

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Joint Meeting Knox County Commission & Budget Committee

Thursday – October 19, 2017 – 5:00 p.m.

A special joint meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Knox County Budget Committee was held on Thursday, October 19, 2017, 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 Sharyn L. Pohlman, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Systems Administrator Mike Dean, Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Judge of Probate Carol Emery (*arrived at 5:04 p.m.*), Finance Director Kathy Robinson, and Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves (*arrived at 5:10 p.m.*).

Budget Committee members present were: Roger Peabody (*arrived at 5:14 p.m.*), Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Randy Stearns, Dorothy Meriwether, Shawn Levasseur, and Gerry Zwick. *Committee members not present: Nicholas Lapham and Terry Pinto.*

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Joint Meeting Agenda

Commission Hearing Room

Thursday – October 19, 2017 – 5:00 p.m.

- I. 5:00 **Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 5:01 **Approve Minutes** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee)
 1. Minutes of the Joint Budget Meeting of August 3, 2017
- III. 5:03 **Election of Budget Committee Officers**
 1. Chair
 2. Vice Chair
 3. Secretary
- IV. 5:08 **Public Hearing**
 1. Budget Committee Chair Opens Public Hearing on 2018 Proposed Knox County Budget
 2. Budget Committee Chair closes Public Hearing
- V. 5:10 **Joint Meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee for the Presentation of the Proposed 2018 Budget** (County Administrator Andrew Hart)
- VI. 5:30 **Budget Review**
 1. Registry of Deeds
 2. Probate
 3. County Administration & IT
 4. Debt Service
 5. Finance
- VII. **Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

The October 19, 2017 joint meeting of the Knox County Budget Committee and the Knox County Commission was called to order by Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke and Commission Chair Carol Maines at 5:02 p.m.

II. Approve Minutes

1. Quarterly Budget Meeting of August 3, 2017.

- Lawrence Nash motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Gerry Zwick seconded the motion. A vote was taken with 3 in favor (Bob Duke, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur), 2 opposed (Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash) and 1 abstention (Randy Stearns). The motion carried.

III. Budget Committee Election of Officers

1. Chair:

- Lawrence Nash nominated Bob Duke to serve as Budget Committee Chair for 2017. The nomination was seconded by Randy Stearns.
- Lawrence Nash made a motion to end nominations. Randy Stearns seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A vote was taken on the nomination of Bob Duke with all in favor.

2. Vice-Chair:

- Randy Stearns nominated Shawn Levasseur to serve as Vice Chair for 2017. The nomination was seconded by Gerry Zwick. A vote was taken with all in favor.

3. Secretary:

- Randy Stearns nominated Lawrence Nash to serve as Secretary for 2017. The nomination was seconded by Gerry Zwick. A vote was taken with all in favor.

IV. Public Hearing

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 5:05 p.m. No members of the public chose to speak.

The public hearing was closed at 5:06 p.m.

V. Joint Meeting with the Knox County Budget Committee for the Presentation of the Proposed 2018 Budget.

The Commissioners and Budget Committee members introduced themselves:

Commissioner	Carol L. Maines, Chair	District 1	Owls Head, Rockland, and South Thomaston, and Thomaston
Commissioner	Richard L. Parent	District 2	Cushing, Friendship, St. George, Union, Washington and Warren
Commissioner, Chair	Sharyn L. Pohlman	District 3	Appleton, Camden, Hope, Isle Au Haut, Matinicus Isle Plantation, North Haven, Rockport, Vinalhaven, and the unorganized territories of Criehaven and Muscle Ridge Islands
Budget Committee	Bob Duke, Chair	District 5	Rockport and Hope
Budget Committee	Nicholas Lapham	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	Terry Pinto	District 3	Rockland

Budget Committee	Shawn Levasseur	District 3	Rockland
Budget Committee	Randy Stearns	District 4	Camden
Budget Committee	Lawrence Nash	District 6	Appleton, Union and Washington
Budget Committee	Roger Peabody	District 7	Warren
Budget Committee	Gerald Zwick	District 8	Thomaston and Cushing

Administrator Hart noted that soon Dorothy Meriwether’s district, which is District 2, will also include the Unorganized Territory of Criehaven because the Bureau of Elections put that in for approval during the last election, which was approved. It just hasn’t been finalized in the statute yet. He stated that once he’s been notified that that statute has been updated and finalized, he’d let Ms. Meriwether know.

Administrator Andrew Hart briefly mentioned some highlights in the proposed budget:

- The department heads began working on their budget drafts in August and submitted them to the County Administrator and the Finance Director, who then met with departments to review their budget drafts. The Commission met on September 29 with department heads to review the whole budget draft.
- The 2018 total budget shows a \$677,861 increase (9.3%) over the 2017 total budget.
- The proposed COLA for 2018 is 1.9%.
- Anyone eligible under the wage plan for the 2% step increase will receive that in 2018.
- Health Insurance increase calculated at 10% but the actual rates will be finalized by mid November.
- Workers Comp and the Risk Pool are currently estimated at a 10% increase but the actual rates will be finalized by mid November. We are expecting our workers comp rate to go down.
- The Courthouse Building Maintenance budget includes a lease/purchase figure for the HVAC project just as a placeholder. This will be discussed next week in detail when the building maintenance budgets are reviewed.

Administrator Hart explained that everyone had been given a couple handouts. One was the Deeds revenue chart since that wasn’t ready when the binders were put together. The second item was a typed up list of questions from Nick Lapham with Administrator Hart’s answers beneath them.

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke encouraged all of the Budget Committee members to read through the Charter and familiarize themselves with the responsibilities of the Committee. The Committee is not here to discuss policy and needs to review the budget and stay on target. He said that he would like the Committee to not discuss last year’s issues and instead focus on this year’s budget. He reminded everyone that after each department is reviewed, the Budget Committee takes a straw vote to gauge how the Committee collectively feels. It gives administration an idea of what everyone is thinking. Straw votes are non-binding votes.

Gerry Zwick asked where it was possible to get a copy of the Charter. It was noted that the Charter is available for download on the County’s website. Administrative Assistant Candice Richards offered to email it to all of the Budget Committee members after the meeting.

VI. Budget Review

1. Registry of Deeds

Register Lisa Simmons went over a few highlights from her budget:

- The total revenues over expenditures budget has decreased by \$46,738 (4%) from (\$193,160) in the 2017 budget to (\$146,422) in the 2018 budget.

Register Simmons explained that while the 4th quarter is starting out well in terms of revenue, it's hard to say how the rest of the quarter will go. She will continue to monitor revenues with Administrator Hart as the budget process continues and hopefully the number will be able to be adjusted before the 2018 budget is finalized. The revenues are reliant on properties being bought and sold and the documents that are recorded in the Registry.

Chair Duke asked if the microfilming and recording line could be lowered if not as many documents are being recorded. He noted that the amount in the budget draft is the same as in 2017 but not that much has been spent from that line in 2017. Register Simmons said that she would look into it because it might be a possibility.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of ~~(\$146,422)~~:

In favor:	7 (Bob Duke, Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Randy Stearns)
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of ~~(\$146,422)~~:

In favor:	3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman, Carol Maines)
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

2. Probate

Register Elaine Hallett went over a few highlights from her budget:

- The budget is down 3% from the 2017 budget (\$2,142).

When Judge Emery was asked why she was not included in the County's wage plan, Judge Emery responded that it was because she is elected.

Administrator Hart gave a little background by explaining that when the County first did the compensation plan, three elected officials requested to be left out of the plan (the Sheriff, Register of Probate, and Judge of Probate), so the Commission honored the request and left them out of the plan. Later on the Register of Probate and the Sheriff agreed to be put in into the wage plan, which took the guess-work out of figuring out what their pay should be each year. With the Judge, however, it's difficult to compare her pay rate against other Judges of Probate because each county has a different work load, and each judge works a different number of hours because they work as needed, not necessarily a scheduled number of hours. Judge Emery agreed that it is very difficult to compare pay rates with the other judges in Maine; however, Judge Emery said that she would be willing to have another conversation with Administrator Hart about trying to find a way to include her in the wage plan, especially since she is the only of the three elected officials (not counting the commissioners) that has yet to be put in the plan. She said she was unaware that she was the only elected official not on the County's wage scale.

Judge Emery was asked if there are backlog of cases in Knox County; she stated that there was absolutely no backlog of cases. Judge Emery gave a very brief overview of some statutory changes coming to Probate (more of an FYI - not necessarily budget-related).

When asked about the statutes book that was in the budget draft, Judge Emery asked that the funding for that not be cut because she needs the actual book. Online research is not always appropriate when you're in a hearing and need the book in front of you. Register Elaine Hallett explained that the cost in

the budget pays for when the book gets updated and the updates are sent to their office. Sometimes the whole book is replaced, and sometimes it's just supplemental updates that are sent.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$127,908:

In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Randy Stearns)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$127,908:

In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman, Carol Maines)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

3. Administration & IT

Administrator Hart discussed some key points about the Administration and IT budget:

- Increased by \$31,556 (6%) over 2017 budget.
- Advertizing is increased because the budget line is going to go over before the end of the year.
- Legal is being lowered for 2018 but as always, it's difficult to estimate how much will actually be needed. The Airport, Jail, and Communications departments all budget for their own legal now. Legal for all other County departments (including the Sheriff's Department) is covered under the Administration budget.
- Knox County is due to have the Orthoimagery data refreshed (the State takes new images every 5 years).
- Spillman (the law enforcement database) maintenance tends to go up about 10% every year.

When asked what Orthoimagery is, Systems Administrator Dean explained that the State flies planes over a region and takes digital photographs. Municipalities use the images for various purposes including assessing and road planning. Administrator Hart added that the State funds the majority of it through a grant they receive. Knox County last did the update in 2012 and since it's done every five years, it's time for this region to be done again. By the County participating and buying in at the base, the towns can buy up (meaning they can buy increased resolution so they can zoom in closer to what they want to look at) and they get a discounted rate to do so. The data gets used for tax maps and a number of other town functions. If the program continues, the County will be doing it again in another five years. The question was raised whether the funding for this should be in the EMA budget since EMA has a GIS Database Manager, but while Orthoimagery does have some GIS applications, they really aren't that connected and Orthoimagery isn't essential to GIS. For this reason, the funding has been in the Administrative & IT budget so far.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's budget recommendation of \$525,685:

In favor: 6 (Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Randy Stearns)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 1 (Bob Duke)

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$525,685:

In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman, Carol Maines)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

4. Debt Service

Administrator Hart noted that 2018 will be year six of the debt service on the Public Safety Building. The amount of \$202,332 is \$8,399 less than the payment made in 2017. The payment amount goes down every year and will be completely paid off in 2027. TAN interest is the same as in 2017.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$208,332:

In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Randy Stearns)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$208,332:

In favor: 3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman, Carol Maines)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

5. Finance

Finance Director Kathy Robinson went over a few highlights from her budget:

- The budget is up 4% over the 2017 budget (\$10,308)
- The cost of the audit has decreased by 15%.
- Postage and Shipping has gone down by 25% because her staff tries to email more often rather than mailing communication, and whenever possible, vendors are encouraged to sign up for EFT’s (Electronic Funds Transfers) rather than the County mailing them a check.
- Equipment Rental is down by 20% because of a new photocopier lease.
- Copy paper was lowered by 52% for the same reason as Postage and Shipping, but also because the office is printing almost everything double-sided to save on paper.

When asked why the Miscellaneous Revenue line dropped so significantly (-83%), Finance Director Robinson said that she thought it could actually be increased a bit more than when she first put in a figure. She explained that the Miscellaneous revenue includes when the County receives certain grants for special details that the Sheriff’s Office conducts that the County can sometimes get an administrative fee for, and it also includes the fees charged to towns when they do not pay their taxes and/or dispatch fees on time. It’s hard to guess what will be coming in from year to year.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$291,071:

In favor: 7 (Bob Duke, Dorothy Meriwether, Lawrence Nash, Gerry Zwick, Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, and Randy Stearns)
 Against: 0
 Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator’s budget recommendation of \$291,071:

In favor:	3 (Richard Parent, Sharyn Pohlman, Carol Maines)
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

6. OTHER

Dorothy Meriwether stated that she had attended the recent Commission meeting and at that meeting the Budget Committee members present were asked if they thought the Siemens Industry reps should come back and do their presentation again since the majority of the Committee did not hear it the first time. Chair Duke said that he didn’t think the presentation needed to be given again because he had read the minutes from the Commission meeting, and the Budget Committee doesn’t need to know the technical aspect of it; the Committee just needs to talk about how it’s going to get funded. When asked if there are any federal grants that could help pay for the Courthouse HVAC project, Administrator Hart said that unfortunately, there isn’t.

Chair Duke asked if the towns had all been sent a copy of the budget draft. Administrator Hart stated that the Administrative Office had emailed the budget draft to the municipalities on the afternoon of October 13th.

Chair Duke suggested to his fellow Budget Committee members that they contact the towns that they represent and offer to pass on any local input that the towns may have.

Next Meeting – October 26

Administrator Hart reminded everyone that the next budget review meeting is October 26th at 5 p.m. the departments being reviewed that night are the District Attorney, Emergency Management Agency, Building Maintenance, and Communications.

VII. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Dorothy Meriwether to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Randy Stearns. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sharyn Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice S. Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Budget Committee & Knox County Commission approved these minutes at the next joint meeting on October 26, 2017.