

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Public Hearing - Budget

Thursday – December 8, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

A public hearing on the proposed Knox County Budget for 2017 was held on Thursday, December 8, 2016, 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 (*arrived at 6:07 p.m.*), 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, Systems Administrator Mike Dean, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Sheriff Donna Dennison (*arrived by 6:08 p.m.*), Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, District Attorney Geoffrey Rushlau, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Lisa Simmons, EMA Director Ray Sisk, EMA Geospatial Database Manager Leticia vanVuuren, and Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves.

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

Also present were: Camden Fire Chief and KRCC Executive Board Chair Chris Farley; Appleton Selectman John Fenner; Thomaston Budget Committee Member Beverly St. Clair; Rockland Code Enforcement Officer John Root (*left at 6:28 p.m.*); Warren Selectman William Lufkin; Rockland resident Rebecca Lothrop; Dan Smith, Reporter for the Courier Gazette; St. George resident Reta vanVuuren; and Kerry Leichtman, Assessor's Agent for the Town's of Camden and Rockport.

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Joint Meeting – Public Hearing – Agenda

Thursday – December 8, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

- I. 6:00 Meeting Called To Order** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Roger Moody for the Knox County Commission)
- II. 6:01 Approve Minutes** (Chair Bob Duke for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Roger Moody for the Knox County Commission)
 1. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 10, 2016.
 2. Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 17, 2016.
- III. 6:03 Opening Remarks – Bob Duke, Chair**
- IV. 6:05 Public Hearing**
 1. Chair Duke Opens Public Hearing on the 2017 Proposed Knox County Budget.
 2. Chair Duke Closes Public Hearing.
- V. Budget Committee Vote on 2017 Budget**
 1. Vote to Approve 2017 Budget and Transmit to Commission.
- VI. Commission Vote on 2017 Budget**
 1. Vote to Approve 2017 Budget.
- VII. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke called the December 8, 2016 Knox County Budget Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Commission Chair Roger Moody called the December 8, 2016 special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. He reminded everyone that the meeting is being streamed live on the internet so all side conversations will be preserved on the record.

II. Approve Minutes

Minutes of Budget Review Meeting of November 10, 2016 and November 17, 2016.

- A motion was made by Lawrence Nash to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Randy Stearns. A vote was taken with 7 in favor (Bob Duke, Randy Stearns, Lawrence Nash, Nick Lapham, Shawn Levasseur, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones) and 1 abstention (Gerry Zwick).

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

Bill Jones commented that the minutes from the last meeting must have been difficult to do and he felt they were done really well.

III. Opening Remarks

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke

Chair Bob Duke stated that he has been the Budget Committee Chair for this year. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Commissioner	Carol L. Maines	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	Roger A. Moody	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	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, Chair	Bob Duke	District 5	Rockport and Hope
Budget Committee	Lawrence Nash	District 6	Appleton, Union and Washington
Budget Committee	Bill Jones	District 7	Warren
Budget Committee	Gerald Zwick	District 8	Thomaston and Cushing

Chair Duke noted that the 2017 budget was not an overly challenging one, but noted that there were a few issues that the Budget Committee and County Commission had different opinions on:

1. Funding the Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD)
2. Funding level of the Communications department
3. Funding level of the Patrol department (for buying new laptops)

The biggest increase factor is the funding for delayed repairs for the County’s jail. There is still some uncertainty on whether the State will take over the jails again, but both the Commission and Budget Committee agreed that some repairs could not wait, in particular the Control System at the jail. The Control System electronically locks doors and controls the facility and is necessary for the security of the building and the safety of both employees and inmates.

Administrator Hart explained that since the previous meeting, the EMA budget’s capital has been reduced because the County still hasn’t received a response on whether or not the County will receive EMPG funds that would go towards replacing the EMA vehicle, so the matching funds have been removed from the EMA budget. That ended up changing the taxes and fees calculations for the overall budget. He also stated that he had provided everyone with a memo and chart about the Communications Budget, specifically the deputy communications director position, based on comments and requests for more information made by the Budget Committee at the last meeting. Everyone had also been provided with a letter from the Town of Rockport in support of the GIS position in EMA. Administrator Hart said that he wanted to thank the

departments for the work they put in during the budget process, which makes the whole process easier. The big drivers in this year's budget are the increases in health insurance and workers comp, as well as the funding for the control system at the jail.

Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart to go through the memo on the Communications budget since the Commission and Budget Committee had only just received it and did not have a chance to review it. Administrator Hart read aloud his memo (*which has been included in these minutes verbatim as written*):

"The KRCC Executive Board and I are, as you know, recommending that we eliminate one Dispatcher position (the one approved in the 2016 budget for July and remains unfilled), and replace it with a Deputy Communications Director position, to be filled in July 2017. Here are the key points to support this recommendation:

- Since the deputy communications director position is a reclassification of an existing dispatcher position, and we are delaying filling the position to July 1, 2017, the 2017 proposed staffing budget is actually **\$15,156 less** than what the proposed budget would have been with the approved staffing level as of 7/1/16 carried forward into 2017.
- Going forward, beginning in 2018, the additional cost per year of having a Deputy Communications Director instead of a Dispatcher is \$27,435.
- If the Budget Committee cuts \$40,000 from the Communications budget, it actually reduces the staffing budget approved in 2016.
- Since 2013, the department has had 10 dispatchers, 2 supervisors, and 1 director, for a total of 13 employees. An additional dispatcher position was approved effective 7/1/16, bringing the total staffing from 13 to 14 positions. The 2017 budget has 13 positions for the first 6 months and then 14 positions beginning July 1st.
- The proposed Communications budget is reviewed, vetted, challenged and approved by the KRCC Executive Board, comprised of municipal representatives from Fire, EMS and Law Enforcement, before it is recommended to the Commission and Budget Committee. The KRCC board unanimously supports the proposed budget and the reclassification of one Dispatcher position to the Deputy Communications Director.
- Here are a few statistics relative to the activity in our Communications Center as compared to other Centers in the State:
 - The KRCC has the 2nd highest total call volume with over 73% more calls than the average of the centers that provided figures.
 - The KRCC is ranked #8 of 13 in number of fulltime call-taking staff (staff minus admin)
 - The KRCC has the 2nd highest call-to-staff ratio, almost double the average workload per call-taker of the 11 centers that provided data and more than twice the work load of the staff at Maine's two largest communications centers.

I am asking you to trust and rely on Director Lothrop, the KRCC Executive Board (who represent the users, our customers), and me to know what is best for our Communications Center and approve the 2017 KRCC budget recommendation as is."

Administrator Hart also explained about the chart that was presented with the memo. It contained information on other county communications centers, such as their staffing levels, call volumes, budgets, etc., and compared them with the KRCC.

IV. Public Hearing

Question/Comment Period:

The public hearing portion of the meeting commenced at 6:21 p.m.

John Root - Resident of Owls Head and Code Enforcement Officer for the City of Rockland

Mr. Root stated that he just wanted to speak in support of the Geospatial Database Manager (GIS) position in the EMA office. Knox County is on the leading edge compared to other counties for the use of a GIS person. The work she does for EMA alone costs more than what you'd pay to hire someone else to do it. It takes someone with a lot of knowledge. She provides data, does mapping, and provides instruction to the municipalities. The training she conducts has been well attended. She has a masters in GIS with a high level of expertise. Mr. Root said that although he loves doing the GIS work, he sometimes doesn't have time for it and struggles with some aspects of it, so having access to the County GIS person is invaluable.

Kerry Leichtman – Assessor for the Towns of Camden and Rockport

Mr. Leichtman wanted to reiterate what Mr. Root had said. He said that he also does GIS but is not very good at it and he relies on the County's GIS person a lot. GIS is the future of how government data is handled, analyzed, understood, etc. He said that he was standing up in support of what the County has done so far with the position, and encouraged the County to go further.

Chris Farley - Fire Chief in Camden and Chair of the KRCC Executive Board

Chief Farley said that he wanted to reiterate Administrator Hart's concerns about cutting the KRCC budget. He noted that the plan is to reclassify a position by changing a dispatcher position into a deputy director, but the department is not *adding* an additional position, as some members of the Budget Committee seemed to believe. The KRCC Executive Board has spent many hours talking to the director, supervisors, and dispatchers about what the County can do to recruit and retain quality staff. The Center has been very short-staffed. The Executive Board believed that it would be beneficial, for multiple reasons, to create a deputy director position. Chief Farley said that he also wanted to address the comment made at the prior budget meeting about the amount of time Director Lothrop spends in meetings and implying that Director Lothrop wouldn't need a deputy director if he were in the Center more often. Just as an example of why a director might need to be out of the office, Chief Farley pointed out that he is the fire chief in Camden, but at this very moment he is in Rockland at this meeting. Sometimes your duties and responsibilities to educate, or be educated, require you to be other places besides where your desk is. If you want to improve things, you have to get involved. If you want to learn, you have to get out and do that. Chief Farley added that the Executive Board had also looked at how much it costs the Center to answer a call. It costs \$4.27 per call in Oxford County, \$6.83 per call in Piscataquis County, and \$6.18 per call in Knox County. The municipalities in Knox County are getting a huge benefit from the KRCC, and it is worth the expense.

There was no other public comment.

Public Hearing Closed:

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

V. Budget Committee Vote on 2017 Budget

Chair Duke asked the Budget Committee if there was anything that needed to be discussed.

A couple Budget Committee members stated that the intent of cutting back the Communications budget by \$40,000 wasn't to cut back the number of staff at the KRCC, but was about lowering the overall budget because it was considered to be "too high". Cutting \$40,000 brought the departmental increase to around 3%, which some Committee members thought was fair and prudent considering the jail was capped at 3%. Others found that confusing because of comments made at the last meeting against the creation of the deputy communications director. Commissioner Moody commented that several Committee members did say at the last meeting that the new position wasn't necessary.

Chair Duke apologized for having offended Director Lothrop at the last meeting, who had felt that his commitment to the County and his job were questioned. Mr. Duke stated that he did, however, question the need for the position, especially since the position of the deputy director was driving the budget hike. Administrator Hart stated that it was not the position of deputy director that was driving the hike. He

explained that it appeared that the Communications budget increased by a lot because when the first draft of the budget was prepared, the number of dispatcher positions had been accidentally lowered by one, so the position and the associated costs had to be added back in. The Committee did not seem to understand that cutting back the budget by \$40,000 would remove a position, even if that was not the intent, because there was not \$40,000 to be cut in lines that were unrelated to personnel services. The increases were mostly due to dispatchers and dispatch supervisors being reclassified at a higher Grade on the wage scale based on changes in their responsibilities, increases in health insurance and workers comp, and increases in utilities, which is not something the department has any control over.

The Commissioners expressed some disappointment in the Budget Committee not really listening to the fact that the KRCC Executive Board voted unanimously to support the budget. The Executive Board represents the towns and are the users of the communications system. The Executive Board is convinced the budget is needed, and they take the time to get into the weeds to really understand the current status of the Center, which the Budget Committee doesn't have time for. Director Lothrop, Administrator Hart and the Executive Board have done their due diligence.

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to approve the 2017 Knox County Budget in the total amount of \$10,419,221 and a net amount of \$8,495,645, and transmit the 2017 Knox County Budget to the Knox County Commission. The motion was seconded by Dorothy Meriwether. A vote was taken with all in favor. The motion therefore passed.

In favor: 8 (Nicholas Lapham, Bob Duke, Shawn Levasseur, Gerald Zwick, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Randy Stearns, Lawrence Nash)
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained: 0

VI. Commission Vote on 2017 Budget

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to approve the 2017 Knox County Budget in the total amount of \$10,500,677 and a net amount of \$8,577,930 (*this includes the Budget Committee figures plus an additional \$40,000 appropriation for the Communications budget, \$16,250 for the other 6 laptops for the Sheriff's Patrol Division budget, and \$25,206 for MCEDD*). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor. The motion therefore passed.

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

The 2017 budget was then passed back to the Budget Committee. Chair Bob Duke stated that the Budget Committee now needed to consider the Commission numbers.

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to approve the 2017 Knox County Budget in the total amount of \$10,419,221 and a net amount of \$8,495,645, and transmit the 2017 Knox County Budget to the Knox County Commission. The motion was seconded by Dorothy Meriwether. A vote was taken with 8 in favor and 0 opposed. The motion therefore passed and successfully overruled the Commission vote.

In favor: 8 (Nicholas Lapham, Shawn Levasseur, Gerald Zwick, Dorothy Meriwether, Bill Jones, Randy Stearns and Lawrence Nash, Bob Duke)
 Opposed: 0
 Abstained: 0

The 2017 Budget was therefore passed at the Budget Committee approved figures of a total amount of \$10,419,221 and a net amount of \$8,495,645.

VII. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Randy Stearns to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dorothy Meriwether. A vote was taken with all in favor.
- 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 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on January 10, 2017. The Knox County Budget Committee will approve these minutes at their next quarterly meeting during Quarter 1 of 2017.