

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Friday – October 2, 2015 - 9:00 a.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Friday, October 2, 2015, at 9:00 a.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

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: Administrator Andrew Hart, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, EMA Director Ray Sisk, EMA Geospatial Database Manager Leticia vanVuuren Monahan, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Jail Administrator John Hinkley, District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau, DA Administrative Secretary/Computer & Network Systems Admin Kelly Leland, DA Prosecutorial Assistant/Investigator Shane Riley, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, Building Maintenance Supervisor Don Decker and Systems Administrator Mike Dean.

Others present included: Maine Real Estate Management President Paul Cook.

Special Meeting – Agenda **Friday – October 2, 2015 – 9:00 a.m.**

- I. 9:00 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 9:01 Discussion Items**
 - 1. Review of the 2016 Knox County Budget Draft.
- III. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commission Chair Roger Moody called the special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 9:00 a.m.

II. Discussion Items

1. Discussion of Knox County 2016 Budget Draft.

Administrator Hart gave a brief overview of the 2016 budget draft:

- Total expenditures: \$10,148,458
- Total revenues \$2,937,932
- Net budget of \$7,210,527
- Projected \$345,874 increase over the 2015 budget, which is a 5.04% increase.
- Main reasons for the increase:
 - 1) building envelope project - \$138,000 in the Building Maintenance budget under capital items
 - 2) decrease in Deeds revenue because revenues in 2015 are lower than was originally projected
 - 3) decrease in Sheriff's Office revenues and an increase in health insurance plans (going from single to family plans)
 - 4) used \$100,000 from surplus in the 2015 budget to reduce the overall budget but not projecting using any surplus in the 2016 so that's a \$100,000 impact on the 2016 budget
 - 5) the jail budget has been brought back into the overall county budget because of the new legislation that returns jails to the counties

Administration & IT

Presented by County Administrator Andrew Hart.

Expenditures:

- Labor relations decreased by \$2,000 because there were less negotiations done in 2015
- Legal fees decreased by \$15,400 because the Jail, KRCC, and Airport now pay for their own legal costs
- Office supplies line includes \$2,400 for the cost of getting set up to do video streaming of Commission Meetings (purchasing the equipment) and also includes \$500 for a new office chair for the county administrator's office
- Computer supplies line is up \$2,700 to pay for scheduled replacement of computers (two desktop computers and one laptop)
- Other minor changes

Revenues:

- Workers Compensation refund of \$3,500

Total budget of \$479,173, down 2% from the 2015 budget.

It was noted that the Consultations Fees budget line, which is for the HR consultant, was not increased even though the consultant is going to be doing an in-house review of the wage plan. It was also noted that there is a committee that reviews employment positions and job descriptions before changes are brought to the Commission for approval.

Building Maintenance – Courthouse

Presented by County Administrator Andrew Hart, as well as Paul Cook and Don Decker from Maine Real Estate Management, the contractor handling building maintenance services for the County.

Expenditures:

- Grounds maintenance increased by \$3,321, or \$16.7%.
- Building Maintenance Supervisor Don Decker had been doing a lot of the landscaping (lawn care, mowing, weeding, etc.) himself at both the Courthouse and Public Safety Building but he just does not have enough time so the landscaping will be pushed back onto the landscaping contractor. The services will be bid out to get a firm amount to put in the budget.

Revenues:

- Down 5.7%

Capital Expenditures:

- \$138,101 for the lease/purchase for the building envelope repairs project (5 year lease with an interest rate of 2.14%)
- \$5,000 for carpet replacement

Total budget of \$331,122, up 90% from the 2015 budget.

Building Maintenance – Public Safety Building

Presented by County Administrator Andrew Hart, as well as Paul Cook and Don Decker from Maine Real Estate Management, which handles building maintenance services for the County.

Expenditures:

- Grounds maintenance increased by \$3,912, or \$66.6%, same reason as was given for increase in Courthouse building maintenance budget.

Total budget of \$74,339, up 4.2% from the 2015 budget.

Registry of Deeds

Presented by Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons.

Expenditures:

- Most expenditure lines are down.

Revenues:

- Down 7.8% overall based on revenue trends in 2015.
- Copy revenues are down in particular because the law allows the first 500 copies to be free so that's all revenue the County has lost.
- Transfer tax revenues have gone up a little in 2015 but it is very unpredictable.

Total budget of (\$154,143), down 18.8% from the 2015 budget.

District Attorney

Presented by District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau.

Expenditures:

- Most budget lines are very stable.
- Biggest change is the addition of "Justice Web", made by the same company that also developed the prosecution database called "JustWare". Justice Web is being adopted by all DA's offices in the state. The company has agreed to only charge half-price to all prosecutors all across the state since they are all buying in together. The amount in the budget is Knox County's share of the cost. The primary function is to provide reports and other documents to defendants and defense attorneys electronically. Many attorneys have been asking for this for a long time because they all want to get information electronically. If it works well, it will mean the DA's office will spend less on printer costs (since the documents will not be printed) and will also save on postage. Another advantage is that the system will record each time a file has been accessed so the staff will have a record of when the documentation was released to a defendant or their attorney to help alleviate claims that individuals did not receive the documentation. There is a one-time cost to get started, which is in the computer supplies line, and then there will be an annual maintenance agreement.
- Increase is offset by court witness fees going down due to the creation of the Unified Docket for the state's court system and some changes the state made with the process so that there are less witnesses being summonsed to court.

Revenues:

- The DA Witness Advocate Grant is actually increasing by 17.9%. The increase, however, is offset by some other lines like training, meals, travel, etc. because the staff's training, etc. used to be reimbursed by the grant but it took a really long time. Now the County will pay for all of those expenses and instead of being reimbursed, the grant itself was just increased to offset it.

Total budget of \$436,639, up 2.4% from the 2015 budget.

Emergency Management Agency

Presented by EMA Director Ray Sisk.

Expenditures:

- Personnel Services – increasing due to the Geospatial Database Manager position being funded for the full year in 2016 (position started part-way through 2015), and retirement/resignation

benefits for the EMA administrative assistant who will be retiring December 31, 2016. The increase overall is about 10.8%.

- Lenfest Tower Site may have a slight increase in the rental, but that is uncertain.
- If the County is able to keep the tower site at the same rental rate it is currently at, contractual services for EMA will be at a 1.8% decrease for 2016.
- Gas for the EMA vehicle is down 20.3% due to the vehicle being driven less often and the cost of gas has gone down a lot.
- Commodities is down 4.6%.

Revenues:

- EMA Special Program Reimbursements is a fund based on revenue from volunteer time and attendance at EMA related meetings. The estimate is about \$16,500 in funds in 2016.

Total budget of \$74,695, down 10.0% from the 2015 budget.

Finance

Presented by Finance Director Kathy Robinson.

Expenditures:

- One big change is the Finance Clerk's position going from a full-time position with benefits to a part-time position without benefits.
- Overtime was increased to get the department through the transition since the part-time person will be working more hours while getting educated on the position, and the Deputy Treasurer will also need to work some extra hours during the transition.
- Two computers need to be replaced, which is a one-time purchase.

Total budget of \$259,418, down 4.1% from the 2015 budget.

Jail

Presented by Jail Administrator John Hinkley.

Expenditures:

- Based on averages of the previous couple years.
- Some capital improvements that are needed were not put in the budget for 2016 to keep the jail budget under the cap (which is set by legislation).
- Food services budget line is lower than 2014 actuals because of changes in employee hours.
- Inmate food costs are down because of the jail gardens doing really well.
- The jail now has a budget line for legal expenses instead of the Administration budget funding it. It is a hard line to predict for the budget. The \$47,000 in the budget is an estimate based on the past few years.
- Projected growth factor over the tax cap is 3% (\$96,661) allowed by statute, which puts the new tax cap for 2016 at \$3,284,361.
- The jail budget is under the cap by \$19,543 because there are no capital items in the budget.

Administrator Hart noted that depending on what SMRT finds when the study of the jail is conducted, if there are a bunch of things that need to be done to maintain the jail building, the County does not currently have the money to fund that. The County would have to look at the jail budget and find a way to pay for it, and personnel services is the biggest driving force in any budget so the County may have to consider laying employees off. The County is trying to find ways to save money by working with

other counties. Major Hinkley noted that while a new control system is badly needed for the jail, the future of the jail is unknown and that is a big part of why he did not include capital items in his budget.

Total budget of \$3,264,818 (which is \$19,543 below the capped amount of \$3,284,361).

Probate

Presented by Register of Probate Elaine Hallett.

Expenditures:

- Large increase in postage expenses (up 92%) due to the department now doing U.S. Passports. Offset by revenues from doing the passports.
- Replacing one computer and upgrading a server. The computer being replaced (by a new one for staff) will be used as a public access computer.
- Register Hallett was proposing increasing her hours from 30 to 35, in part due to the extra work load from the department issuing passports. The Post Office has been sending people to Probate instead of doing the passports at the Post Office. The public has been very happy to come get their passport without having to make an appointment first.

Total budget of \$135,793, down 4.0% from the 2015 budget.

Sheriff Department – Patrol Division

Presented by Chief Deputy Tim Carroll.

Expenditures:

- Changing (at least through to the end of 2016) the patrol administrator's position to a patrol supervisor position to see if that will work out better for the department, will offset the decrease in Civil Process revenues because a supervisor makes less than the patrol administrator.
- Also changing the administrative assistant position from a full-time position to a part-time (25 hours/week)
- These two personnel changes lower the personnel services costs by 1.8% (\$22,067).
- Vehicle gas line reduced by 20% (\$15,000) due to lower gas prices and staff shopping around for better prices.
- Increased K-9 food and supplies line by 40% (\$200) because of increased costs.
- Health insurance costs have gone up 17.9% (\$48,224)

Revenues:

- Decrease of 33.3% (\$30,000) in Civil Process revenues

Capital Expenditures:

- Up 38.5% (\$25,000) because of continuing to replace in-car video equipment and the cost of new vehicles. Continuing to purchase the Ford Police Interceptors because of good gas mileage and cost less overall. State Police are still using them as well and have switched to more of the small SUV version of the car, which is what the Sheriff's Office is also doing. The SUV's do cost a little bit more than the sedan version.

It was noted that although deputies take their County-issued vehicles home, the Sheriff's Office tries to keep mileage down by having deputies leave their vehicle somewhere between if they live too far away. One deputy left his vehicle at the Waldoboro Police Department.

Total budget of \$1,828,223, up 3.5% from the 2015 budget.

Airport

Presented by Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves.

Expenditures:

- Total expenditures (contractual, commodities and capital) down 0.8%.
- \$9,000 has been put into the resignation/termination benefits line because a long-time airport maintenance employee may retire in the next year or two. It will be about \$18,000 when the employee retires, so if he chooses to retire in 2016, there will only be enough budgeted for half, but there is a County resignation/termination benefits line that can help cover it. If he retires in 2017, the airport budget will have enough in it. The employee has not made a decision on when he will retire.
- Since that maintenance supervisor employee is already on the last Step on the wage plan (Step 16), a stipend has been included in the budget for that employee of \$910.00. This is the first year this is being done for employees already at the top of their Pay Grade who do not receive Step increases because it is the first year performance appraisals have been done.
- Increase in hours requested for the administrative assistant – changing the number of hours worked each week from 32 to 40.
- Going out to bid for winter plowing for the airport parking lot because current vendor was planning to increase his rate in 2016.
- Building Repairs Maintenance increased by 229.5% (\$27,540) because it now includes a maintenance agreement with AAA and also funds to help pay for the geothermal system repairs.
- Looking at the possibility of lowering electricity costs by trying a different provider because costs are continuing to go up.
- \$1,000 included in the Office Supplies line to pay for a defibrillator since the airport does not have one and a recent incident at the airport highlighted the need for one.
- Computer Supplies line includes \$850 for computer replacements.

Revenues:

- One reason the overall budget is down so much for 2016 is that higher revenues are anticipated due to a large aircraft being kept at the airport, which results in the airport being able to collect aircraft excise tax from the aircraft's owner. The owner made the choice to keep the aircraft here because the County is planning to extend the runway by 400 feet. If for some reason the County ends up not extending the runway, the aircraft will probably no longer be kept here and the County would lose that revenue. The County is not able to do the extension until the FAA approves funding after the County does an Environmental Assessment and another study on the runway safety area.
- Revenues are up 5.8% (\$25,885)

Capital Expenditures:

- The overall budget is down so much in part due to the fact that the 2015 budget had the spike in it from the \$65,000 in Capital to pay for the County's share of the AIP projects.
- 2016 Capital includes \$14,000 for various vegetation management equipment.

Total budget of \$98,888, down 23.7% from the 2015 budget.

Knox Regional Communications Center

Presented by KRCC Director Linwood Lothrop.

Expenditures:

- Includes the addition of another dispatcher position starting June of 2016. The position was not put for January 1st because of the length of time it takes to go through the hiring process. The additional position is based on the workload of the Communications Center. Documentation was provided that compared the Knox Regional Communications Center's staffing levels and work load against three other counties of similar size. Knox has the largest work load by far, but the lowest number of staff. The data is backed up by State statistical reports. The need for additional staff is also supported by the Organizational Study's report in 2010. Because of the lack of enough dispatchers, supervisors are having to fill in as regular dispatchers and are unable to do their supervisory duties, which include monthly reports to the state, Quality Assurance, supervising/evaluating/training/consultations with the other dispatchers, etc.
- Radio Repairs & Maintenance line is up 22.7% (\$9,540) for the Avtec consoles (dispatcher work stations) software maintenance agreement.
- Legal Fees is a new budget line now that the KRCC pays its own legal expenses.

Commissioner Moody asked Director Lothrop to estimate the remaining months of 2015 based on the trend the year is currently following so that 2015 can be compared against the other years his write-up showed to give a better idea of how the overall trend is going. It was also discussed adding in data for Hancock, Oxford, and Franklin counties.

When asked if the KRCC Executive Board and KRCC User Group supported the additional dispatcher position in the budget, Director Lothrop responded that yes, both the Executive Board and User Group supported it, and they had even asked Administrator Hart why he didn't support it in the budget. Both groups voted to support the KRCC budget as presented, which included the additional position. Director Lothrop noted that the Executive Board is willing to come to the budget meetings and be there to support the communications budget. Administrator Hart noted that it is important to recognize that the Executive Board does support the budget with the additional position in it. If the users of the system support the budget, then the Budget Committee should support it as well, especially since it is funded through user fees, not taxes.

Capital Expenditures:

- Remote IP Monitor – coming out of KRCC Surplus (not in operating budget)
- ProQA Software – coming out of KRCC Surplus (not in operating budget)
- Fleet SYNC ANI – coming out of KRCC Surplus (not in operating budget)

Total budget of \$1,006,513, down 1.4% from the 2015 budget.

Director Lothrop noted that with communications technology changing rapidly in the next few years, there is a lot to learn about what is happening and what it means for consumers. He recommended that the commissioners check out his blog site for more information: <http://knoxrcc.blogspot.com/>.

Miscellaneous

Presented by County Administrator Andrew Hart.

Debt Service

- The County is now on its 4th Bond payment.
- The Bond Interest payment is down by 7.2% (\$3,399) from 2015.
- Keeping the TAN Interest amount the same.

Knox-Lincoln Cooperative Extension Service

- Asking for the same amount as last year: \$57,042.

Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District

- Their request was handed in several days past the deadline.
- Asking for \$27,473, a 3% increase (\$800) over their 2015 budget request.
- Administrator Hart put \$0 in his recommendation column since the budgetary request was not received by the submission deadline.

Administrator Hart noted that he had received a call from Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water the day before. KLSW had received the same email with the information about submitting a budgetary request and the deadline that went out to all four program grants and had responded saying that they received the email. They also acknowledged that they received the hard copy that went in the mail. Apparently the problem was that they were thinking the due date was a week later than it actually was. Commissioner Parent noted that he had spoken with the staff at KLSW and the staff member had written the date on their calendar but got busy and was thinking the due date was in a different week. She actually thought she was dropping it off early, not realizing it was a week late. He did note, however, that the letter was sitting on her desk and it had been sitting there for two weeks before she brought it in.

Commissioner Moody said that the Commission needed to decide whether to support including KLSW's request in the budget. Commissioner Parent said that he had to support it. The commissioners were not sure if the County had to fund KLSW like Knox-Lincoln Extension Service, which is required by state statute, but Administrator Hart said that he had looked into that and KLSW is not something the County is required by law to fund. He noted that the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission got their request in two days after the letters went out, and most of the organizations just use the same request but change the figures so it shouldn't take that long to get their request in. He said that the question is whether the County holds organizations to deadlines or not. The County may want to establish a policy so it wouldn't be up for debate each time it happens. He noted that he checked with Lincoln County to see if KLSW had met that county's deadline, and it turns out that KLSW's request to Lincoln County was handed in late as well. Lincoln County decided to give them some slack this year since their budget process was behind schedule anyway, but if it happens again next year, Lincoln County will not fund their request.

Commissioner Parent felt that the mistake of the request being handed in late was the fault of one person, not the entire agency, and the organization should be penalized for that. The request was prepared by senior organization officials days prior to the due date but the administrative staff mixed up the dates and handed the request in late.

Commissioner Moody said that he didn't have a problem leaving the request in the budget because the County has always funded KLSW and the organization has a proven track record. However, if it happens again next year, the County shouldn't accept their request. He asked Administrator Hart what the Commission needed to do at this meeting. Administrator Hart suggested it might make sense for the Commission to vote on this issue since the Budget Committee wanted the Commission to decide what program grant requests go into the budget draft. Commissioner Parent felt that he should abstain from the vote because he helps the organization in a supervisory fashion, though he makes no money from it.

Commissioner Maines felt that KLSW shouldn't get a complete pass for having turned in their request late. She suggested putting an amount in the budget for the organization but without the increase they had requested over the 2015 request.

- Commissioner Maines made a motion to include Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District in the budget draft but at the amount requested in the 2015 budget rather than the amount requested for the 2016 budget (a difference of 3% or \$800). Commissioner Parent seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Midcoast Economic Development District

- 2016 request is not clear based on documentation provided.
- The Budget Committee had voted not to fund MCEDD in 2015 but the Commission overrode their decision and allocated \$10,000 to MCEDD.
- MCEDD has since merged with MCOG and now has a different funding formula – the County either pays the requested amount to buy in or is not a member.
- The remainder of the 2015 funds owed to MCEDD has been sent but as it did not include the extra money MCEDD wanted, it is unknown if MCEDD will follow through with the threat to send the check back if the County did not also send the extra funding beyond what the County actually budgeted.

Commissioner Moody felt that it was hard to justify the money because he was not sure what the actual benefit will be. The four municipalities that were interested in MCEDD have already bought in and do not need to be covered by the County buying in. Commissioner Parent said that the towns he represented were not any of the four that had already bought in, so he was concerned with making sure that these smaller towns had access to the same economic development resources. He was worried that one of those towns might need a grant and not have the ability to get it. Commissioner Moody noted that economic development in the larger towns does benefit the smaller towns because the people working in the larger towns live in the smaller ones. Commissioner Maines wondered if MCEDD should be given a chance to prove their worth since it is a new organization (having merged with MCOG) in this area. The Commission also does not know if MCEDD will actually send back the \$5,000 check or not.

It was noted that one of the things that bothered members of both the Budget Committee and Commission so much during the last budget process was that it seemed like MCEDD was not only making it sound like the organization was doing more than it was, but was also taking credit for work in the towns done by others, not MCEDD. The information MCEDD handed in this year is similar to what was handed in last year – it talks more about what is being done in Lincoln County and does not say much about what is being done in Knox County. Administrator Hart noted that he was confused by MCEDD's dues calculations because the formula is based on per capita but MCEDD is not using population figures supported by the U.S. Census and he didn't know where MCEDD had gotten the figures from. He added that since any amount the County pays to buy in to MCEDD is distributed among all of the municipalities in Knox County in the County tax assessment, the four municipalities that already bought in on their own will end up essentially being billed twice for the service. He felt that the information from MCEDD needed to be explained better to help the Budget Committee and Commission understand.

- Commissioner Parent motioned to approve MCEDD's budget request. Commissioner Maines seconded the motion but noted she was not clear on the actual amount requested.

Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart to check with MCEDD's Executive Director, Jeff Kobrock, to find out exactly what the County would have to pay during the 2016 calendar year since the documentation from MCEDD was built on fiscal years. The Commissioners also wanted to see the breakdown for the four municipalities that had already bought in on their own.

- A vote was taken with all in favor.

Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission

- Same budget request as in numerous prior years: \$2,500

Other Discussions

MMA Leader Program

Administrator Hart noted that the Leadership Program visit had taken place this week and he wanted to thank all of the departments, and especially Ray Sisk as the head of the Safety Committee, for all of their hard work because the County had done really well this year. Dan Whittier said he saw a big difference in departments keeping records and the work being done, which helps with the County's workers comp reimbursement. There are still some improvements to make but the Commission can be proud of the commitment by departments.

SHAPE Program

Administrator Hart noted that the County is going to get into the SHAPE program through the Maine Department of Labor. That will help with workers comp reimbursement, but not until 2017. If the County is accepted into the program, Knox will be the first county in Maine to do it. EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that the SHAPE program recognizes when public employers are not only meeting the standard, but exceeding it with respect to employees' health and safety. Participation also protects the County from surprise inspections and shows that the County is committed to safety being a priority.

Computers

It was noted that some departments have computer replacements in their budgets and that Systems Administrator Mike Dean was working with departments to keep them on track with replacing computers on the 3 - 5 year schedule plan.

Additional Positions or Increasing Employees Hours

Airport Manager Northgraves expressed some frustration about the fact that the county administrator will not support any department managers' requests to either increase an employee's hours or add new positions in the budget, even when the administrator says that he agrees in some cases that the new position or additional hours are warranted. He said that rather than having the Budget Committee weigh in on the matter, it is time for the administrator and the Commission to step up and make a decision on whether or not they support increasing his administrative assistant's hours to 40 hours/week. The organizational study supported this and based on the airport manager's work load, the change is warranted.

Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart to explain why he has continually not supported staffing changes in the budget and asked if it was because Administrator Hart was trying to keep the budget down. Administrator Hart said that there were two reasons:

- 1) To keep the overall budget down
- 2) To be consistent - he did not think it was fair for him to pick and choose or support one position but not another, so he said no to everyone.

Administrator Hart noted that he had not put the additional supervisor position for Patrol in his proposal column for the 2015 budget but the Sheriff and Chief Deputy were able to convince the Budget Committee that the position was needed so the additional expense was approved anyway. He said that he supported the additional position in concept but that his focus is on keeping the budget down.

The request by Probate Register Elaine Hallett to increase her hours from 32 to 35 was briefly discussed. Finance Director Robinson noted that the Register's position should be treated differently than the others because the position is elected and Exempt (salaried). The person filling the position works the number of hours it takes to get the job done. It cannot really be compared with the other positions in question in this budget. Administrator Hart responded that departments needed to convince the Budget Committee and Commission that the position should be funded. He said that other departments are cutting hours and every year he looks at the budget and asks himself whether some staff needs to be cut. He noted that he did not believe that it should be up to him to recommend an increase in staff or hours. Commissioner Moody commented that he wished Register Hallett had provided more information on why she wanted to increase her hours. Administrator Hart noted that salaried employees should know that they work the number of hours that they need to in order to get

the job done – the salary is what it is and people already know that. Finance Director Robinson commented that most department managers are paid salary based on 40 hours but often work a lot more hours than that.

Administrator Hart noted that the Register of Probate is one of three elected positions that requested to be taken out of the compensation study. If they had stayed in the study, the positions would have been placed on a Grade and Step, and would receive step increases. Because these three positions did not want to be in the wage plan, they do not automatically receive increases. They hurt themselves by not wanting to participate, especially since there will be no CPI increase for anyone this year.

Commissioner Maines asked Manager Northgraves about the impact if the administrative assistant's hours were not increased. He explained that right now she does not work on Fridays, so that means that if someone wants to pay their parking fees, or needs to ask a question, etc. there is no one there. On Fridays and in the late afternoons when she has left, Manager Northgraves ends up doing those tasks for her which takes him away from his own work. Besides that, now that the airport has the new terminal, the administrative assistant is truly a receptionist and will be the one the public stops to ask questions of. Cape Air is rarely at their desk when they are working flights and do not have time to answer questions related to other areas of the airport. Commissioner Maines noted that besides easing the operational workload, increasing the administrative assistant's hours also has a direct positive effect on the public.

Commissioner Maines said that the Commission would consider it but Commissioner Moody was not sure that now was the time to be considering the request. Manager Northgraves said that he believed that now is the time to decide. Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart if there was enough time to calculate what increasing the hours would have for an effect on the budget before the regular Commission meeting in October so it could be discussed then and was told yes. Commissioner Moody asked for more information from Probate on the request to increase hours. Administrator Hart noted that the Register of Probate position has always been 30 hours. It is also the only department head position that works less than 40 hours. Other department managers are paid for 40 but often work a lot more hours than that. The Register of Probate comes in at 9 a.m. and leaves by 4 p.m. She does not work extra hours beyond the 30. He said that he could not support an increase for that position but the request should have been supported by justification so the Commission and Budget Committee can make an informed decision. Commissioner Moody commented that the increase in work in Probate due to the department now handling passports is not a managerial function so the Register should be looking to increase the hours of her part-time staff, not her own hours and pay. Finance Director added that if a department manager wants to increase hours for any staff in their department, they should have solid statistical information to back up the request and not just that you are not completing all your work before the end of the day because no one ever really does.

Director Lothrop stated that he had the same concerns as the Airport Manager about the County Administrator not supporting department managers in their staffing change requests even if he agrees that a department needs that change. Director Lothrop noted that it caused some confusion at the KRCC Executive Board and User Group meetings because they looked at the county administrator and said, "why don't you support this?" He said that the Administrator's response was the same he related to the Commission in this meeting. Director Lothrop noted that the lack of support from the Administrator made him feel like a ship that's dead in the water but he will continue to argue his case before the Commission and later on the Budget Committee.

Employees on Step 16 Receiving Bonuses

There was a discussion about employees who have reached the top of their Grade (reached Step 16) and no longer receive Step increases. The "bonus" does not increase their base wage but rewards them for being long-term employees. Commissioner Moody expressed some concern that giving employees bonuses could cause a breakdown in teamwork because the other employees might resent their coworker getting an extra bonus. It could be construed as favoritism. He said that he objected to it and

would prefer to award bonuses to a team of employees, rather than one person, for supporting each other and working well together. Commissioner Maines noted that the other employees are already receiving a Step increase, whereas the topped out employees are not. Commissioner Parent believed that bonuses should only be given for exemplary service. It should not happen automatically every year – but rather occasionally when the employee has done an exemplary performance, and is not just “average”. Manager Northgraves commented that as long as the employee isn’t doing a “bad” job, they should still get the bonus. Administrator Hart stated that if an employee is only doing an “average” performance, they won’t be getting a bonus. He reminded the Commission that the ability to award bonuses was already in the Position Classification & Salary Administration Policy as approved by the Commission in 2011. It just had not been implemented yet because the employee performance appraisals did not start until the middle of 2015. He added that bonuses would not be given in 2015 but at the end of 2016 after the employee’s evaluation has been done, because that is what the policy says. A discussion will be held with the department manager on whether the employee should get a bonus or not. If the employee gets a “meets” expectations rating instead of “exceeds”, then the employee would not get the bonus. The policy says that an employee on Step 16 “may” get a bonus, not that they “shall” get it. He read aloud from the policy:

***Special Bonus.** An employee with very good performance record who is ineligible for a pay increase solely because s/he has reached the top of the salary range for his/her position, may be rewarded with a bonus equal to or less than the dollar amount of the increase to which the employee would have otherwise been entitled. Assuming the salary increase would have been processed in January, this Special Bonus would be paid in the last pay of December (at the end of the period).*

Commissioner Parent asked whose decision it would be to award a bonus. Administrator Hart said that the department manager would make a recommendation and he would then make a decision after discussing it with the department manager. Commissioner Moody wanted to know what the dollar impact was going to be and thought maybe some money should be set aside to pay for it because he thought that the County could end up with a bunch of employees reaching Step 16 and continue being stellar employees, which would earn them a bonus. Those employees will already be receiving a COLA increase anyway, if the Commission approves one, so it’s not like they’re getting nothing. He wanted to know what the impact on the County was going to be and said that looking at each individual department did not give him an overall picture of that impact. He said he would insist on knowing what the trend will be after the first year, how many employees will be maxing out at Step 16, and how many bonuses will the County give out increasingly as the years go by.

Commissioner Maines asked how everyone felt about employees that have been here long enough to be on Step 16. She asked if everyone felt that those employees were getting “stale” and whether the County should hang on to them or let them go. She said that people cling to a public job like this while the rest of the economy is poor. If the Step 16 employees do not get bonuses, the County may lose them. Commissioner Moody noted that the object of the wage plan was to get and stay current with the market, and the County should review the plan maybe every five years to make sure it’s updated.

Administrator Hart said that he would pull the information together and gave it for the regular Commission meeting on October 13th.

Communications Director Lothrop stated that he wanted to comment on the implication that long-term employees no longer have any value because he was offended by it. He said that in his line of work, the job is always changing – it does not matter how long he has been in the position – so as an employee he will never get “stale”. In the realm of communications, you can buy electronic equipment one day and have it become obsolete shortly thereafter, so there is always something new to learn and work with. He also continues to further his education every year and goes to school more often now than he did 15 years ago. Commissioner Maines responded that Director Lothrop had misunderstood her comment and that she was just posing the question of how, generally speaking, the County looks at long-term

employees as opposed to new ones, in terms of costs, etc. A lot of companies will hire the new college graduates and get rid of their older employees so she was just bringing up the subject in general.

Director Lothrop also commented that he agreed with the idea of reviewing the wage plan every five years because his own position has changed drastically in the past five years and a lot of significant technological changes will increase both his work load and the workload of the dispatchers, so those things need to be looked at and reviewed.

Jail Inmate Fund Reimbursement

Finance Director Robinson noted that this should have been brought up during the jail discussion. She wanted to talk about the fund since it has never been used to fund personnel services and this year the administration was hoping to do that. The reason the difference in personnel costs in 2016 is not as big as it might otherwise be, is because there is \$83,000 coming out of the inmate fund reimbursement to help cover personnel costs in 2016. The money in that checking account comes from the money made by the jail commissary and the phone that the inmates use. The funds can be used to help pay personnel services for County staff working directly with the commissary or with the inmates, such as the administrative assistant, assistant programs position and the corrections maintenance position. The rules regarding the use of the funds is not law but rather set by the jail standards created by the Department of Corrections.

Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart to check with other counties to make sure Knox County can use these funds in this way. Administrator Hart explained that he already had spoken to other counties and Jail Administrator Hinkley had spoken with the Attorney General's Office about it as well.

Jail Control System

As much as a new system is needed, the County cannot go over the budget cap on the jail, so to put the \$450,000 in the budget for 2016, that much would have to be cut out of the jail's operating budget to fund that, which isn't realistic. To go over the cap, the County would have to get approval to raise more taxes. Commissioner Maines asked if the County could go out to bond for the money but Administrator Hart explained that the timeframe for that had already passed. The County could do another lease/purchase, like what was just bid out for the courthouse repairs, but the County would still have to fund another \$130,000 so it doesn't make sense to do that. The only other option would be to zero Jail Surplus out but he didn't think that was a good idea because until the facility study of the jail is completed, there's no way to know what will happen with the jail. Commissioners were nervous that using the funds in this way might not actually be allowed. Administrator Hart said that he would talk to the Department of Corrections or the Attorney General's Office just to verify things.

III. Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on November 10, 2015.**