register in 2015 when Mrs. Page retired.

S. Grant reported that the registry is a little ahead of recordings, up in revenue and things are going well. She spoke about receiving a grant that was applied to the renovation project in the registry and that it was nearly complete and working well.

R. Desmarais asked about the additional \$1000.00 in the Personnel line. W. Shorey explained that there had been a wage adjustment when the new Register came on board, as it was lower than the previous Register's wage. The Commissioners had seen the excellent job being done and raised the Registers salary by \$1,000.00 for 2016 and will continue to raise it in future.

A. Fowler directed everyone's attention to the revenue control sheet and the revenue generated by the Registry of Deeds.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S BUDGET – 1015

District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau was present to speak regarding the budget request. He explained that he is also the District Attorney for Lincoln, Knox and Sagadahoc counties, as well.

G. Rushlau commended the excellent staff at the Waldo County District Attorney's Office.

G. Rushlau discussed briefly explained the unified criminal docket and his hope that this will reduce officers having to come to court, as much will be resolved before reaching this point.

G. Rushlau explained the initial difference in job functions with the two legal secretaries – one did work related to Superior Court and the other did work related to District Court. Now both courts have been split between both secretaries. One of those secretarial positions had to be reclassified so both are on same wage line. He had anticipated a reduction in personnel costs with one less pay period, but change in process did not reduce pay the way he anticipated.

He spoke briefly about a one-time cost to bring their office into the 21st century. They are required to provide "Discovery" documents that up to this point have been papers that are mailed that has to be produced for criminal investigations. This would allow this data to be transmitted electronically instead of as paper. The software company is Justware and has a program called Justice Web that would allow this electronic submission. It also creates a record that those documents were provided. These costs are shown in the Capital Outlay budget request for \$7,000.00. He noted that he should have separated out the maintenance cost, but didn't know when this was budgeted that there would be an annual fee for this. The bulk of the cost is for the one-time installation.

B. Sneed inquire about the new line item, 4085 – Investigations. It was shown as \$100.00 on budget but listed at \$200.00 on explanations. G. Rushlau explained it was a typographical error on the budget and should be \$200.00.

****B. Sneed moved, R. Desmarais seconded to increase line 4085 from \$100.00 to \$200.00. Unanimous.**

G. Rushlau notified the Committee that part of the funding for the part-time victim advocate is paid by a grant. This year, for whatever reason, the grant has been decreased and Waldo County will see a decrease in the grant.

REGISTRY OF PROBATE BUDGET - 1070

B. Sneed said that S. Peavey had requested to be absent and sent paperwork to Commissioner Shorey to speak to the few increased budget lines.

W. Shorey explained those few budget increases to the Budget Committee.

B. Sneed noted that the Judge had started several years ago restitution fees and that generated revenue. Also the registry now does passports, which generates revenue.

K. Trussell directed attention to revenue the revenue control sheet and noted that the Registry of Probate is doing well bringing in revenue in court ordered fees.

B. Sneed explained the various things that have to be paid for by the County including things for some parts of Probate, for the Jail, and noted there are some things that just must be paid for by counties by statute, whether they were budgeted for or not.

W. Shorey added that this reminded him that the boarding rates for Waldo's inmates at Two Bridges includes all the inmates' medical expenses.

B. Johnson said she had heard that passports were generating a fair amount of revenue for Probate.

COMMISSIONERS BUDGET – 1020

B. Sneed noted that technology is under the Commissioners budget. W. Shorey explained that the technology expenditures for 2016 will be funded from the Technology Reserve this year, which is why the Commissioners' budget had increased very little this year.

B. Sneed noted that the technology consultant reminds the Commissioners every year to fund about \$70,000.00 to \$90,000.00 in the Technology Reserve under "Budgeting Reminders", and there is no funds requested to add to reserves.

W. Shorey said that likely next year, there will be a request in the 2017 budget to plan for future technology upgrades in 2020-21. Also, there will be a need to replace some equipment in the Communications Center in the future which will be about \$750,000.00 in the next five or six years, so the Commissioners will be moving funds to those accounts.

B. Sneed said he went through the Commissioners budget and said he couldn't find any time to complain about.

A. Durity said he would like to ask about the company that the County had requested to give funding incentives, which was moving to Belfast called On-Process Technology.

W. Shorey said he just heard that On-Process has hired 101 employees. Two clients from Reentry now work there. This means that there is an extra \$3 million dollars circulating in Waldo County. The Commissioners had offered to help at \$350.00 per employee for the first 100 employees hired there. The Economic Director recently asked City Manager Joe when those funds would be forthcoming. J. Slocum had responded that there would need to be a ribbon-cutting ceremony in which Commissioners are publicly thanked before any funds would be transferred. It appears this business is going to grow.

A. Durity asked what the nature of the company's business is. W. Shorey explained that they are a phone service company that takes care of warranty claims, lost parts that have been shipped somewhere and perform a service for major corporations because it is cheaper than the company doing it themselves.

B. Sneed used large companies such as Hewlett Packard and Dell as illustrations.

A. Durity stated that he was one of the committee members who had argued against expenditure and wondered if, with the additional wages in the area, whether there was any tax revenue for towns, county or state.

W. Shorey said he was not sure but believed that these 100 people live somewhere, many own homes, pay real estate taxes, sales tax, etc. He offered to inquire of J. Slocum and will try to get an answer before the next meeting.

B. Sneed said that this company is occupying the former MBNA buildings and likely there was tax being paid there.

P. Curley thought perhaps there might be taxes on some of the equipment.

A. Fowler said the Commissioners had a lot of discussion and wondered whether to go out on this limb but listened to Town Selectmen and are grateful that if this generates jobs anywhere in Waldo County, this would be good. Comparing what was offered as an incentive with what can be gained by hiring a part-time economic development director, it seemed to be a good decision.

R. Desmarais asked if \$35,000 had been spent yet. W. Shorey said no, not until after the public ribbon cutting ceremony. A. Fowler reiterated that it was a \$350.00 per employee, who had been hired for a year and that money will not be paid until that proof is provided

R. Desmarais said he was against this and felt that the taxpayers don't know where the tax payers' money is going in this case and should not take taxpayers money and use it when they haven't consulted with the tax payers and was afraid it might be misinterpreted that way.

W. Shorey added a positive thing. 3 fire-proof file cabinets were donated from Bank of America and the County accepted them. There was going to be two people and a fork lift there to move them as they were extremely heavy, but those people weren't available so with the ingenuity of the Facilities Manager and Captain Walker, those were delivered.

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION BUDGET – 1080

B. Sneed said he was not in favor of funding Eastern Maine Development Corporation and R. Desmarais agreed.

B. Sneed asked how W. Shorey felt. W. Shorey said he is an incorporator with Eastern Maine Development and when the Bucksport Mill closed, EMDC helped many displaced workers get other jobs. He felt that they were doing a better job now.

R. Desmarais felt that \$3,000.00 was enough for EMDC.

Regarding Time & Tide's request, W. Shorey explained that with the County's involvement with the County Garden, this has far surpassed what Time & Tide could have done, so they have not given Time & Tide much consideration. They have agreed to support the Fireman's Association, and also thought it was fair to give \$3,000.00 to Midcoast (MCEED). The Commissioners had reviewed the money and submitted their recommendation to the Budget Committee.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS - 2025

W. Shorey explained the background on County's self-funded health insurance plan. Several years ago, the budget committee told Commissioners to get costs down and do something different. It has been highly successful. They have wellness meetings, etc. He explained that the Commissioners just met with health insurance administrator and while it went down to \$580,800.00 this year, next year it will likely go to \$620,000.00 or so. Some years the claims have been higher than others. This plan has been very successful in keeping the health insurance costs down for all the years the County has been on this plan. It was noted that all the other counties have increases in their costs each year – some have reported increases of 10 to 20% yearly.

WALDO COUNTY SOIL WATER DISTRICT BUDGET – 2035

B. Sneed says that this budget has hardly changed in all the years he has served on the committee.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION – 2005

The Budget Committee noted that this budget hasn't changed much, either. The Commissioners spoke in favor of this group as they have been very helpful to the County and to local farmers.

PROBATE JUDGE

Judge Longley came in and was asked if she would like to speak. She thanked the Budget Committee for all the hard work that they do.

A. Fowler asked the Judge to speak regarding fees revenue collected in her office. Judge Longley said that when she first came into office, the appointments budget for lawyers had skyrocketed – it was \$8,000.00 and had gone up to \$20,000.00. She had dared the Budget Committee to have her reduce this cost. The Treasurer had said that \$8,000.00 was too low so they settled at \$12,000.00 in 2004. She kept it down, but the real big benefit was when she established the mediation service so that before they go to litigation, she offers them the ability to have a mediator. 9 out of 10 want to try mediation. This is much cheaper, financially, emotionally, etc. Of the 9, eight have agreements that last and are never seen again. Only one of the nine comes back with an agreement that doesn't hold. This is where appointment of counsel comes into play. In the past, some Probate Courts haven't appointed lawyers as much as District Courts because there, it is standard procedure and they're offered the lawyer right up front. She explained that in the future, yes appointments have been brought down and try to keep it down, but in the future the law court is looking at Probate and saying they are working to impose District Court standards on Probate Courts. So even though this cost has been brought down, she can foresee in the future, she will have to volunteer a lawyer for them for the cases that can't be settled. She expected to have to do a lot more lawyer appointments in the future. At this point, she can wait for people to ask for an attorney. She believed this change will take place in the future to honor the constitutional rights in the future. She hoped that the Probate Court will be able to keep the mediation program working. If she was in a tough family situation in which one spouse could afford a lawyer and the other spouse couldn't and they were in mediation, then she would have an ethical obligation not to send the non-covered person into mediation without representation.

A. Durity asked about provider services and where they fall. He thought last year there was discussion of allocating money to various provider agencies. He was told this is addressed in the 1080 budget. It was thought that likely the only provider would be Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP). Various selectmen spoke to how much they allocate to WCAP. Some expressed that their only issue with WCAP is that they "double-dip". B. Sneed said he believed that WCAP used to have an office in the County building and had to be moved due to lack of space for the County. B. Arseneau confirmed this, and added that the County now funds a subsidy for their rental space.

A. Fowler also spoke to why the Commissioners funded the Waldo County Firefighters Association because they put volunteer firefighters through training, etc. R. Desmarais said he is glad they can be certified here in Waldo County.

W. Shorey went back to the health insurance budget. He said he would bet if they were looking for health insurance from an outside company this year, it would easily be \$1.2 million.

A. Durity asked if the County ever polls the towns to see what services they are giving up and ask where gaps are. A. Fowler said that this happened with Lincolnville reducing its law enforcement. B. Johnson noted that the County had tried that with animal control but it was not wanted by the towns.

B. Johnson said it hadn't come to this point as yet she didn't think it had come point. She thought it was possible that it could happen and there will be a wakeup call somewhere.

B. Sneed commented on the statutes that are supplied in the County budget. He recommended that they look at the whole chapter, which allows the counties to take on and perform many county services. He recommended the committee go on the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated online and read it.

W. Shorey said that the County partnered with the YMCA to distribute over 12,000 lbs. of fresh produce from the Waldo County Garden to local citizens.

B. Sneed said that a former Town Clerk said the best deal in the town's budget is the money sent to the county. Nobody argues that it is the best bang for the buck.

D. Parkman said he is on his fourth term as Treasurer and he won't be running again in 2018. If anyone knew of anybody that would be interested in that position, it is a good position. He would love to meet with them and tell them what the job entails, etc.

The next meeting will be **the Public Hearing/Final Budget Committee meeting on Friday, November 20, 2015 starting at 6:00 p.m.**

B. Sneed briefly explained the Public Hearing and Final Budget Committee Process.

****B. Sneed moved, A. Durity seconded to adjourn the meeting at 11:46 a.m. Unanimous.**

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