

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Thursday – June 26, 2014 - 9:00 a.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Thursday, June 26, 2014, 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: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Communications Director Linwood Lothrop, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Jail Administrator John Hinkley, and Sheriff Donna Dennison.

Others in attendance: County Attorney Peter Marchesi.

Special Meeting – Agenda **Thursday – June 26, 2014 – 9:00 a.m.**

- I. 9:00 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 9:01 Action Items**
 - 1. Act to Approve FY15 Knox County Jail Budget.
- III. 9:20 Other Business**
- IV. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

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

II. Action Items

1. Act to Approve FY15 Knox County Jail Budget.

Administrator Hart reminded everyone that the Commission approved the FY15 budget proposal previously, but at the time, the decision of the Commission was to submit a realistic budget of what it actually costs to run the jail. He said that the BOC decided to flat-fund the budget at an amount lower than the budget previously submitted by the Commission. On June 17th at the BOC meeting, the Board changed the figures for all of the counties including Knox. Administrator Hart said that he has met with Sheriff Dennison, Major Hinkley and Finance Director Kathy Robinson several times to discuss what the County will do. The County has to find a way to cut the jail's budget to make up for the \$178,111 difference between what the Commission originally submitted for the FY15 Budget, and what the BOC approved as the FY15 Budget for Knox County. He said that the Sheriff and Major will be submitting one option, but there are several different options.

FY 14 Budget	\$3,704,529
FY 15 BOC Approved Budget	\$3,664,820
Reduction	(\$39,709)

FY 15 Submitted Budget	\$3,842,931
FY 15 BOC Approved Budget	\$3,664,820
Reduction	(\$178,111)

Administrator Hart explained that what the Commission had in front of them proposes getting rid of two open positions, reducing overtime, and freezing wages for all jail staff. He noted that the County

had to have the revised budget in by Monday because if it’s not in on time, the County would be subject to not receiving the first quarter payment.

Estimated Budget Reductions

Eliminate 2 open Corrections Officer positions	\$100,364	(2) Booking officers to move to Corrections Officer floor positions
Reduce Overtime & Holiday Overtime	\$13,654	(2) Open Corrections Officer positions not backfilled with Overtime
Reduce Part-time	\$4,340	(2) Open Corrections Officer positions not backfilled with part-time
Freeze pay at current salary	\$33,072	No CPI or Step increases January 2015
Reduce Maine Pretrial based on tenant space	\$26,681	
Total Reductions	\$178,111	

Commissioner Parent asked if eliminating the two corrections officer positions and backfilling them with the booking officers meant that the officers would receive a reduction in pay. Major Hinkley said no, that the employees would just go back to being regular corrections officers on the floor, and on each shift someone will be assigned to work booking. Their pay stays the same as it is now.

Commissioner Maines asked about the letter that the Commission had sent to the BOC asking the BOC to tell the County what the County should cut or make for changes if the BOC wanted the County to decrease the jail budget. Administrator Hart responded that the BOC is not going to do that; they want the County to decide how to handle making the cuts, and if the BOC doesn’t like what the County has done, they’ll tell the County to refigure it. Major Hinkley commented that in reality, the BOC doesn’t have the authority to do that anyway.

Commissioner Maines asked if this was the best option. Major Hinkley said that the Administration asked the staff if they would rather that the County closed a pod and laid off staff or the County freeze everybody’s wages. He said that the response from the staff was that they’d rather have their wages frozen than to see anybody get laid off.

Commissioner Parent asked if the County would be required to pay out back-pay to the employees later on if the BOC eventually gives up control. County Attorney Peter Marchesi said that the County would not be required to do that, but could if the Commission wanted to.

Administrator Hart commented that at the July 8th Regular Commission meeting, the Commission will vote on whether to allow Maine Pretrial Services to use space in the courthouse. When asked how that would work, the Major explained that the MPS staff go to the jail to interview inmates and see who would be a good candidate for release. Once the inmates are out of the jail, they would come to the courthouse to meet with the MPS staff once a week. Attorney Marchesi commented that it’s like probation except that it’s before the person is convicted.

Commissioner Maines asked about how the food services were working out since the Food Services Manager had been asked to cut costs by 30%. The Sheriff admitted that with everything else going on lately, they haven’t focused on that, but she noted that Manager Bruce Sheaff has worked hard to reduce costs and make the most of the jail garden and chickens.

Attorney Marchesi noted that if Maine Pretrial Services is to be housed on County property, the Administration needs to make sure that the County is protected from potential liability issues. He said that the County would draft what is essentially a lease, and MPS will have to agree to provide their own insurance that will respond to defend both MPS and the County against any claims of alleged misconduct. The County would agree to do the same. It’s standard language. There will also be issues of access to the building – the MPS staff will not be given key cards. MPS will have to go through security, as will their clients, and they will have to operate during normal business hours. Attorney

Marchesi noted, however, that nothing is binding yet and it's still possible that MPS could change their minds. If they did, that would mean the County submitted a budget with the \$26,681 reduction that no longer exists to the BOC. He said that it sounds like MPS is on board, but until a lease is signed the County is just operating on faith by submitting the budget showing the reduction.

Commissioner Moody said that he respected the employees' willingness to protect each other by having their wages frozen, but he also wanted to protect the integrity of the pay scale system.

Administrator Hart commented that the amount the BOC approved for the jail's budget was the same for three years in a row, but now it's even less, while costs like personnel services, utilities, etc. continue to go up. You can't truly freeze a budget.

Commissioner Moody noted that he, Administrator Hart, Sheriff Dennison and Major Hinkley had recently attended a three-county meeting to discuss combining resources for pretrial services. He said he didn't know if that would happen but thought it was worth looking into. He thanked Administrator Hart, Sheriff Dennison and Major Hinkley for working hard to craft the budget and doing the best they could.

Commissioner Parent said that he was very concerned about the future. He said that right now morale may be good at the jail, but at some point in time the employees are going to get so frustrated that they're going to leave to go work somewhere else. Sheriff Dennison agreed that the employees are worried because they don't know what the future will bring, but she noted that the employees will do anything they can to keep the place running. She added that today's proposal was only a band-aid, and if the BOC doesn't increase the amount that the County can use to operate the jail, the County will have to shut down part of the jail and release inmates back into the system.

Commissioner Maines asked who gets appointed to the BOC and whether they really have any experience. Commissioner Moody said that there are only three people on the Board and two of them are county people: one sheriff and one county commissioner. The third person is a member of the public. There's actually supposed to be five Board members because the governor was supposed to appoint two people, but he refuses to. The Major noted that in reality, it's the Legislature and Appropriations Committee that are withholding the money.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Roger Moody to approve the revised FY15 Knox County Jail Budget as proposed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

III. Other Business

IV. Adjourn

- 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 9:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on July 8, 2014.