

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Joint Meeting Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Thursday – October 30, 2014 – 5:00 p.m.

A special joint meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Knox County Budget Committee was held on Thursday, October 30, 2014, at 5:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Administrative Assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Carol L. Maines, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau, Systems Administrator Mike Dean, EMA Director Ray Sisk, EMA Administrative Assistant Donna Allen, EMA Geospatial Database Manager Leticia vanVuuren Monahan, and Finance Director Kathy Robinson.

Budget Committee members present were: Ann Matlack, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Randy Stearns, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Stephen Carroll, Shawn Levasseur, and Tom Mellor.

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee Joint Meeting Agenda Commission Hearing Room

Thursday – October 30, 2014 – 5:00 p.m.

- I. 5:00 Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Dorothy Meriwether for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 5:01 Public Comment**
- III. 5:03 Approve Minutes** (Chair Dorothy Meriwether for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
 - 1. Minutes of the Joint Budget Meeting of October 23, 2014
- IV. 5:05 Budget Review**
 - 1. District Attorney
 - 2. Finance
 - 3. County Administration & IT
 - 4. Debt Service
 - 5. Emergency Management Agency
- V. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

The October 30, 2014 joint meeting of the Knox County Budget Committee and the Knox County Commission was called to order by Budget Committee Chair Dorothy Meriwether and Commission Chair Carol Maines at 5:01 p.m.

II. Public Comment

Budget Committee Chair Dorothy Meriwether asked if any members of the public wished to speak. There was none.

III. Budget Review

Dorothy Meriwether expressed some frustration with the fact that there were several handouts waiting for the Committee members when they arrived for the meeting. She said that she would prefer to get the information for the night's meeting in advance because there was a lot there and she didn't feel she had time to absorb it. Other Budget Committee members voiced their agreement with her option.

Administrator Hart apologized for things not being handed out until tonight. When asked how many of the handouts related to tonight's meeting, Administrator Hart explained that only the two things for EMA were

for tonight. When asked what had yet to be handed out for the next meeting, Administrator Hart responded that he'd just given everyone the patrol documentation but it was possible that Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves might have some sort of handout. Bob Duke commented that Manager Northgraves needed to get the documentation to the Committee before that night. Administrator Hart said he would talk Manager Northgraves.

Dorothy Meriwether asked EMA Director Ray Sisk if he planned to go through the handouts provided enough that they wouldn't need to read it beforehand, but Director Sisk thought that it might be a good idea to read the documentation first so the Committee and Commission could come up with questions. Chair Meriwether paused the meeting so that everyone could read the handouts.

District Attorney

DA Geoff Rushlau introduced himself. He explained that Drug Analysis was decreased in his budget by \$1,500 to be closer to the 2014 actual expenditures. He said that it's hard to predict and can vary from year to year. The Equipment-Copier Rental was decreased by \$162 because the photocopier lease was renewed which slightly decreased the monthly payment. Statutes and Reference Books was increased by \$550 as the cost of the subscription for online research and statute reference books has gone up. DA Rushlau said that while he is moving away from using printed books and trying to do more online research, the costs are still going up even without purchasing all hard copies of the reference materials that the office uses. Revenues have decreased by \$3,400 because the DA Witness Advocate Grant share increased for Waldo County, which means a \$3,000 decrease for Knox County.

When the DA was asked for his opinion on Restorative Justice, DA Rushlau said that Restorative Justice started out in Waldo County, and while their program doesn't work for every case, it has enormous value. It's intended to get offenders to understand the consequences of what they did, and work towards doing what can be done to fix the wrong they've committed. For the right kind of case it's very, very helpful. He said that as far as this particular program, he didn't know the details but he assumed it was similar to what the organization does in Waldo County. It relies on a large pool of volunteers that are trained and are very impressive and help both offenders and victims.

There was a brief discussion about whether there were any untapped sources of revenue for the DA's office. DA Rushlau noted that historically, DA's offices don't have revenues, so it's unusual to begin with that Knox County does have some revenue. He said that there was no other way to get revenue.

- A consensus vote was taken on the District Attorney budget with 8 in favor (Ann Matlack, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Shawn Levasseur, Tom Mellor, Bill Jones, Dorothy Meriwether, and Randy Stearns), and 1 opposed (Steve Carroll).

Finance

Finance Director Kathy Robinson stated that her operating budget (not including personnel services) is actually a decrease from the 2014 budget. The department had a one-time audit that was done in 2014 that won't have to be done in 2015, and there is also a 10% reduction in the MUNIS software cost. Director Robinson noted that there is a reduction in revenue but stated that it's not something she has any control over.

When asked about why the Civil Process revenues were down. Director Robinson explained that the Sheriff's Department had made changes to the position and the way the paperwork is handled in 2014, and it took a while for someone to get hired and to get the process going. Since the Finance Department makes a portion of the revenue coming in from the number of papers served, the Sheriff's Department serving fewer papers meant that the Finance Office's revenues were also down.

Dorothy Meriwether asked for surplus and reserve figures for the Airport for next week. Director Robinson said she could provide that.

- A consensus vote was taken on the Finance budget with all in favor.

County Administration & Information Technology

Administrator Hart explained that he had to spend a lot on Labor Relations this year because of the NCEU union being in mediation. The union contract is going to be voted on next week by the union members but he had heard that it's probably going to be voted down. The jail employees are concerned about the uncertainty of wages in 2015 because there will not be any more money coming from the State and the County was instructed by the BOC to cut the 2015 budget. It's causing strife amongst the employees in Knox County's jail and in other jails.

Administrator Hart said that Legal Fees was decreased by \$10,000, Automobile Mileage was increased by \$1,000, Dues and Registration was increased by \$500 because some of the dues have increased, Postage and Shipping was increased by \$500 because the administrative office has had to mail more material out for Freedom of Access Requests and that's usually sent out via certified mail to verify that the documentation was received. Computer Repairs and Maintenance has increased by \$1,936 because the cost for the annual maintenance contract for Spillman has increased. Employee recognition is a new budget line item for 2015. The plan is to recognize employees for their years of service with the County. Revenues are down slightly. There are no Capital expenditures in the budget for 2015.

When asked why the telephone line in some departments had gone down but the administrative office one had gone up, Administrator Hart explained about the courthouse needing a new phone system, which would be for multiple departments, and the new phone system is in the Admin budget so that's why the Admin phone budget increased.

There was a discussion about County health insurance for the employees. Administrator Hart explained that the County has been working the last few years to adjust plans and phase out grandfathering to lower costs. Currently employees pay 25% of their dependents' coverage and the County pays 75%. It's up to the Commission to make any decisions about changing the percentage that the employee pays. Finance Director Robinson noted that when the County did the compensation study, the wages were in part based on the financial worth of the benefits the employees are also receiving, so if the benefits get changed, the County would no longer following the wage plan.

One Budget Committee member voiced some concern over why the County would spend \$2,300 on employee recognition when he felt that the employees are already being recognized through their pay that is based on the wage study. Administrator Hart explained that the whole of the \$2,300 wasn't just for employee recognition, but also included funding for a memorial bench for out front of the courthouse to recognize Sheriff's Deputies from the past that died in the line of duty. A couple Budget Committee members questioned whether it was the role of the County to pay for something like that. One Committee member felt that the deputies had died too long ago to be putting up a memorial.

When Steve Carroll asked why the County had to recognize the unions and negotiate with them, Commissioner Moody explained that collective bargaining is allowed by law and if they do it per the law set forth in statutes then the County is required to bargain with them. Shawn Levasseur noted that the issue of negotiating with the unions does not have anything to do with the Budget Committee. Bob Duke added that the role of the Budget Committee is to vote on a bottom line amount, not change policy or tell the Commission how to change policies, regardless of whether it's about health insurance or unions.

When asked how many hours HR Consultant Laurie Bouchard spends working for the County each week, Administrator Hart explained that she works two Mondays a month for 8 hours each, and the other two Mondays a month for 4 hours each. He said that having Ms. Bouchard providing HR services is cheaper than having an HR employee position because the County isn't paying Ms. Bouchard benefits and she has a high level of experience.

When asked about why the County had a computer consultant contract in the budget when the County has an IT person, Systems Administrator Mike Dean explained that he is the only IT person which means that if he needs extra help or is unavailable due to sickness or some other reason, or if he just needed some higher level of consulting, the company (Harbor Digital) already knows everything about the County's system and can provide backup at any time. When asked what percentage of the Administrative budget is strictly IT, Administrator Hart said he didn't know without figuring it out and providing the information at the next meeting. Bob Duke stressed that when you're looking at what it costs to run the admin office vs. the whole County's IT budgeting needs, they are really two different animals.

Dorothy Meriwether asked the Committee whether they wanted to have a discussion about the commissioners' pay. There was some discussion about the role of the commissioners having been cut back now that the County has an administrator to do the day-to-day tasks. Some Committee members felt that the commissioners' stipends should remain the same, while others thought they would approve a CPI increase.

- Ann Matlack motioned to increase the commissioners' pay in 2015 by the CPI of 1.6%. Tom Mellor seconded the motion. A vote was taken with 4 in favor (Dorothy Meriwether, Ann Matlack, Tom Mellor, and Randy Stearns) and 5 opposed (Bill Jones, Shawn Levasseur, Bob Duke, Steve Carroll, and Lawrence Nash). The motion therefore failed.

The question was asked how the stipends changed over time so Finance Director Robinson said she could put the information together and get that to everyone.

- A consensus vote was taken on the Administrative & IT budget with 8 in favor (Ann Matlack, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Shawn Levasseur, Tom Mellor, Bill Jones, Dorothy Meriwether, and Randy Stearns), and 1 opposed (Steve Carroll).

Debt Service

- A consensus vote was taken on the Debt Service budget with all in favor.

Emergency Management Agency

EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that he tries to cut back the budget where he can and do group purchasing with other agencies as much as possible. He also utilizes State and Federal surplus instead of buying new equipment when possible.

Director Sisk noted that his 2015 budget proposal included funding for a part-time Geospatial Database Manager. The proposed 20 hour/week position supports Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and mapping needs for Knox County municipalities, the County and EMA. The 2014 rate of pay for this position, including fringe benefits is \$21.75. Director Sisk said that he has secured Homeland Security Planner Grant funding through March 30, 2015 principally to provide and support a robust municipal mapping assistance capability as FEMA revises the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Knox County. The position, if approved, would be funded by the County under the EMPG program for the remaining nine months of 2015. This GIS specialist will be available as a resource to assist municipalities with any mapping, mapmaking or Orthoimagery Project upon request. The person currently filling the position initially worked for EMA as a volunteer for about a year. In the process of working with the towns on their Flood maps, it was discovered that the towns had other mapping needs that are outside of the scope of the emergency management grant. Those are the types of services that towns couldn't afford to hire an expert for. The County employee can provide a higher level of education to the towns at a far lower cost than if the towns each tried to hire their own employee with that level of education.

Several members of the Budget Committee voiced support for the position, including some who were from towns that could really benefit from the expertise. Administrator Hart noted that Kerry Lichtman in Rockport sees the position as a help to him because he doesn't know as much as the County employee does

and he wants the help. Camden said the same thing. John Root in Rockland has the highest level of training in the municipalities but he's going to retire in the next few years. Mr. Root is very much in support of the County funding the position. Some of the work the position could produce for the towns really isn't EMA related, but if the position isn't kept in the EMA department, Director Sisk would be unable to justify in an EMPG grant application to continue getting 50% of the salary paid for.

A couple Budget Committee members weren't convinced that this was something the County should be the one funding. Commissioner Parent noted that the Commission's goal is to save the taxpayers in the County money. Administrator Hart added that the towns have asked the County for various services, but while it wouldn't make sense for the County to handle all of those services, the County will at least look into it.

- A consensus vote was taken on the EMA budget with 6 in favor (Ann Matlack, Dorothy Meriwether, Tom Mellor, Shawn Levasseur, Steve Carroll, and Bill Jones), 2 against (Randy Stearns and Bob Duke), and 1 abstention (Lawrence Nash).

IV. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ann Matlack. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roger Moody. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice S. Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their meeting on November 25, 2014.