

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

## Special Joint Meeting Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Thursday – November 5, 2009 – 5:00 p.m.

A special joint meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Knox County Budget Committee was held on Thursday, November 5, 2009, at 5:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The executive assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Anne Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, and Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Executive Assistant Constance Johanson, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Chief Deputy Ernest McIntosh, EMA Director Ray Sisk, and Kelly Perry from the District Attorney's office.

Budget Committee members present were: Ann Matlack, Bob Duke, Sid Lindsley, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Elizabeth Dickerson, and Jim Bowers.

Others present were: A. Mason Johnson, Jr. from Thomaston, Lawrence Nash from Union, Deputy Robert Potter, Deputy John Palmer, Deputy Mark Tibbetts, and Helen Shaw from Rockport.

### Special Meeting – Agenda Thursday – November 5, 2009 – 5:00 p.m.

- I. 5:00 Meeting Called To Order (Chair Ann Matlack for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 5:01 Approve Minutes (Chair Ann Matlack for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center for the Knox County Commission)
  1. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of October 29, 2009.
- III. 5:03 Budget Review
  1. District Attorney's Office
  2. EMA Office
  3. Sheriff's Office – Patrol Division
  4. Communications Departments for further review
- IV. 7:00 Adjourn

#### I. Meeting Called to Order

Budget Committee Chair Ann Matlack called the Budget Committee meeting to order and Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center called the November 5, 2009 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 5:00 p.m.

#### II. Approve Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on October 29, 2009 were not ready to be approved.

#### III. Budget Review

##### 1. District Attorney's Office – page 18

County Administrator Andrew Hart explained that the District Attorney was not available, but Kelly Perry was present to answer any questions. The commodities increased over last year because some items that have traditionally been placed in the capital line were moved into the office supply line. The projected revenue is down by \$1,000.00. Wages were calculated at a two percent increase plus longevity. The total budget is up by \$8,000.00.

Bill Jones asked if the revenue reflected a downward trend. Finance Director Kathy Robinson responded that the revenues were below what was expected. The revenue projection for 2010 reflected that trend. It was noted that revenue projections for 2009 were optimistic.

There were minor differences between the department head's proposed budget and that of the administrator. Ann Matlack asked if there were any questions or comments.

Dorothy Meriwether commented that there did not seem to be anything of special note in the budget except perhaps the \$750.00 for an ergonomic chair. It was probably for a medical reason.

Sid Lindsley asked why the salary line for the prosecutorial assistant was being increased by three percent and the others being increased by four percent. The difference is because of the difference in longevity. Longevity for non-union employee is calculated at \$0.15 for 1 to 5 years, \$0.25 for 6 to 10 years, and \$0.35 for 11 years and beyond. Longevity for union employees is calculated at \$0.15 for 1 to 5 years, and \$0.35 for 6 years and beyond.

There were no other questions or comments. The committee was in agreement to move forward with this proposed budget as it is.

2. EMA – page 21

Ann Matlack asked what type of truck was being considered. EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that he was looking to purchase a  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton crew cab pickup truck to pull the EMA trailer and serve as a command vehicle. Currently the EMA director uses his personal vehicle.

Bill Jones asked if it was cheaper to pay mileage or buy a vehicle. Mr. Sisk commented that if you looked strictly at mileage alone, it was cheaper for the County to reimburse an employee for mileage. He explained that he was looking to replace his own truck, but to buy a replacement truck that would meet the needs of the EMA office is more than what he needs for a personal vehicle. It was noted that the director responded from home and there was no secure place to keep the vehicle at the courthouse.

Mr. Duke commented that there have been complaints that county vehicles are used to commute back and forth from home. The complaints were usually directed at the use of patrol vehicles, but it is still an expense for the County when a vehicle is used to commute.

EMA Director Sisk explained that there was grant money available to help pay for the truck. The money has to be spent in November, which means it may have to be purchased probably before the budget is approved. County Administrator Andrew Hart explained that the issue of the truck being taken home or not had not been resolved. The request to purchase the vehicle was expected to be discussed at the next Commission meeting on November 10, 2009. A request for proposals and bid forms were sent out to obtain a purchase price for their decision.

Dorothy Meriwether commented that EMA funding was a dollar for dollar match, but there were no funds requested in the proposed budget for the truck. Mr. Hart explained that the discretionary funds available had to be used in November to purchase the truck so it was a matter of buying the truck now or not. If the truck is not purchased, the funds are no longer available. The money in the 2010 budget for the truck is for the truck's maintenance and fuel. The mileage reimbursement line was reduced.

Bill Jones remarked that he was trying to get an idea of EMA's operations, and only seeing the County's funding in the budget, he was asking where the federal funding was shown. He also asked about what to tell people about EMA's operations. Mr. Hart explained that the total proposed EMA budget is \$128,244.00, and \$64,219.00 is shown as revenue, which is the federal matching funding. There are some other grants that the EMA director has applied for, but these are not included in the budget.

EMA Director Sisk explained that the EMA office is involved in getting money for post-disaster work, which helps the municipalities with repairs due to storm damage. EMA is trying to make the County disaster resistant. One of the items to look at is the economic impact the federal funds and other grants have on the local area, which saves taxpayers' money. So far this year, 1.2 million dollars have been received and the impact on the taxpayer is a return of \$23.00 per taxpayer dollar. The EMA office manages the County's drug discount program, provides response training for various agencies, and is involved in the heating assistance program and the safety program.

Bob Duke asked if the \$20,000.00 requested as an allowance for new building costs was necessary to obtain funding. He asked if it needed to be funded every year, and if it could be put off until next year.

EMA Director Sisk explained that there was a space needs assessment done and the EMPG funds (federal matching funds program) were used to pay for a portion of that study. The program allows EMA to continue with the relocating project to another building to resolve the space needs issue. The EMPG program requires the relocation project to be part of EMA's strategic work plan and be supported by the County's taxpayers. The money does not have to be spent, but if it is, then it qualifies for the matching funds. The EMPG funds supported much of the EMA's operational costs, including the space for an emergency operations center, and that will probably continue. If a new space was built or leased, then the reimbursement would be based on a percentage of the space allocated to EMA.

Ann Matlack asked why \$20,000.00 was requested. Mr. Sisk explained that the space needs assessment study cost \$34,000.00 and \$17,000.00 was reimbursed to the County through the EMPG

program. A plausible number had to be proposed, and guided by the space needs study cost, \$20,000.00 seemed to be a reasonable number. The question was posed as to what would happen to the money if it was not used. Mr. Hart responded that it would probably be put into a reserve account.

Bill Jones asked what the consequences would be if the \$20,000.00 was taken out of the budget. Mr. Sisk commented that it was difficult to get the space needs assessment study funded and this would commit the County to continue its efforts to resolve the space needs issue, even if the relocation was put off. The money has to be spent in order for the County to be reimbursed, but the money could go into reserves for spending at a later date.

Sid Lindsley suggested reducing the amount to \$10,000.00.

The space needs study is finished and the relocation project is at a standstill because there does not seem to be a suitable site or building proposed at this time. The cost to stabilize the soil at the law enforcement facility is estimated to be a million dollars. There are other issues that have not been resolved. The relocation project may only include EMA and Communications. If the County decided to build, then it would have to be through a bond.

It was suggested that the departments should be preparing long term plans in order to avoid having large problems develop later that would need attention. The space issue has been a problem for over 10 years and there still does not appear to be a viable solution. At one point the County was ready to enter into a lease/purchase agreement for a property, only to have some of the end-users object. The administration changed, as well as the direction for finding a solution. The former DOT building on Rankin Street was looked at several times.

Sid Lindsley suggested that the \$20,000.00 be used for other things. The space needs study was done. Whether it had merit or not, (i.e. provided for growth or proposed too large a space), it was done and there should not be a need for another study.

Dorothy Meriwether asked if \$10,000.00 would be enough. Mr. Sisk responded that there had to be a reasonable commitment in order to be eligible for the EMPG funds and a place marker to hold onto the relocation project. There may some money in reserve that could be used.

Bill Jones commented that he would like to be able to get the matching funds with the proof of the study being done as the County's commitment to the relocation project.

Finance Director Kathy Robinson commented that there is money in reserves for a building, but there needs to be a place marker in the EMA budget. Once money is put into a reserve account, it cannot be put back into a departmental budget line. It may be used to pay for a designated project such as a building.

Bob Duke said he agreed with the suggested amount of \$10,000.00.

Bill Jones commented that he did not want to hurt EMA's chances for matching funds, but perhaps the final budget figures needed to be looked at.

There was discussion on the impact of reducing the figure to \$10,000.00. The money has to be spent in order to be reimbursed. If \$10,000.00 is put in the budget and is spent, the reimbursement is \$5,000.00 (in revenue), which translates into the project costing \$5,000.00. If the \$10,000.00 is put in the budget and not spent, it would be put in reserves, but it would not be eligible for reimbursement and the impact is that there is no \$5,000.00 in revenue. It can be used at a later date for a \$10,000.00, or larger project. The same holds true for whatever amount is put in the budget for this line item.

EMA Director Sisk commented that money had been spent on a jail study, but it did not address EMA's needs, and then the space needs assessment was done. The concern was to do the right thing and make sure the size of the space was accurate. It was an investment for the future and therefore there may be a need for further study.

The consensus was to change the Allowance for New Building Costs to \$10,000.00.

3. Sheriff's Office – Patrol Division – page 29

A new position was being requested, which would start in February of 2010. It was noted that there was no reduction in overtime, holiday overtime, and part-time deputies. Chief Deputy McIntosh stated that there was a reduction in part-time deputies. He explained that the main focus of the sheriff's office is safety and the crime rate is increasing. Currently, the Sheriff's office does not provide 24 hour coverage. The County partnered with the state police to cover the gap. Additional

personnel are needed for 24 hour coverage and for back-up. It is difficult to keep up with the complaints and do the job correctly.

Bob Duke commented that adding one person does not seem to be enough. The state police barracks may shut down as the state faces big cuts and any response from the state police may have to come from Augusta. There are two state police officers that live within Knox County and may be able to respond from home.

Sheriff Dennison commented that the department is short staffed with some officers leaving for military duty and some at training courses. The officers on military leave can be filled by using overtime or hiring someone for a year. It was noted that their salaries were in the budget because the positions would still be funded, but probably at a lesser rate.

County deputies provide backup and assistance to the larger towns that have their own police departments. The Domestic Violence Coordinator covers a large area. An informational sheet was distributed.

It was noted that the budget figure for the new position only covered the wages and did not include a vehicle, equipment, or uniform.

Tutoring and counseling had been provided by Jump Start and then by Youth Promise. The funding was discontinued. The services are still being provided and referrals made through probation and parole offices.

The contribution to the Knox County Fish and Game Association allows the department to use the firing range.

Sid Lindsley commented that he thought it would be better to take the \$20,000.00 (Allowance for New Building Costs) out of the EMA budget and put in the Sheriff's budget.

There was discussion on the patrol vehicles. The vehicles budgeted for 2009 were bid out and would be purchased soon. Large ticket items like the vehicles were put off until tax payments were received from the towns. Sheriff Dennison reported that the County would be purchasing Dodges because of their fuel efficiency.

The replacement program called for three new vehicles each year. Generally the oldest and/or highest mileage vehicles were scheduled to be replaced. The computers in the vehicles allowed the deputies to do their reports in their vehicle and save mileage by not coming back to the facility to do the paperwork. Two vehicles were being requested in 2010.

Sheriff Dennison gave some statistics on drug arrests in the County. It was noted that drugs impacted the rise in the crime rate.

Bob Duke suggested that three vehicles might be needed. Reserve money for vehicles could be used. The theory had been to use up most of the vehicle reserve account before adding funds for vehicles to the budget each year. Currently there were three vehicles nearing the 100,000 miles mark, which is when they are generally replaced. The non-emergency response vehicles such as the sheriff, chief deputy and detective vehicles do not get replaced as often.

The sheriff was asked if the outlying towns complained about the coverage or response times. Chief Deputy McIntosh explained that department was busy keeping up with responding to complaints and did not realistically have the time to be proactive to be checking for burglaries. The Town of Washington has complaints about trucks speeding through the village. There were not many complaints in the rural areas other than speeding.

Chief Deputy McIntosh reported that the patrol vehicles are equipped with audio and video recording devices. There is always someone on call to respond.

Bob Duke commented that the department is dramatically underfunded.

Ann Matlack asked why there was a reduction in the uniform line when an additional person is being requested. One reason was the bare bones approach to the budget, and the other was that the finance director had suggested looking at the cost of equipment and uniforms on a per person basis. This is how the figure was determined.

Sid Lindsley commented that there was a difference between the department head's and the administrator's proposals. The differences are in the elimination of the additional position request, holiday overtime, and the part-time deputies' wages. The overtime and part-time wages reflect what is actually being spent this year. The contractual lines reflect what is actually being spent.

The airline funding was taken out, as it was in all departmental budget proposals for 2010. The commodities were looked at realistically with equipment being increased. Some capital items were moved into the commodities/equipment lines (radios and firearms). The revenues were projected at the same level. The safety equipment was moved into a commodities line. The investigation line was cut because legal counsel was funded through the administrative office budget. The sheriff had requested it to pay for reviewing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). All legal funding lines were taken out of the departmental budgets.

Ann Matlack asked if the committee was inclined to add the new position.

Vehicle bids were sent out and received back. The sheriff reported that one vehicle cost \$29,000.00 and the other one cost \$16,000.00, which reflected the trade-in value of two vehicles for a total of \$45,000.00. There were supposed to be three vehicles purchased in 2009. It was noted that there was some money in the vehicle reserve account (\$37,000.00) and \$61,000.00 was budgeted in 2009 for two vehicles with the third coming out of reserves. The total available for three vehicles to be purchased in 2009 is \$98,000.00. It was pointed out that only \$45,000.00 of the \$61,000.00 was being spent and the rest would go in the reserve account, which already had \$37,000.00 in it and was not being used in 2009 as originally planned.

The County Administrator proposed \$52,000.00 for purchasing the two vehicles requested by the sheriff for 2010, which would be \$26,000.00 each without a trade-in. The requested position was eliminated as well as the third vehicle which would have been for that deputy.

It was suggested that the vehicle could be further reduced and still purchase two vehicles with the use of money from the reserve account. *For clarification purposes - The reserve account should have \$53,000.00 in it by year end (\$61,000.00 - \$45,000.00 + \$37,000.00).*

Bob Duke recommended reducing the vehicle line to \$26,000.00 for two vehicles and adding the new person. There was discussion on the use of the reserves and how the account had grown over the years. It grew mostly because the purchased vehicles cost less than what was put in the budget. It was up to the Commission, the administrator and the sheriff to work out the details. It was suggested that the vehicle replacement program needs to be reviewed.

The question was asked as to what forfeiture money could be used for. The answer was that any federal forfeiture funds had to be used for law enforcement, while state forfeiture funds are discretionary.

It was suggested that \$26,000.00 be put in the vehicle line to purchase two vehicles and add the new position, noting that there would still be money in the reserve account for a third vehicle if the need should arise. It was a long time commitment to hire a new person, which estimated to cost approximately \$46,000.00 for wages, benefits and equipment.

The consensus was to change the vehicle line to \$26,000.00 and add the new position.

#### 4. Communications – further review

It was noted that the funding for part-time employees was reduced from \$26,000.00 to \$20,000.00. The Communications proposed budget also reflected the change in the health insurance premium. The request for an additional employee would be discussed further at this meeting.

Communications Director Lothrop was asked what effect an additional person would have on the overtime budget line. Director Lothrop responded that eventually the overtime line would be reduced. Currently there were two vacancies and it was expected that those vacancies would be filled in 2010. Training of the two new employees was expected to take 12 weeks and after that it was expected that the overtime budget line would be reduced.

Another topic for discussion was where to place the cost of equipment and infrastructure upgrades in the budget. The original budget proposal had \$40,500.00 in the general budget and \$16,800.00 in the communications budget. It was then suggested that the combined amount of \$57,300.00 be placed in the communications budget for 2010. The total cost of the project was expected to be \$263,000.00 with the \$57,300.00 being the first installment of a five year payment schedule. Page 44 shows this proposal of the updated proposed 2010 budget.

Jim Bowers asked when the funding formula was determined. It was noted that the funding formula has been in effect since the inception of the communications center. It was supposed to be reviewed after a few years of collecting data to show the origin of the calls. Because of the uncertainty of the cost of operations, it was thought the review would take place and a formula developed to share the costs based partially on the number of calls coming in from the towns. It was based on the assumption that the larger towns would be the larger users with more calls into the communications center than the smaller towns. Currently, the funding formula is based on population. Call volume is not a factor.

Director Lothrop reported looking at this issue. There is a direct correlation between population and call volume. The actual line up of the towns may vary slightly, but the top ten in terms of call volume are the same top ten in population. The population is driving the call volume. Rockland is the largest user and has the largest population. There is also a similar correlation to the dispatch fees assessed to the towns.

Bill Jones reported that the towns he represented pay 6.6 percent of the county tax, but pays 12.9 percent of the dispatch fees. The towns may be in the same order as far as use and population, but it makes a difference how they are being assessed. It may be that some towns are being overcharged. Since the review was not done, there is no way to know if the formula is equitable. Mr. Jones commented that he supported the administrator's first proposal, which was the split between the general budget and the communications budget to fund the cost of the equipment and infrastructure because it was closer to being equitable.

Mr. Jones explained that the basis for this is that the communications formula for assessing fees really hits hard the towns that do not have the large call volume. Mr. Jones agreed that costs associated with communications should be in the communications budget to show the actual cost of operations. He thought the \$40,500.00 should be put back in the general budget because the way costs are allocated in that proposal seems to be more equitable.

It was suggested that the Town of Warren may not be paying in proportion to its call volume because it is not one of the larger towns, in terms of population, but it has a high call volume. Warren does not have its own police department, or a large population, but some of the major roads go through the town, which affects the number of calls.

Bill Jones commented that it was reported that 61 percent of the call volume came from Rockland, but Rockland does not pay 61 percent of the county taxes and does not pay 61 percent of the dispatch fees. Mr. Jones pointed out that, although, the rankings of the towns in terms of population and call volume were similar, the fees assessed, based on population were not as equitable as they might be and therefore he wanted the \$40,500.00 moved back into the general budget and the funding formula reviewed.

It was noted that call volume was not taken into consideration in either the dispatch fees or the taxes assessed to the town.

Bob Duke suggested that the costs associated with communications should be in the communications budget. It was understood that the advisory board had recommended the original split funding of the equipment and infrastructure costs because of their concern that if it was all in the communications budget, the towns might vote it down at their town meetings. He suggested that the fire chiefs go to the towns to explain the need for the equipment.

Ann Matlack suggested that first installment for the equipment and infrastructure replacement costs should be placed in the communications budget for 2010. The funding formula should be reviewed to determine the most equitable way to assess dispatch fees.

It was noted that the original proposal to have the total cost of the equipment and infrastructure replacement project in the amount of \$263,000.00 be placed in the 2010 budget. The change to having the project spread over a five year period made the upgrade more acceptable.

It was noted that Director Lothrop had applied for a grant, which may pay for most of the upgrade. If the grant is not received, then the costs will be spread over a five year period. The cost to borrow the money over the five year period is estimated to be \$21,000.00. The interest on a 5 year loan has not been put out to bid.

Bill Jones commented that it was still a surprise to find that the equipment was in such need of replacement. Sid Lindsley commented that as with many technological advances and equipment, there was always a need to upgrade and replace equipment as technological advances were made.

Bob Duke commented that there never was any premise that there would be no new equipment. Director Lothrop has been willing to make due with equipment many times as well as the small area allocated to dispatch in the law enforcement facility. The consoles were put off and then broke this year.

The consensus was to add the additional dispatcher based on the call volume reported and put the cost of the first year's installment to replace the equipment and infrastructure in the communications budget.

5. Other

Bob Duke had a list of budget items that were being added into the proposed 2010 budget. Mr. Hart e-mailed a list of new items or changes in the proposed budget and put them in the revised budget dated 11/4/09.

Sid Lindsley commented that he would like to see the additional deputy funded for six months.

County Administrator Andrew Hart reported that that the proposed budget for 2010 as revised with a number of additions is now \$100,000.00 over the assessment. Mr. Hart commented that the idea had been to keep the budget lean and this was one of the reasons he decided to cut the three positions requested and let the department heads present their reasons for their requests. Mr. Hart explained that his recommendation was not to use any surplus to off-set any increases.

One suggestion was to do a compensation and benefit study and an organizational and staffing study. This may be a more prudent way of looking at a department heads' request for additional staff. Mr. Hart explained that he planned to discuss contracting the studies out with the commissioners at their next meeting. The organizational study is probably a higher priority. Mr. Hart recommended the new positions not be funded at this time. It was noted that there had been some discussion towards the end of some of the previous meetings on staffing needs in terms of additions and cuts due to technological advances.

Another suggestion was to have better communications with department heads and have better capital purchasing plans.

Bob Duke mentioned that he had additional information on EMDC and KWRED for the next meeting. He agreed to e-mail the information to the county administrator for distribution. Mr. Duke did not recommend funding KWRED after reading the information. He was in favor of supporting an economic development department at the county level.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

- A motion was made by Sid Lindsley to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Bob Duke. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Constance W. Johanson  
Executive Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at the joint meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee held on December 3, 2009.**

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Anne H. Beebe-Center, Chair – Commissioner District #1

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Richard L. Parent, Jr. – Commissioner District #2

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Roger A. Moody – Commissioner District #3