

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

## Public Hearing - Budget

Thursday – December 11, 2014 – 6:00 p.m.

A public hearing on the proposed Knox County Budget for 2015 was held on Thursday, December 11, 2014, 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 (*arrived at 6:29 p.m.*), and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons, EMA Director Ray Sisk, EMA Administrative Assistant Donna Allen; EMA Geospatial Database Manager Leticia vanVuuren Monahan, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, and Lt. Kirk Guerrette.

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

Also present were: Kerry Leichtman, Appraiser for the Towns of Camden and Rockport; Joanne Richards, Thomaston Planning Board Chair; Esperanza Stancioff, UMaine Extension; Rockland resident Peta vanVuuren; and Rockland resident Rebecca Lothrop.

### Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

#### Joint Meeting – Public Hearing – Agenda

Jury Assembly Room

Thursday – December 11, 2014 – 6:00 p.m.

- I. 6:00 Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Dorothy Meriwether for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 6:01 Approve Minutes** (Chair Dorothy Meriwether for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Carol Maines for the Knox County Commission)
  - 1. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 13, 2014.
  - 2. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 20, 2014.
- III. 6:03 Opening Remarks – Dorothy Meriwether, Chair**
- IV. 6:05 Public Hearing**
  - 1. Chair Meriwether Opens Public Hearing on the 2015 Proposed Knox County Budget.
  - 2. Chair Meriwether Closes Public Hearing.
- V. Budget Committee Vote on 2015 Budget**
  - 1. Vote to Approve 2015 Budget and Transmit to Commission.
- VI. Commission Vote on 2015 Budget**
  - 1. Vote to Approve 2015 Budget.
- VII. Adjourn**

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

Budget Committee Chair Dorothy Meriwether called the December 11, 2014 Knox County Budget Committee meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Commission Chair Carol Maines called the December 11, 2014 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 6:05 p.m.

#### **II. Approve Minutes**

Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 13, 2014 and November 20, 2014.

- A motion was made by Bob Duke to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ann Matlack. 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 Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor.

### III. Opening Remarks

#### **Budget Committee Chair Dorothy Meriwether**

Chair Dorothy Meriwether 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	<i>Appointed</i>	
Budget Committee	Ann Matlack	District 1	Isle Au Haut, Matinicus, North Haven, St. George and Friendship
Budget Committee, Chair	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	Bob Duke	District 5	Rockport and Camden south of Route 1 from Camden/Rockport line to the Megunticook River
Budget Committee	Lawrence Nash	District 6	Appleton, Union and Washington
Budget Committee	Bill Jones*	District 7	Warren and Hope
Budget Committee	Tom Mellor	District 8	Thomaston and Cushing

*\*Note: Bill Jones was not present but is included in this chart for information's sake.*

Chair Dorothy Meriwether relayed the following information about the changes in the 2015 budget:

- The total expenditures for the 2015 budget are budgeted at \$9,790,361, less revenue and including the dispatch assessments this equals a net budget of \$8,012,818. This is a total increase of 4.85% over the prior year.
- The increase is primarily due to personnel costs, including a 1.6% cost of living increase and a 2% step increase as approved by the Position Evaluation & Salary Administration Policy, and increases in other costs including an 8.35% increase in costs for health benefits.
- 2015 will be the third year of the bond payment for the Public Safety Building, and this is in the amount of \$217,531. Last year the Commission voted to take \$230,000 out of Surplus, partially to offset last year's payment. This year they've recommended \$100,000 to be used from Surplus; therefore there's a \$130,000 reduction.

- The Patrol Division has requested a new patrol supervisor position, primarily due to a 68% increase in reported incidents from 2009 - 2013, during which time they were operating with the same number of personnel. The Budget Committee has voted to include this new position for an additional projected cost of \$78,000. In order to reduce this expense line, it was recommended by the Committee that \$40,000 be taken from Forfeiture Funds and applied towards the cost of the purchase of a new vehicle.
- EMA personnel services increased with the addition of a Geospatial Database Manager position. This employee will be a valuable asset, available for support and assistance for any mapping projects for all Knox County municipalities. This is at an additional expense of \$16,712, but is 50% offset by EMPG reimbursement funds.
- There is an unfortunate projected decrease of \$21,000 in Deeds revenue for 2015.
- The Jail budget is once again capped at \$3,188,780, as determined by the Board of Corrections. At the Airport, total expenditures were up 17.1%. That's \$574,208, in large part due to a \$65,000 request for the County's portion of a runway rehabilitation project. These increases have been significantly offset by an increase in airport revenues of \$84,986 due to a renegotiation of the contract with Cape Air.
- The Communications budget is up only just under 1% due to a reduction in Capital expenditures.
- The proposed budget is \$264,309 below the 2015 LD1 tax cap limit.

Administrator Hart gave a brief overview of the 2015 budget process. He explained that the process began in August of 2014 with a request made to all department managers to submit a 12-month budget for the 2015 calendar year. Department managers were provided with spreadsheets to do their budget drafts, which already contained the personnel services information as by the Finance Director using an employee database. Department managers were asked to complete the budget forms and submit them to the Finance Director by September 5<sup>th</sup>, along with supporting information and documentation. The completed budget request forms were reviewed by the County Administrator and the Finance Director. Meetings were then scheduled during the week of September 15<sup>th</sup> with the department manager, the County Administrator, and the Finance Director to discuss and review the budget requests. The Commission met with department managers on October 3<sup>rd</sup> to review the budget draft and ask questions. The Commission and Budget Committee met during October and November to review the budget, with the last meeting being on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **IV. Public Hearing**

##### Question/Comment Period:

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 6:14 p.m.

##### John Gibbons from the Town of Union

Mr. Gibbons asked if MCEDD would receive funding in the budget. Budget Committee Chair Dorothy Meriwether responded that there was currently no funding for MCEDD built into the 2015 budget. Mr. Gibbons then asked to speak. He said that MCEDD's purpose is to drive the economic health of the district. MCEDD is new and is still trying to get its feet under itself in order to carry out its mission of supporting the counties that make up the district. MCEDD really needs support from the counties to be successful. All the other economic development districts in Maine have been around for decades so they've gotten to the point where they are really successful. MCEDD won't need that much assistance after just a couple more years. The funding requested of Knox County is only a small part of what the MCEDD budget will look like in a couple years, but it's a support that's needed or larger pieces won't be put into place.

##### Kerry Leichtman, Assessor for the Towns of Camden and Rockport

Mr. Leichtman introduced himself as the Assessor for the Towns of Camden and Rockport. He said that he wanted to speak in support of the new Geospatial Database Manager position. He said that GIS is fairly new and a lot of people don't understand it. The Town of Rockport has been using GIS for a number of years now and sees the great possibilities that it offers. He explained that he has been trying to get himself

educated on GIS for years now but he is also the assessor and therefore can't devote too much time to it. He said that he was actually initially against the idea of a County GIS person because he thought it was just basic mapping. Over the past few weeks, however, he has had some chances to meet with the County's Geospatial Database Manager and to work with her. He was very impressed with her knowledge and training. The towns will be able to do far more sophisticated work with her assistance. He gave an example of some sewer issues the Town of Rockport is having and how the County is helping to figure it out with GIS assistance. He said that while some towns are only at the basic mapping level, he personally needs the higher level of expertise that the County position provides, and that he hopes that at some point that the County will make it a full-time position.

There was no other public comment.

Public Hearing Closed:

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed at 6:22 p.m.

Dorothy Meriwether asked the Budget Committee if they had any comments.

Steve Carroll expressed some concern about the budget increase, especially when combined with municipal tax increases. He felt that the County should not increase the 2015 budget over the 2014 budget.

- Steve Carroll made a motion to reduce the budget to a zero percent increase and to allow the county administrator to adjust within the departments as he sees fit. Randy seconded the motion for discussion.

Several comments were made by other Budget Committee members who were strongly against the motion made. Some of the comments included Committee members feeling like the Committee had spent a lot of time going over the budget and making sure the County had earned and retained professional employees through the implemented wage plan, and that flat-lining the budget now undermined all of the work already done and was a disservice to Knox County citizens.

Chair Dorothy Meriwether stated that she was troubled that after the Committee had spent a great deal of time working on this budget and had plenty of opportunity to discuss concerns, having a Committee member trying to make a cut at the end was upsetting. She added that a flat cut across the board, and then handing it to the administrator to figure it out, essentially abdicates their responsibility as the Budget Committee.

*Commissioner Richard Parent arrived at 6:29 p.m.*

- A vote was taken on the motion with 1 in favor (Steve Carroll), and 7 opposed (Dorothy Meriwether, Ann Matlack, Bob Duke, Tom Mellor, Randy Stearns, Shawn Levasseur, and Lawrence Nash). The motion failed.

Commissioner Moody explained to the Budget Committee that he was disappointed at the fact that the Committee had not supporting MCEDD receiving any funding. He felt that MCEDD is worth it and wanted the Committee to be aware that he intended to propose to the Commission to appropriate \$10,000 to MCEDD. It was noted that Lincoln County has changed their mind and is now funding \$8,000 to MCEDD for 2015. When asked what would happen if the Commission voted on a budget total different than what the Budget Committee approved, Commissioner Moody explained that if the Commission wanted to make a change to the budget after it is voted on by the Budget Committee, the Commission could only do so with a unanimous vote. If the Budget Committee wanted to pass the budget at the figure the Committee had approved, the Committee would need a 2/3rds majority to be successful.

Randy Stearns noted some concerns he had about the budget because he felt that instead of increasing the number of employees in two departments, the County should be focusing on putting funding towards making the repairs to the Courthouse building. He said that if the money for that project is taken out of

surplus instead of being built into the budget, the County isn't being very transparent or presenting a fair budget to the communities. He added that while he does feel that the budget overall is well done, he would be voting against the budget due to his stated concerns.

After questions were raised about why the figures for the health insurance and workers compensation insurance had gone up since the last budget draft, Administrator Hart re-explained what he had stated at the previous budget meeting. The health insurance figure that was originally put in the first budget draft was either 5 or 6%. The County has MMEHT (Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust) for a health insurance carrier, and the number doesn't get finalized until around the time of the last budget meeting. When the County finally received the figures, the increase ended up being 8.3%. For workers compensation insurance, the County had estimated a 10% increase, but that ended up coming in at 17%, although that's not across the board. It depends on the payroll. Administrator Hart noted that the budget was actually at a lower number than at the previous meeting because money was voted to be taken from forfeiture that lowered the budget.

Chair Dorothy Meriwether stated that the Commission had discussed the issue of the building repairs at their Regular Commission meeting on Tuesday and asked the Commission to explain where they are in that process.

Commissioner Parent gave a brief history of how the County came to realize that the exterior of the courthouse was in great need of work. He explained that while Building Envelope Specialists (BES) was able to determine that the building is not in as bad a condition as originally believed, the County can't wait too long to implement repairs. He said that the Commission wanted to put it out to bid this winter to see what kind of pricing the County would get in any bids received. The County may not award it yet depending what the County receives for bids. The current estimate for repairs is around \$465,000.

Dorothy Meriwether added that she had been at that Commission meeting and had asked Scott Whitaker of BES if there currently any life safety issues that would necessitate the project being done right away, but Mr. Whitaker said no.

Commissioner Maines commented that not everyone on the Commission agrees that the public would react negatively to a bond. She said that she felt the public would understand that the courthouse is a 140-year-old building that needs to be fixed and maintained.

## **V. Budget Committee Vote on 2015 Budget**

- A motion was made by Ann Matlack to approve the 2015 Knox County Budget as proposed in the total amount of \$9,790,361 and a net amount of \$8,012,818 and transmit the 2015 Knox County Budget to the Knox County Commission. The motion was seconded by Tom Mellor. A vote was taken with 5 in favor (Lawrence Nash, Ann Matlack, Dorothy Meriwether, Tom Mellor, and Shawn Levasseur) and 3 opposed (Steve Carroll, Bob Duke, and Randy Stearns). The motion therefore passed.

## **VI. Commission Vote on 2015 Budget**

- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to approve the 2015 Knox County Budget as in the total amount of \$9,800,361 and a net amount of \$8,023,018 (this includes the Budget Committee figures plus an additional \$10,000 appropriation for MCEDD). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor. The motion therefore passed.

The 2015 budget was passed back to the Budget Committee. Chair Dorothy Meriwether called for a Budget Committee vote.

- A motion was made by Bob Duke to approve the 2015 Knox County Budget in the total amount of \$9,800,361 and a net amount of \$8,023,018. The motion was seconded by Dorothy Meriwether.

After a discussion about what the Budget Committee needed to vote on and an explanation from Administrator Hart on the wording in the Charter on the process, Bob Duke withdrew his motion and Dorothy Meriwether withdrew her second of the motion.

- A motion was made by Ann Matlack to reject the 2015 Knox County Budget as presented by the Commission and to approve the original budget figures approved by the Committee. The motion was seconded by Shawn Levasseur. A vote was taken with 2 in favor (Shawn Levasseur and Steve Carroll), 5 opposed (Bob Duke, Dorothy Meriwether, Tom Mellor, Lawrence Nash, and Ann Matlack), and 1 abstention (Randy Stearns). The motion failed.

**The 2015 Budget was therefore passed at the Commission approved figures of a total amount of \$9,800,361 and a net amount of \$8,023,018.**

## **VII. Adjourn**

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ann Matlack. 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 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on January 13, 2015. The Knox County Budget Committee will approve these minutes at their next quarterly meeting during Quarter 1 of 2015**