

WALDO COUNTY 2020 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 15, 2019
Commissioners Courtroom
39B Spring Street, Belfast, Maine
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Richard Desmarais, Herbert Harnden, Penny Sampson, Gabriel Pendleton, Peter Curley, Joshua Gerritsen, Brian Jones, Peter Rioux, Bob Kurek. Also present were County Commissioners William D. Shorey, Amy R. Fowler and Betty I. Johnson, and both County Clerk Barbara Arseneau and Assistant Clerk Nicole Hubbard to take minutes.

Call to order: R. Desmarais called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and led the flag salute.

1080-4715 Waldo Community Action Partners Budget:

Present were Michael Haellundbaek and Donna Kelley.

M. Haellundbaek thanked the Budget Committee for their support over the years. Heave a brief description of the services that the organization has to offer and also presented a print out of the services to each committee member. They are seeing a persistent increase of need in the County, so due to this, they are currently asking for \$5,000.00 in funds from the County.

1080-4719 Waldo County Firefighters Association Budget:

Present was Bill Gillespie, Liberty Fire Chief. He discussed training offered, etc. They are currently asking for \$5,000.00 from the County as this would help with training new individuals and these expenses are costly.

R. Desmarais asked where training used to be held. B. Gillespie replied that he had certificates from all over the State. It used to be that some were in the eastern part of the state, some in the western part, etc. Now all the live training is done at the "Burn Building" locally. There are Length of Service Awards for a firefighter to earn points to get contributions for a retirement program. This is to help with retention, keep people involved, and is designed to assist them in getting some sort of retirement. The funding sources are state, county or municipal. They went to the State with a \$2.5 million budget. The State wants the County to fund this. He said that firefighters have a "Boot Drive", dinners and other fund raisers. Law enforcement doesn't have to fund raisers for bulletproof vests, because these are funded for them. Firefighters don't currently have that option. If they can't keep firefighters, this will be a real issue for the small towns. There are half as many firefighters now then there were in 1983. It costs money to run a fire department and a lot of the towns are doing it for next to nothing.

R. Desmarais talked about full-timers, and asked if there was a way to have people be credited with the training they've had if they go to another agency. B. Gillespie said it is nearly impossible to do.

B. Gillespie said that they have already done some research and the average firefighter is \$62,000.00 with benefits. But most rural towns are living off per diem coverage. If they can't get the younger generation involved in community service, the situation will be very difficult.

It costs \$250.00 per student for basic fire school. For officers, it is \$200.00, and \$50.00 for the books. Some of the training that is not offered locally, but the "Firefighter 1 Expedited" is about \$2,500.00 for a week, which is at the Maine Fire Institute.

P. Rioux asked if there is a plan for recruitment. B. Gillespie explained that the 2-1-1 information phone number can give people who are interested in joining a local fire department information of who is the local fire chief and information for recruitment. Sometimes there are commercials to try and recruit, but it costs a lot of money. He put out "Desperate Need of Help" and got 3 new members. It takes a year to get someone the training they need to be up-to-speed. It cost thousands to put 22 members through school in the past two years and there are only 2 of them left.

2005 Waldo County Extension Budget:

Present was Vina Lindley. She provided an overview of her position. Rick Kersbergen has retired. They are currently asking for a significant increase as the Extension office has to pay the salary increase for new hires. These expenses now fall to the Extension.

G. Pendleton asked if the budgets would continue to increase from year to year. V. Lindley stated that that is probably an accurate statement. They are absorbing some of the increase, but it shouldn't be quite as big in the future. She noted that they wrote \$2,000.00 worth of the salaries into a grant that should last a few years.

Waldo County Soil & Water District:

Present were Jenny Jurdak and Andy Reed. A. Reed explained that the request from the County is the same as it has been in previous years, with no increase.

Waldo County Soil & Water District has been working with the town of Unity and Unity Pond is it has been the cleanest it's been in a number of years, due to their services. Because of this, they did had the last bass tournament, along with a group trying to get the lead out of the lures. This in turn helps preserve the loon population. They do like to work with the towns and have a non-expense for the towns. P. Sampson said that Unity Pond is also known as Lake Winnecook, and agreed that the water was definitely clearer this year.

P. Rioux mentioned StreamSmart. WCSWD went to 8 towns, and if you go into the StreamSmart website it shows all the culverts they have in the community. They are also working on LakeSmart, in addition to StreamSmart, which is available to homeowners that helps to eventually protect their property on the water.

1070 Registry of Probate Budget:

Present was Register Sharon Peavey and Sean Ociepka, who is the new Judge of Probate since Judge Longley retired. Probate has moved upstairs, which is a better situation; safer and better for the Judge. Everything has been renovated.

The budget has changed very little even with the move. The only additional cost at this point that was missing from the lines is the request for \$1,250.00 for the phone lines because they have a new phone system that she did not account for. **The total request for that line is \$3,300.00.**

B. Jones asked if there was more emphasis on professional education. S. Peavey explained that with Judge Ociecka new to this position, he has some educational sessions to attend.

1080-4716 Eastern Maine Development Corp Budget:

Commissioner Shorey spoke on behalf of EMDC. He explained what this organization does for Waldo County. The 2020 request is \$2,500.00.

P. Sampson stated that EMDC doesn't serve a lot of the western counties, and noted that Unity is with KVCOG. B. Jones said that Freedom is also with KVCOG.

B. Johnson said that it is a choice the towns made, and it might make sense for them to have picked KVCOG.

P. Sampson said that Unity asked EMDC and said they don't serve Unity.

W. Shorey asked if Unity would like to be part of EMDC and she said she would need to ask the other Unity Selectmen. W. Shorey offered to get an appointment with EMDC and to attend with anyone who was interested.

W. Shorey noted that Penobscot is a big county. Most of the attention goes to the Counties who have paid more. Waldo should really be paying around \$6,000.00.

1075 Sheriff's Budget:

Present was Sheriff Jeffrey Trafton. He said it's been a busy year at the Sheriff's Office. There are a few budget lines with increases this coming year. Under Contractual, Traveling expenses have gone up mostly due to ferry fees. He mentioned that it was a good thing Islesboro has a law enforcement office, Fred Porter, living on the island. Without him, the traveling would be even more expensive. Budgets are put together in August so sometimes gas prices are unpredictable that time of year.

Dues: The S.O would like Purchase a program called Power DMS. They have been doing a big rewrite of the Sheriff's Policy and Procedures, which required hiring a law firm that specialized in policies. Power DMS allows each officer to be hooked into this, so if there is a new policy, it comes up right away on their computer screen and they have to read it, sign it and this program records this. This is almost \$3,000.00 purchase.

Grants have been obtained to buy video cameras for officers. It is the storage of the units that is the most expensive. Chief Deputy Trundy got another grant that helped.

The Chief Deputy went to the Federal Academy so there are new dues there.

The S.O. is averaging about one deputy per year who is training in other specialty areas so there is turnover, and training costs have gone up, so it's more expensive.

Most interviews with major crimes need to be recorded and that takes hours to transcribe. There is a program that lets them talk into a microphone to transcribe the reports, which will be purchased in the future.

Capital Outlay: There are 27 vehicles, with 3 spare vehicles available for when a patrol unit goes down. They have ordered a hybrid. Lieutenant Matthew Curtis stated it has been backordered. He has run into a few issues with getting it fitted with lights, radios, etc. and that is what is holding everything back. The Sheriff's Office heard what the Budget Committee requested last year and have tried to make this work. They will let the Committee know when it is in and being used. M. Curtis also promised some news stories and to take a few reporters on a ride.

Bulletproof vests are on the list of safety items to be ordered. They need vests that high speed bullets can't go through and they are looking out for the maximum safety of the officers.

A. Fowler asked the Sheriff to speak to the call sharing agreement with the State.

J. Trafton explained that the State Police keeps reducing its manpower. The County has had to pick up the slack. The County has modified the agreement and the State is only covering about 25% of the calls. January 1st the State will be reducing coverage in a number of counties. Waldo won't be affected this year, but he knows that the State Police is focusing on specialty services, and will be pulling more out more and more. At some point he will need to ask to fill more positions at the Sheriff's Office.

B. Kurek asked how much notice the Sheriff would likely get from the State. The Sheriff said that he is still in contact with the State Officers and he believed he would get appropriate notice.

M. Curtis explained that there have been a lot of changes. Perhaps there will be ways to share the administrative work. J. Trafton explained that one OUI case can take a couple of hours. He has two administrative secretaries and they are doing an analysis of their job status to see if there is a need or a way to shift duties to get more officers out on the street.

P. Sampson asked who decides who the School Resource Officer will be at Mt. View. J. Trafton said the Sheriff's Office works with the school. There are certification requirements, where there are a lot of serious cases generated out of the school, and certain skills and training are needed. This position is now a detective position because they do a lot of detective work there at the school. This position works in the detective division during the summer because the current 3 detectives are not enough.

P. Sampson asked what happens to the funds that are paid by the school. K. Trussell explained that the officer is paid out of the Detail reserve, and then the money goes back into the Detail reserve.

B. Jones summarized by saying that it is basically it's being paid from a designated account. J.

Trafton and M. Curtis said that there are also funds paid by the school for part of the benefits, vehicle, fuel, uniform, technology, and professional dues – 2/3 of what that number is.

FICA and MainePers come out of the Benefits Budget, but the rest of the costs come in and out of the Detail Reserve account.

(BREAK)

1065 Registry of Deeds Budget:

Budget Committee decided to skip review as the employee filling in for the Register of Deeds became ill so nobody from that department could attend.

1010 Emergency Management Budget:

Present was EMA Director Dale Rowley. Any increases that he has is from staffing, for the 2% COLA. Outside of that, his GIS planner's hours is being increased because of all he does. He has a huge skill set. He was funded before by Hazmat and the Homeland Security budget. Both of these budgets have shrunk so at this point the County would need to absorb the cost.

B. Kurek asked a few questions about emergency plans for school, etc. He has actively gone over several different plans, especially active shooter training.

D. Rowley stated EOC assessments have been very successful. He goes to the different towns to assist and schedules time to come and do that. He reviewed potential weather-related disasters.

There is a program for landowners at no charge where power lines are de-energized so that the owner can cut down trees. D. Rowley said he now has a very good relationship with Central Maine Power Company. They'll even send in someone from CMP to sit in the EOC during power outages and help coordinate things.

Some schools already have "Radios in the Classrooms". R. Desmarais asked what that would mean for the frequencies and D. Rowley briefly explained how that worked.

1015 District Attorney's Office Budget:

Present was District Attorney Natasha Irving. **She requested that line 5375 Training/Education have \$90.00 added to it.**

She attended a conference as part of a cohort with Waldo County. The Sheriff's Office paid for the D.A.'s hotel, and a foundation grant paid for her registration. This was a multi-disciplinary team to fight addiction. She said she learned a lot and would like to continue to go to this conference. Next time course will be in Pennsylvania, not in Florida. **N. Irving asked for an additional \$290.00 for Travel and Mileage line 4105.**

N. Irving mentioned that she also attended a conference in Pennsylvania and ended up driving there because the airfare was so high. **She requested and additional \$250.00 for Lodging line 4115.**

J. Gerritsen asked if representatives for the state were present to discuss internet costs at the courthouse. County Clerk Barbara Arseneau apologized because she had forgotten to arrange that, and she would contact them to see if they could be present at the Public Hearing. B. Johnson said that they had done some investigation on that and were basically satisfied with the answers. The Budget Committee still had some questions. N. Irving said Felicia Gray and Meghan Duval had done a lot of the legwork on this. She understands that they have to pay a lease but finds having to pay for internet offensive. B. Johnson confirmed that the rates were reduced down some but they are still too expensive. B. Arseneau said she would forward that question along as well.

N. Irving said she still felt internet and phone were too expensive, but she acknowledged that the court process is changing and everything will be filed online and all courthouses will have to have internet connections to perform this work.

B. Johnson said it was safe to say that they were going to continue with that investigation for the next meeting.

P. Sampson questioned the postage and witness fees. She said she noticed that not all of it had been spent in 2018 and not all has been spent this year so far and wanted to know if those two lines could be reduced. N. Irving said she could try to find out from her staff but she wondered if it might be an error because postage fees accrue quickly, especially when they have to send out discovery paperwork.

N. Irving also explained that witness fees can be expensive because some witnesses are out of state and they need to get that individual back in order to testify. It needs to be listed in the budget potentially higher than it typically would be because it is hard to know when these cases will come up.

1080-4721 Belfast Creative Coalition Budget:

Present was Lorraine Brown.

L. Brown stated that the arts bring in over 8 million a year to Waldo County. Currently they are doing a cultural planning process and that income doubles. Putting out surveys is an imperative process to obtaining data and identifying resources even outside of the county. When the data of the survey is tallied and when resources for the needs can be found, then they will be able to get that information out to the citizens. She noted that they had great results from Searsport, Unity, and Stockton Springs, among others.

The request is for \$1,000.00 to fund the end of the study.

B. Jones asked if there would be some sort of document produced once the data has been gathered. L. Brown confirmed that there is, and it is one that has to be paid for.

P. Sampson asked if this was a one-time thing or more, just for this study. L. Brown stated it was going to end after this next year.

B. Johnson explained that there was a \$1,000.00 grant applied for that requires a match, and the \$1,000.00 would end it. They are short about \$1,500.00 and this would help as it's been a struggle.

1080-4720 Midcoast Economic Development Budget:

Present was Bill Najpuer. He reported that MCEDD offers a full range of planning services. Transportation planning is the bigger portion of their organization.

They are asking for \$2000.00 to help their organization, as they are currently working on identifying marine areas. They have been approached by businesses regarding deep-water access that is zoned and not in a residential area, which has proven to be difficult. There just isn't the area they thought there was. They have found that there is some opportunities to find space and this is a project they're working on.

B. Najpuer briefly discussed the 50-year plan, which is the trail that connects from Belfast to Unity. The plan is to try to connect the trails from Topsham in the direction of Unity. These trails are spread out and they would like to connect all trails to promote tourism.

They also offer loans for businesses and most of the loans are \$25,000 to \$100,000.00. Most of the time, they don't have to come back to them for more money.

Waldo and Knox Counties have lost Midcoast Regional Planning Commission last night as a formal vote last night. They have lost 14 towns who received those services. MCEDD has been asked to assist with comp planning and technical assistance for those towns. The County will deal with the economic portion of those towns.

B. Jones asked why the County should be paying for two sets of services, and it was a matter of which service covers which area of the County. B. Najpuer said no, but a lot of the other counties fully support their organization.

There was discussion of the different types of grants that they do for towns, etc. It varies from community to community. P. Rioux brought up that any emails he has received from them are stating that the membership fees are rather expensive, \$2500 or more.

P. Sampson asked if any of the four towns pay for the services and was told Lincolnville does. They don't charge for grant writing services for member towns, but some grant services do have a charge simply because of the amount of time and work that goes into them.

1030 Facilities Budget

Present Keith Nealley. He explained that a number of the reentry residents have assisted with all the recent office renovations, and have provided over 1000 man hours from them. He said there has been a tremendous amount of support from the Reentry Project.

K. Nealley discussed going out to fuel bids, and how Commissioner Shorey has assisted with that. They have steadily been decreasing the fuel cost in the Communications Center, by locking in a fuel price early on and it has paid off.

LED lighting is favorable and is replacing bulbs, and utilizes Efficiency Maine funds. Some heat pumps have been installed and there will be rebates for those. LEDs don't need to be replaced as often.

The County may have a tenant for the former Probate space, still in agreement processing.

The D.A. will be expanding into vacant space, which will make their space safer, more efficient, etc. but is waiting on suggestions still for the courtroom upstairs and it doesn't offer a lot of suggestions for offices to go in there. They have backed the heat down as much as they could but it's difficult to adjust the steam heat.

All the buildings now have programmable thermostats that set back to 66 during the evenings to save costs.

B. Jones asked about cleaning, as he thought it was contracted out. K. Nealley stated that contractor didn't work out so they hired an individual instead. The expenses are over because of having to outfit the employee with equipment, cleaning supplies, etc.

1076 Communications Budget:

Present was Director Owen Smith. He stated that 2019 brought many of the same challenges as 2018 – hiring, training, and keeping personnel. The center lost an experienced dispatcher to a day job, another went to be a paramedic firefighter, and one moved out of state. He is currently still down two people, and training a new employee takes about 15 weeks.

One employee was out on FMLA leave the first part of year, and then was out again. All communications centers are in the same boat. A study came out today that shows that it is not a favorable job to find people to hire. Dispatchers suffer PTSD as much as, if not more than, law enforcement officer. Dispatchers are trained in 5 different disciplines. With vacancies, positions have to be filled, which results in overtime expenditures.

Overtime is way over and he increased the amount in the budget again for 2020 but it was reduced by the Commissioners. As weather gets bad, they really get busy.

O. Smith explained that there is a lot of required education, but he couldn't send employees to some of it because of the expense.

The Tower Sites line was up again this year. One site didn't bill the County for 3 of the quarters in 2018, which he didn't realize until they came in. These were paid in 2019. Snowplowing was up at one of the tower sites, as well.

J. Gerritsen asked what Critical testing was. O. Smith explained that it is part of the hiring process, it tests the candidates for their comprehension and ability to do the calls. It is used widely in the State of Maine.

He noted that the center takes on some of the Sheriff's and Belfast PD calls. R. Desmarais asked how many on a 9:00 p.m. shift and O. Smith replied that there are 3. The center has four 9-1-1 lines, and also has a number of radios. He explained the huge liability of not manning the full staff, especially if there was a bad accident.

1025 Treasurer's Budget:

Present was Finance Director Karen Trussell. She reduced 4100 Travel expenses to \$700.00.

1090 Audit Budget:

K. Trussell said she thought this could be reduced \$500.00. The previous Treasurer had a lot to do with the budget, and set it last year. She felt this year it could be reduced by \$500.00.

1095 Debt Service Budget

No discussion as the County has no debt.

2000 Interest Budget

K. Trussell explained that the Tax Anticipation Note (T.A.N.) is split between the County and the Jail. It will be over budget this year, but has been told that interest rates will be dropping, so should be in a safe zone if did it \$20,000.00.

Go out for a 5.3 million T.A.N. and only pay the interest as they go. Won't know what the rate is until December.

2045 Reserves Budget

Only request is the Severance Line

2025 Employee Benefits

MainePers, Retirement is all based off from salaries. Workers comp was the quote that was given to the county as there have been a couple of incidents per year. Some years have been really good.

Health insurance is higher but the county is self-funded and so it is actually a lot lower than most outside companies. The plan is able to stay grandfathered so that is one of the bigger reasons to be able to keep it at a lower rate.

1020 Commissioners Budget:

A. Fowler mentioned that the budget decreased. No questions asked.

2040 Records Preservation Budget:

B. Arseneau mentioned the moldy records at the jail. In the future they will have to be handled appropriately. An outside company was brought in to see what was in the boxes so that it could be documented. The process is still ongoing. The County is required by Statute to keep certain records for X amount of years, depending on the record. P. Sampson asked if there were estimates from the companies on how to take care of those records. B. Arseneau said that they have received estimates. After the State notifies them which records can be disposed and which cannot, they will know how much approximately it will cost.

NEXT BUDGET MEETINGS:

R. Desmarais scheduled the Public Hearing and Final Budget Committee Meeting for 5:30 p.m., December 6, 2019 in the Commissioners Courtroom.

****R. Desmarais motioned, P. Sampson seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Nicole V. Hubbard
Waldo County Assistant Clerk

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