

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Public Hearing - Budget

Thursday – December 5, 2013 – 6:00 p.m.

A public hearing on the proposed Knox County Budget for 2014 was held on Thursday, December 5, 2013, at 6:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Knox County Budget Committee and the Knox County Commission met following the public hearing.

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, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons, EMA Director Ray Sisk, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, and Systems Administrator Mike Dean.

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

Also present were: Juliette Laaka from the Courier Gazette; Washington Selectman Don Grinnell; and Rockland Resident Rebecca Lothrop.

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Joint Meeting – Public Hearing – Agenda

Jury Assembly Room

Thursday – December 5, 2013 – 6:00 p.m.

- I. 6:00 Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 6:01 Approve Minutes** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
 1. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 14, 2013.
- III. 6:03 Opening Remarks – Bob Duke, Chair**
- IV. 6:05 Public Hearing**
 1. Chair Duke Opens Public Hearing on the 2014 Proposed Knox County Budget.
 2. Chair Duke Closes Public Hearing.
- V. Budget Committee Vote on 2014 Budget**
 1. Vote to Approve 2014 Budget and Transmit to Commission.
- VI. Commission Vote on 2014 Budget**
 1. Vote to Approve 2014 Budget.
- VII. Public Hearing**
 1. Chair Maines Opens Public Hearing on the 2014 Proposed Knox Regional Communications Center Budget
 2. Chair Maines Closes Public Hearing
- VIII. Commission Vote on 2014 Communications Budget**
 1. Commission Vote to Approve 2014 Knox Regional Communications Center Budget.
- IX. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke called the December 5, 2013 Knox County Budget Committee meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Commission Chair Carol Maines called the December 5, 2013 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. Approve Minutes

1. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 14, 2013.

- A motion was made by Lawrence Nash to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Randy Stearns. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

III. Opening Remarks

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke

Chair Bob Duke asked everyone to introduce themselves:

Commissioner, Chair	Carol L. Maines	District 1	Owls Head, Rockland, Rockport and South Thomaston
Commissioner	Richard L. Parent	District 2	Cushing, Friendship, St. George, Thomaston and Warren
Commissioner	Roger A. Moody	District 3	Appleton, Camden, Hope, Isle Au Haut, Matinicus Isle Plantation, North Haven, Union, Vinalhaven, Washington and the unorganized territory of Criehaven
County Administrator	Andrew L. Hart		
Budget Committee, Chair	Bob Duke	District 5	Rockport and Camden south of Route 1 from Camden/Rockport line to the Megunticook River
Budget Committee	Ann Matlack	District 1	Isle Au Haut, Matinicus, North Haven, St. George and Friendship
Budget Committee	Dorothy Meriwether	District 2	South Thomaston, Vinalhaven and Owls Head
Budget Committee	Shawn Levasseur	District 3	Rockland
Budget Committee	Stephen Carroll	District 3	Rockland
Budget Committee	Randy Stearns	District 4	Camden – north of Route 1 from the Megunticook River
Budget Committee	Lawrence Nash	District 6	Appleton, Union and Washington
Budget Committee	Bill Jones*	District 7	Warren and Hope
Budget Committee	Elizabeth Watts*	District 8	Thomaston and Cushing

**Note: Bill Jones and Betty Watts were not present so they are included in this chart for information's sake.*

IV. Public Hearing

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke noted that this has been a very productive budget year and the budget is down from last year. The Budget Committee didn't work any less on the 2014 budget than they have in previous years. The department heads and County Administrator have done a great job in preparing the budget and fortunately there were no big surprises this year.

Question/Comment Period:

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 6:05 p.m.

Don Grinnell – Washington Selectman

Mr. Grinnell stated that selectmen from the Town of Washington have always tried to attend budget meetings. He said he wanted to thank the Budget Committee and Commission for thinking about the towns and presenting the budget as it is.

Bob Duke asked Administrator Hart if he wanted to speak on the budget. Administrator Hart stated that the budget hasn't really changed since the presentation at the first meeting on October 24th when he did the detailed overview of the departmental budgets. He said he did want to thank the department heads for the work they did in working on their budgets and having the overall budget lowered by 1.68%. He said he also appreciated the work the Budget Committee and Commission did during the process.

There was no other public comment.

Public Hearing Closed:

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed at 6:08 p.m.

V. Budget Committee Vote on 2014 Budget

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to approve the 2014 Knox County Budget as proposed in the total amount of \$8,524,679 and a net amount of \$6,635,343 and transmit the 2014 Knox County Budget to the Knox County Commission. The motion was seconded by Lawrence Nash. A vote was taken with all in favor. The motion therefore passed.

VI. Commission Vote on 2014 Budget

- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to approve the 2014 Knox County Budget as presented in the total amount of \$8,524,679 and a net amount of \$6,635,343. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The 2014 Budget was therefore passed.

VII. Public Hearing – Communications Budget

Commissioner Maines explained that this year at least, unless the process is changed in future years, this portion of the budget will be dealt with only by the Commission. She noted that the Commission had invited Budget Committee members to contact the Commission with any questions that they had, and the Budget Committee had received copies of the Communications budget along with the rest of the budget. She asked Administrator Hart if he had anything that he wanted to say about the Communications budget.

Administrator Hart stated that he had explained at a quarterly budget in July that the review of the Communications budget would be different for this year, at least. The Commission met in October to review all departmental budgets, including the Communications budget. The Commission then voted on the Communications budget in November, and their final vote would be tonight. He noted that Municipal Resources Inc, which did the Organizational Study for the County as a whole, is currently doing an in-depth study of the Communications department. They are looking at the budget approval process and also the governance structure. He said that the County does not know yet whether the Communications budget will be handled the same way next year or if it will be changed. MRI will present options to the Commission at a later date. MRI has just started a couple weeks ago. They are hoping to have something to present to the Commission within a 6 to 8 week period, so probably in February or March. The County

could know by the first quarterly budget meeting in 2014 how the County will handle the Communications budget review process during the next budget process.

Question/Comment Period:

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 6:12 p.m.

No members of the public spoke.

Budget Committee & Commission Discussion:

Ann Matlack commented that she understood that MRI was going to be looking at the Communications committees (KRCC Advisory Committee and Executive Board) but she was really not happy with the way the committees have been put together. She said she didn't think they were a good cross section of municipal government. She noted that she had received feedback from her municipalities and they are concerned about the costs. She said she wondered if there could also be a study of the technical system in place because there are still gaps in the system and there has been talk of there not being enough towers. She said she would like to be able to reassure folks in the County who don't necessarily understand the technical side about this so they will know that the County has an appropriate communications system in place and it's an appropriate amount of money that the County is spending.

Bob Duke commented that what Ms. Matlack was talking about wasn't specific to this budget. He voiced his opinion that if the general public knew that the responsibility of reviewing the Communications budget was taken away from the Budget Committee because of a technicality, they would be upset. He suggested that the public be polled to get a sense of how they want the Communications budget reviewed. If the public wants the Budget Committee to retain the responsibility of reviewing the Communications budget, the Charter would have to be changed, which can be done. He said that he didn't believe that the Charter Committee intended for the Budget Committee to be isolated from the review of the Communications budget. He said that he was personally offended that it was removed based on a technicality.

Commissioner Maines restated Ann Matlack and Bob Duke's concerns to make sure she had understood them correctly.

Ann Matlack asked who determines what the Executive Board is made up of. She asked if people selected themselves or if the Commissioners select who serves on the Committee. Commissioner Moody explained that there is a policy (the KRCC bylaws) in place that determines the governance structure, which has been in place for quite some time. The Commission had the County attorney review the Charter and Communications bylaws and the attorney's legal advice was that the Budget Committee did not review the Communications budget. The bylaws are one of the things being looked at by MRI and there may be other issues that MRI needs to look at as the County reviews the process.

Administrator Hart stated that the Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement. From that group, an Executive Board is elected by the members of the Advisory Committee. The bylaws definitely need to be revamped, which is one of the things MRI is working on. He noted that the Advisory Committee also needs to be revamped because if you ask the selectmen who their representatives are to the Advisory Committee, they don't even know because a lot of time has passed and there's been a lot of turnover in the towns. The County is planning to go to the towns and ask them who their representatives are and they may need to re-elect people if they don't know who their representatives are. He said that the County doesn't even know if the people showing up to the meetings are the right people to be there. Also, the ambulance service represents multiple municipalities so how many votes to they get? It's things like that that have to be figured out. The bylaws were established before the Charter was put in place by the voters and it is out of date.

Commissioner Maines asked Communications Director Linwood Lothrop if he had anything to add.

Communications Director Lothrop stated that if anyone had any concerns about the budget or issues they wanted addressed that he was more than willing to answer questions and discuss things. The survey by MRI is definitely needed. There hasn't been a revision of the bylaws since they were put in place in 2000 (they were written in 1999). The bylaws don't even follow the county administrator form of government. He said that he was going to be looking at the study to identify who are the representatives for each down to determine who is going to be distributing information back to the towns. Those representatives are supposed to be sharing information with their towns. Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement individuals tend to be the makeup of the Committee because they understand communications and what the issues are. He said that the County is working to improve the overall operations of the Communications Center and streamline the budget process. He said that he would like to see a finance committee be formed to work on the Communications budget made up of the County Administrator, a member of the Commission, and representatives of the Budget Committee. In the past there 5 levels of review: it started with the county administrator, went to the Advisory Committee, then the Executive Board, then the Budget Committee, and finally to the Commission. The process worked but could definitely be streamlined and still give everybody an opportunity to have input. He added that the County is waiting for MRI to report what they're learning from other similar counties on how their communications centers' governance is set up. He encouraged anyone with questions to ask.

Dorothy Meriwether noted that she wanted to clarify for those who didn't understand that the "technicality" that Bob Duke was referring to was the difference between some things falling under taxes versus user fees. The attorney had determined that the Communications Center was funded through user fees and not taxes and that's why the Budget Committee was not going to review the Communications Budget. She said that she also wanted to comment on what Ann Matlack had said about the people who serve on the Advisory Committee. She said that it was her understanding as a selectman herself, that in the past the determination of who is on the Advisory Committee was the County going out and finding whoever the County thought was the best representative of the town. She said that if she understood correctly, the County approached South Thomaston's Fire Chief and ambulance director. She noted that their chief is a county employee so she felt that that's a conflict. Public service employees always, and should, want the best equipment they can get; however, that doesn't mean that the taxpayers can afford it. She said that in her opinion, the selection of who serves on the Advisory Committee is a decision that the selectmen need to make – not the Communications department.

Director Lothrop responded that he fully agreed that the towns should be selecting their own representatives. He clarified by stating that the County has never gone to the municipalities and said "it should be you, you and you". He said that he was definitely not telling towns who is going to be on the Advisory Committee. He added that anyone that is an official representative for the town is welcome to come regardless of if they are in Fire, EMS or Law Enforcement.

Commissioner Maines commented that she wanted the Budget Committee to know that when the Commission reviewed the Communications budget in November, the commissioners did ask quite a few questions about the budget and discussed issues with both Administrator Hart and Director Lothrop.

Public Hearing Closed:

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed at 6:28 p.m.

VIII. Commission Vote on 2014 Communications Budget

- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to approve the 2014 Knox Regional Communications Budget as presented in the total amount of \$1,450,999 and a net amount of \$1,013,832 (with \$37,167 will be coming out of Communications Surplus). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The 2014 Knox Regional Communications Budget was therefore passed.

IX. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Lawrence Nash.

Randy Stearns noted that he's been doing this a few years so far and he expressed some frustration that he doesn't get much feedback from people from the community he represents. He thanked meeting attendees for taking the time to show up and give feedback, including the department heads that gave a lot of helpful information.

- A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on January 14, 2014. The Knox County Budget Committee will approve these minutes at their next quarterly meeting during Quarter 1 of 2014.