

**WALDO COUNTY 2021 BUDGET COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
OCTOBER 30, 2020
Remote Teleconference (Zoom)
6:00 p.m.**

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Herbert Harnden (Waldo), Joshua Gerritsen (Lincolntonville), Gabriel Pendleton (Islesboro), Melissa Moody (Stockton Springs), Linda Payson (Searsport), Tammy Higgins (Winterport), Penny Sampson (Unity), Bob Kurek (Palermo), and Elaine Higgins (Freedom). Also present were County Commissioners William D. Shorey, Amy R. Fowler and Betty I. Johnson, Finance Director Karen Trussell, IT Director J-sun Bailey to run the teleconference, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Shorey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTIONS: Commissioner Shorey asked for the Budget Committee members to introduce themselves. He also introduced Waldo County IT Manager J-sun Bailey, Commissioner Amy Fowler, Commissioner Betty Johnson, Finance Director Karen Trussell, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau. He thanked everyone for being present and noted that this was the first time all nine Budget Committee members have been present in several years.

He listed some of the departments in which positions had been cut in order to reduce costs, including the Commissioners Office Assistant Clerk, the IT Manager's Part-time Technician, and a secretary from the District Attorney's Office. The Commissioners have been trying very hard to make the budget process streamlined as much as possible, and hopefully this will make the Budget Committee's job easier.

IT Manager J-sun Bailey spoke briefly about how the Zoom features worked.

W. Shorey asked Commissioner Amy Fowler to speak on the subject of the County Jail.

A. Fowler explained that the County Jails were taken over by the State back in 2008, and this failed miserably. Even though the Jails were returned to the Counties, now the only changes the Counties can make in their budgets is to increase the jail budget up to a certain percentage every few years. Otherwise, they have to go before the State and ask for more funds during State biennial budgets.

A. Fowler said that once COVID is under control, she would encourage the new Budget Committee members to ask the Commissioners to take them around to all the buildings. As Budget Committee members, they should have the opportunity to visit the departments and see how they function and operate.

She stated that Waldo County's budget is down 2.31% below last year. There is no other Maine county that is coming in under budget.

She encouraged the Committee to ask questions. There is information in the binders. Reach out to the Commissioners, and long-time members of the board.

W. Shorey explained that salaries and personnel under the purview of the Commissioners but all other budget lines are up to the Budget Committee.

He asked Commissioner Johnson to speak to the system for the County's finances.

B. Johnson explained that with the financials, there are checks and balances. Each department has a budget and keeps as close to it as possible. Each department head signs off on invoices, and sends them to the Finance Director. After they have been entered into the system, B. Johnson reviews each invoice and signs off on them. She checks that they are signed by department head, checks the amount, and compares it to the check written. It is very rare that an invoice that hasn't been signed gets by the Finance Director. Sometimes an invoice has to be paid right away, so the Finance Director calls B. Johnson and asks permission. The finances run a lot like the municipalities but perhaps the County's system goes a little further in checking on things. Commissioner Shorey signs off on payroll timesheets for some of the department heads, and Commissioner Fowler signs off on a few others. Commissioner Fowler also oversees payroll.

J. Gerritsen asked if the meeting was being recorded. J. Bailey stated that County Clerk Barbara Arseneau had asked for it to be recorded, he had intended to start it when the meeting began and was now recording.

VOTE FOR 2021 BUDGET COMMITTEE CHARIMAN:

W. Shorey suggested that the Committee make nominations for 2021 Budget Committee Chairman.

****P. Sampson nominated Josh Gerritsen. The motion was seconded by Herb Harnden.**

Nominations ceased.

G. Pendleton recommended that a roll call be held. B. Johnson agreed with that.

A. Fowler called for the roll call regarding the nomination:

Herb Harnden – yes

Josh Gerritsen - abstained

Gabriel Pendleton - yes

Melissa Moody – yes

Linda Payson – yes

Tammy Higgins –yes

Penny Sampson – yes

Bob Kurek – yes

Elaine Higgins - yes

The motion passed by 8 with 1 abstention.

W. Shorey turned the meeting over to J. Gerritsen. J. Gerritsen thanked everyone, and noted that this was either his third or fourth year serving on the Budget Committee. He asked if anyone had any questions on the budget. There were no questions.

NEXT BUDGET MEETINGS:

J. Gerritsen asked W. Shorey how many budget meetings there should be. W. Shorey said that there are usually three but suggested that since the budget was so tight this year, the next budget meeting could be scheduled with the time for the public hearing and public comment before the budget was voted on once rather than doing it again later. This would be two meetings total instead of three.

A. Fowler said that there were a lot of new members this year, and that there might be department heads and organizations that might want to address the Budget Committee, or perhaps the Budget Committee may want to meet with them. This allows the Budget Committee members to see the process, allows the public to address the Budget Committee, and allows the Budget Committee to become more familiar with the departments. She didn't think it would take too long, since the budget was so low. Once this was done, she believed that ten (10) days after that meeting, the budget would be posted. The Committee would meet again and would have the opportunity, with the Public there, to vote on each departmental budget. She stated that she was grateful for the time the Committee was putting into this process. She related that historically, there were a number of budget meetings and they lasted so long food was served. She felt it was very important that all had the opportunity to present their budget requests, and to be asked questions by the Budget Committee, if there were any questions.

J. Gerritsen said he felt the Committee should have at least two meetings. He asked the Committee if they want to hear from every department or just a handful.

L. Payson said she felt it was important to hear from each one.

H. Harnden said he felt that they might meet with the larger departments but not necessarily the smaller ones as, in his experience, it was kind of a waste of time.

B. Kurek said he thought it was important to hear from the department heads to ensure that they're able to provide the services that the Waldo County community expects from them. He said he thought it was important to hear from them.

G. Pendleton said his preference was to hear from all the all department heads, and he agreed with J. Gerritsen that there should be at least two meetings.

M. Moody said that being new to the Budget Committee, she thought it would be good to hear from each department head, and have two meetings.

T. Higgins said there should be at least two meetings, and to hear from all the department heads, as this was new to her as well.

P. Sampson said she would like at least two meetings, and to meet with department heads.

E. Higgins said she would like for there to be two meetings, and to meet with the department heads.

J. Gerritsen confirmed that there would be at least two meetings and they would meet with all the department heads. He mentioned that just the educational aspect for the new members was important, and even for the members who are returning, it's good to check in. It makes every department head

feel respected and that they do an important job for the County. He said it was good that all the department heads and organizations have a chance to share their thoughts on the budget.

A. Fowler mentioned that there are a number of groups such as the Extension Office and Waldo County Soil and Water. She understood what Herb Harnden was saying – for example, these are two organizations and their budgets for the most part are stabilized. These are not actually employees or department heads of the County; these are offices that are with the County. She asked if they wished for those folks to attend, or perhaps if one of the Commissioners could speak on their behalf.

J. Gerritsen agreed that these outside offices should be invited to meet with the Committee as well because the education part is important.

B. Johnson said that there are also those groups that are part of Advertising and Promotion, which is comprised of several different groups such as the provider agencies like the towns have, and asked if each of these agencies should come in, too.

J. Gerritsen said that they should be invited to meet, too, unless there was strong objection by the rest of the Budget Committee. He asked how everyone felt about meeting two weeks from now, which would be Friday, November 13th at 6:00 p.m., by roll call:

B. Kurek – nodded yes

G. Pendleton – nodded yes

H. Harnden – yes

M. Moody – yes

L. Payson – yes

T. Higgins – yes

P. Sampson – yes

E. Higgins mentioned she will be moving that week, but she would try to attend the Zoom meeting.

J. Gerritsen asked about scheduling the final meeting. A. Fowler asked B. Arseneau to comment on how long it would take for posting the meeting in advance. B. Arseneau explained that there is a minimum 10-day posting requirement, and for her to be able to do this with newspaper and the media, she needs to allow 14 days in order to meet that requirement.

J. Gerritsen asked about scheduling the final meeting Friday, December 4, 2020, as this would be 3 weeks. B. Arseneau clarified that if she knew this far in advance, they could hold it sooner as she could post it earlier.

J. Gerritsen said that in view of Thanksgiving week, he felt December 4th would be good. He asked if there were any objections to holding the final meeting on December 4, 2020. He noted that there were no objections, so the next two meetings will be November 13th and December 4th at 6:00 p.m.

W. Shorey noted that Eastern Maine Development Corporation is one of the agencies that the County supports. He is chairman of that group, so he will be speaking for them.

B. Arseneau asked how much time the Committee would like her to allot for each of the departments and agencies on the agenda.

A. Fowler thought that about 10 minutes per group or department would be sufficient. Some of them wouldn't take that long, so if there were questions for some of the larger departments, there would still be a window of time.

J. Gerritsen that should be fine, and what the Committee has done in the past seemed to work well for scheduling and attending. He said he would like to live-stream the next two meetings to the Internet and asked if there was any objection from the Committee. There were no objections. He said that if there was no County YouTube channel, he would ask the Town of Lincolnville as he didn't think they would have a problem with that. He said he wasn't sure what technical aspects would be needed to accomplish this on the County's end. J. Bailey said he should be all set and thought the County had the capability. He will run some tests beforehand to be sure.

J. Gerritsen asked if there were any last questions or comments from the Committee.

A. Fowler stated that she was very conscious of the new members and described how the process would go at the next meeting with each department or agency presenting their budget and being available to answer any questions the Committee may have. She also listed the 501-C3 organizations that the County funds who would also be speaking. The Committee will go through the entire budget binder, and it will be an interesting process.

J. Gerritsen asked for a motion to adjourn.

****B. Kurek moved, G. Pendleton seconded to adjourn the meeting. No discussion.**

Roll Call:

B. Kurek – in favor

G. Pendleton – in favor

H. Harnden – in favor

M. Moody – in favor

L. Payson – in favor

T. Higgins – in favor

P. Sampson – in favor

E. Higgins – in favor

J. Gerritsen – in favor.

Meeting adjourned unanimously at 6:35 p.m.

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