

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

**Special Joint Meeting**

**Thursday – November 10, 2016 – 5:00 p.m.**

## **Knox County Commission and Budget Committee**

A special joint meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Knox County Budget Committee was held on Thursday, November 10, 2016, at 5:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Administrative Assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

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

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Chief Deputy Carroll, and Jail Administrator John Hinkley.

Budget Committee members present were: Nicholas Lapham, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Randy Stearns, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Shawn Levasseur, and Terry Pinto. *Budget Committee members not present: Gerald Zwick.*

Others in attendance: John Spear, Representative Elect for State House District 92; Sonja Sleeper, resident of South Thomaston.

### **Knox County Commission and Budget Committee Joint Meeting Agenda Commission Hearing Room Thursday – November 10, 2016 – 5:00 p.m.**

- I. 5:00 Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Roger Moody for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 5:01 Public Comment**
- III. 5:05 Approve Minutes**
  - 1. Minutes of the Joint Budget Meeting of October 27, 2016
- V. Budget Review**
  - 1. Sheriff's Office – Patrol Division (Pgs 26 - 28)
  - 2. Sheriff's Office – Jail Division (Pgs 21 - 23)
- VI. Adjourn**

#### **I. Meeting Called to Order**

The November 10, 2016 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 Roger Moody at 5:01 p.m.

#### **II. Public Comment**

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke asked if there was any public comment.

Sonya Sleeper of the South Thomaston Budget Committee.

Ms. Sleeper stated that she had attended the prior budget meeting and had listened to the discussion about the cost of benefits for an employee going from being part-time to full-time. She reminded the Budget Committee and Commission that the money the County spends belongs to the tax payers and government officials should be considering cutting benefits for employees out. She felt that with the creation of "Obama Care", employees might be able to get cheaper insurance anyway. She asked that everyone keep in mind that some of the public can't afford things.

There was no other public comment.

### III. Approve Minutes

#### 1. Minutes of Joint Budget Meeting of October 27, 2016.

- Dorothy Meriwether motioned to approve the minutes. Randy Stearns seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- Commissioner Richard Parent motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Carol Maines seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.

### IV. Budget Review

#### 1. Sheriff's Office – JAIL DIVISION

Major Hinkley and Sheriff Dennison went over a few details and answered various questions about the 2017 jail budget:

- Overall budget is up 3% over 2016.
- The County jails are no longer involved with the Board of Corrections since that was disbanded by the legislature. The County has gone years (since 2008) without being able to repair things because of the BOC. It is now to the point where some repairs are critical needs.
- For the most part, the operational budget itself has gone down. The personnel services is a zero percent increase. Contractual expenses are at a 5% decrease and Commodities are down 3%. The increases of the budget over the 2016 budget comes from the badly needed repairs, mainly the control system. The control system has to be replaced. It can no longer be repaired.
- Large expenses, including the medical care for the inmates, transport vehicles, and the new control system that the jail needs, are all put out to competitive bid.
- The County had been looking at possibly changing the mission of the jail to being a 72-hour hold and a female re-entry facility, but doing so would require paying other jails to board the County's prisoners that didn't fit into those categories. This would cost more than it would cost to fix the jail's control system and other issues in order to bring it up to standard.
- The Jail Administrator's proposal has different figures than the County Administrator's proposal in some instances because the Jail Administrator's proposal was only the first draft. Since then, numerous changes and updates have been made, all of which are reflected in the County Administrator's column. It is the same with all of the other departments.
- Overtime usage is high, but it's not because the employees are underpaid; it is because the jail has been short-staffed and so employees are having to fill extra shifts. It is hard to find people to work in corrections – it is a very tough job. Jails all over the state are having the same problem.
- The Inmate Fund Reimbursement funds helped cover the costs of three County employees in 2016 who work directly with the inmates. The funding comes from the inmates themselves when they buy things in the commissary and can only be used for direct services to the inmates. The funds are not sustainable, however, so this is not something that can be done every year.
- The current legislation only allows the jail budget to be increased by either 3%, or the County's growth factor, whichever is lower. The County's growth factor was higher than 3% this year, so the jail is capped at a 3% increase.
- While waiting to see what the current legislature will do with regards to county jails, the County still needs to move forward with putting together an RFP package for going out to bid on the control system while the County still has the variance from the Department of Corrections. The process of doing that will take time; the actual work of putting in a new control system would be further down the road.

**A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the county administrator's recommendation of a net budget of \$3,388,782:**

In favor: 8 (Nicholas Lapham, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Randy Stearns, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Shawn Levasseur, Terry Pinto)  
 Against: 0  
 Abstained: 0

**A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the county administrator's recommendation of a net budget of \$3,388,782:**

In favor: 3 (Carol Maines, Richard Parent, Roger Moody)  
 Against: 0  
 Abstained: 0

The Sheriff offered to do a tour at the jail for anyone that wanted to come do it. She just asked that those wanting to do a tour contact the administration to schedule a time that won't conflict with activities at the jail and make sure there is staff available to conduct the tour.

## **2. Sheriff's Office – PATROL DIVISION**

Chief Deputy Carroll and Sheriff Dennison went over some of the changes to and answered questions about the Patrol budget for 2017:

- Overall the budget is up 4% over 2016
- Contractual services has decreased
- Personnel Services and Commodities have increased
- The Sheriff's Department now has a contract with Georges River Shellfish Management Committee, which is made up of 5 towns. It's a conservation group that the Sheriff's Department is providing an enforcement deputy (Shellfish Warden) for 30 hours per week for their conservation efforts. They bought their own vehicle. The budget shows an increase in the salary line but it is offset in the revenue line from the Committee refunding the County for the officer. It works the same way with the MDEA contract. It seems to be going very well and will likely continue.
- The Sheriff's Department has been meeting with various towns to discuss the possibility of handling animal control, but nothing has been set in stone and it likely would not be county-wide. If the County ends up providing those services, there will likely be a contract with participating municipalities similar to the Shellfish Warden contract.
- In 2016 the department temporarily tried having 4 patrol supervisors (sergeants) instead of 3 supervisors and 1 patrol administrator (lieutenant). It did not work out as the administration had hoped. The sergeants need more direct supervision than the Chief Deputy has time for because his time is split between patrol and the jail. For 2017 the department would like to promote one of the 4 sergeants to the patrol administrator position. The number of employees would not change, but one will be promoted to create a better chain of command.
- Forfeiture funds will be utilized again this year to help pay for scheduled vehicle replacements. Vehicles are not financed because they don't last long enough to make it worth doing it that way.
- The computers that the deputies use were purchased with a grant in 2009 for the patrol vehicles. Those computers were since then but are old enough now that they need to be replaced again. The plan going forward is to pay for 2/3rds of the computers in 2017, and then after that replace 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the computers every three years since that's roughly the life span of a computer.

There was some discussion among Budget Committee members about whether it was really necessary to replace 2/3rds of the laptops the first year. They wanted to do 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. Some Committee members also

questioned the amount budgeted for each computer because they didn't think it was necessary to spend that much money on a computer. Chief Deputy Carroll explained about the type of computer that patrol staff require in their patrol vehicles that meet specific needs of law enforcement officers, such as being physically tougher and having higher levels of capabilities. They have to be able to handle complex software and conform to security requirements set by the FBI. These types of computers cost more than a basic computer that an average citizen might buy. The last time the department replaced their laptops, the administration decided to try out a cheaper model to save money, but the computers have not held up well at all and need to be replaced. This time the plan is to buy computers that fall in the middle – still good quality but not as expensive as the “tough books” that were purchased a decade ago.

Administrator Hart expressed some frustration that Committee members were bringing up technical questions relating to IT when he had asked them to ask all of their IT related questions the night of the 10/20 meeting when Systems Administrator Dean was present to answer questions. Some Committee members felt that it was unrealistic to expect them to come up with IT questions for all departments the first night, but Administrator Hart reminded them that everyone had received the entire budget up front, with all of the departmental budgets in it and not just the departments reviewed on 10/20. He said that neither he nor the Sheriff or Chief Deputy Carroll felt comfortable answering IT questions. The replacement of 2/3rds of the patrol computers and the replacement schedule after that was a recommendation by Systems Administrator Mike Dean and he would be the most qualified person to speak to that. Administrator Hart said that he would attempt to contact Systems Administrator Dean about the replacement schedule issue, but Mike is currently on vacation and so it was uncertain about whether he would be able to respond.

- **Bob Duke made a motion to cut the Administrator’s recommendation of \$1,899,030 for the Patrol budget by \$16,250 (cutting the amount budgeted for computers in half) for a new net budget of \$1,882,780. The motion was seconded by Dorothy Meriwether.**

**A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve a net budget of \$1,882,780:**

In favor:	8 (Nicholas Lapham, Bob Duke, Lawrence Nash, Randy Stearns, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Shawn Levasseur, Terry Pinto)
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

**A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Budget Committee’s recommendation of a net budget of \$1, 882,780:**

In favor:	3 (Carol Maines, Richard Parent, Roger Moody)
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

Commissioner Maines requested that Administrator Hart try to get in touch with Systems Administrator Mike Dean about the computers issue. He said he would.

**Other Topics Discussed**

**Tax Cap**

Administrator Hart was asked about the jail tax cap because it appeared that the County was over the cap based on the numbers in the budget draft. Administrator Hart explained that the numbers will end up changing anyway depending on what happens with the actual numbers for health insurance and some other factors. At the next budget meeting there will be a completely new/updated budget draft for everyone. He noted that before the \$175,000 was put in the budget for the control system at the jail, the budget was only up 0.2% over last year, so that one item is what brought up the budget.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next meeting is November 17<sup>th</sup>. Administrator Hart asked if the Commission and Committee felt the budget could be wrapped up that night or if the “if needed” meeting on the schedule for the 22<sup>nd</sup> would also be needed. Chair Bob Duke felt that the budget process could be finished on the 17<sup>th</sup> so Administrator Hart said that he would ask all of the department managers to attend the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> to answer any last questions that the Commission and Budget Committee have.

**V. 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 Carol Maines to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice S. Richards  
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their next joint meeting on December 8, 2016.**