

**MINUTES
DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET HEARINGS
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING, ROOM 113
THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2009
1 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Bernie Heier, Chair
Larry Hudkins
Bob Workman
Deb Schorr

Commissioners Absent: Ray Stevens, Vice Chair

Others Present: Kerry Eagan, Chief Administrative Officer
Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Officer
Dan Nolte, County Clerk
Angela Zocholl, County Clerk's Office

The Chair opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

County Court (622)

Present were Becky Bruckner, Judicial Administrator, and Susan Strong, County Court Judge.

Bruckner said they could lower the budget to \$12,000 under Furniture & Fixtures (Object 67465) as, after working with Purchasing, they obtained a much lower bid for additional civil file storage. In response to Schorr's question about moving files off-site, Bruckner said these are current files and must stay on-site.

Bruckner requested furnishings for a new judge's chambers, as well as two new chairs for Judge Strong. She explained that Judge Rouse from Seward County has been helping with the workload and is using space in a jury room where there is no phone or computer access. She added Judge Strong's current chairs could then be used in the new judge's chambers.

Meyer asked if the budget for legal services was Bruckner's own estimate or if she included input from Dennis Keefe, Public Defender. Bruckner replied it was her estimate, but she did ask Keefe if there would be anything different for next year and he did not think so.

Judge Strong was not sure if the expenses for Legal Services (Object 64120) would be greater than the \$190,000 budgeted. She said they started limiting the number of cases the attorneys could handle, which had a big impact on how many legal services were contracted.

District Court (624)

Present were District Court Judges Karen Flowers and Steven Burns.

In response to Workman's question on Welfare IV D Reimbursement (Object 54245), Meyer said this sometimes lags, so one quarter may not be showing up in the current numbers.

Meyer asked about the number of full time employees. Judge Flowers said this number has not changed even though they do not intend to replace the receptionist and the law clerks have become full time.

Schorr inquired about the monitors listed under the microcomputer request. Judge Burns said these monitors would replace old ones. Additionally, they are requesting dual monitors for the bailiffs so they can run two programs at the same time. Heier asked if they could get along without the new monitors. Judge Flowers said it could be done but the new technology will make their jobs much more efficient.

District Court Clerk/Mental Health Board (621/751)

Present were Simon Rezac, Deputy Clerk of the District Court, and Sue Kirkland, Clerk of the District Court.

Workman noted the budget is up 9% and revenue is down 4%. Rezac said federal funds coming through the State are decreasing and bank fees are around \$1,000 per month. Kirkland added that bank interest has dramatically decreased. They now earn \$4.70 per day in interest when they used to earn \$2,000 per month.

Kirkland said the budget of \$30,000 for Information Services (Object 64285) could be a little high and agreed to drop it to \$25,000.

Heier inquired about Other Miscellaneous Fees & Services (Object 65845). Kirkland said bank fees were included in that figure. The possibility of acquiring new bank bids was discussed.

Under Legal Services (Object 64120) and Other Miscellaneous Fees & Services (Object 65845), Kirkland said it is difficult to determine when an outside attorney would be needed or when another county's mental health facility would be used.

Meyer inquired about Consulting Services (Object 64150). Rezac explained this includes hiring an outside examiner to evaluate patients. The use of a County examiner was discussed and it was considered to be a possible conflict of interest.

County Extension (645)

Present were Gary Bergman, County Extension Agent; Kay Coffey, Administrative Aide; and Linda Butcher, County Extension Board Member.

Meyer said he pulled a \$5,000 line item out of Repairs/Improvement to Building (Object 67215) that should not have been pulled. The amount should still be \$6,500, and the change would reflect an overall percentage difference.

Bergman said Charges and Services of 60.85% represents client services, which is personnel. Personal Services at 36.44% would not be completely accurate since client services includes payroll and benefits through the University.

Bergman said Contract Revenue (Object 58510) of \$161,973 comes in through the City and represents a large increase in the budget since it includes personnel.

Workman asked about the change in full time employees. Meyer said he took contract employees out of the total and focused on the County full time employees. Bergman explained eight were supplied by the University of Nebraska and eight or nine were funded by the nutrition education program.

Bergman noted there is miscellaneous revenue of \$10,659 from this past year, which is primarily reimbursement for operating funds.

Heier asked about the necessity of insulating the storage building (Object 67410). Bergman said they store a lot of records in the building and they have had trouble with moisture. Hudkins stated he visited the building and agreed it should be insulated.

Schorr asked about the request for four desktop computers and a laptop computer. Bergman said last year they withdrew their microcomputer request, so there is more need now since they skipped a year. Bergman said one computer must be left on for GIS work and he submitted a letter on purchasing a replacement computer (Exhibit A).

Meyer asked about Miscellaneous Fees & Services (Object 65845). Bergman said it is part of the City contract and supports programs like soil testing and the bio-solids project.

Bergman distributed the Annual Report (Exhibit B).

Juvenile Probation (673)

Present was Lori Griggs, Chief Probation Officer.

Griggs said one of the Probation Officers is close to becoming a Senior Probation Officer, which will account for an increase in salaries.

The issue of needing more space was discussed. Griggs said they received permission from the State to add another probation officer and this person would take the last available space.

Briggs noted more low-risk kids are being kept on probation and not moving on to the juvenile system. She said Health and Human Services is contracting with Douglas County to pay for another probation office whereby a voucher system will be used similar to the adult probation system. If this works, it will likely be moved to Lancaster County in the next few years.

Public Defender (625)

Present was Dennis Keefe, Public Defender, and Monica Ross, Office Administrator.

Keefe distributed and reviewed a handout on case overload figures (Exhibit C).

Keefe submitted a revenue budget, which increased by \$79,000 to cover City misdemeanor costs. He said the figure is probably closer to \$60,000. He handed out a sheet on the cost of providing counsel in City attorney-filed misdemeanors (Exhibit D), which totals \$333,425.

Keefe requested \$250,000 from the City for the misdemeanor costs. Meyer said he preliminarily discussed this issue with Steve Hubka, City Budget Officer, and expected there would be further discussion.

Hudkins questioned where cuts could be made. Keefe said he would look at deposition, psychologists/psychiatrist, and data processing costs to see if these items could be reduced.

Keefe reviewed various cost options for an increase in staff. Under Option #1, the cost of felony assigned counsel would be reduced from \$43,350 to \$30,000, the cost of MISDI assigned counsel would be reduced from \$79,200 to \$60,000, and the cost of juvenile assigned counsel would be reduced from \$38,880 to \$21,600. The new total for Cost Option #1 is \$111,600. Option #3 also changed with a reduction in juvenile overage cases to \$21,600 and elimination of the \$24,000 mental commitment contract. Keefe felt that contracting child support paternity cases would help cover the City misdemeanor problem. Keefe said he preferred Option #3 because it is less expensive, gives another year to look at standards, and takes pressure off support staff.

County Attorney (652)

Present were Gary Lacey, County Attorney; Eileen LeGrande, Administrator; and Joe Kelly, Chief Deputy County Attorney.

Lacey said autopsies are now done in Omaha, and this will save \$100,000-\$120,000 per year.

Lacey said the new case management system should be up around July 1 and should save around \$50,000 since the Information Services budget will decrease.

Lacey mentioned that he previously spoke with the Board about hiring two additional staff with stimulus money. This money is expected soon and would cover two attorneys and one support staff position for a two-year period.

Lacey said laptop computers are needed in the courtrooms for the new case management system and 42 flat screen monitors would be needed to more easily read the information. Lacey said the cost of these items will be made up with savings from the new system.

In response to Schorr's question on the increase in overtime, LeGrande said they have worked overtime to keep up with the workload.

Lacey discussed an agreement with Health and Human Services (HHS) whereby the Attorney's office is paid \$125,000 per year for processing termination of parental rights cases. He noted HHS still owes for the past two years and that money will be received soon.

Schorr asked about the \$50,000 reduction in Welfare IV D Reimbursement (Object 54245). LeGrande said the State requested a different form and is not approving the current submission; therefore, the numbers are different.

Election Commission/Jury Commission (607/627)

David Shively, Election Commissioner; Maura Kelly Tolzin, Chief Deputy Election Commissioner; and Becky Hight-Moravec, Administrative Assistant.

Shively distributed his 2009-2010 budget request (Exhibit E).

Shively discussed increasing expenses: more absentee ballots, extra time in training board workers, increase in minimum wage, and postal costs.

Shively said there has not been an all-mail election yet, which would probably be done for a smaller election such as a school district or village. It would probably be too costly if the election has more than 5,000-6,000 voters.

Shively said a full-time position used to be shared with Clerk of the District Court, but they did not need that help anymore and transferred the position to his office.

With regard to equipment, Shively hoped to maintain counting machines for another five years. He noted these machines were bought by the State with federal dollars. He was not sure where the money would come from the next time the equipment would be needed.

Schorr asked about the decrease in building rent. Shively said rent was in one category last year, including rent for polling locations. This year it is in separate categories.

Meyer asked about revenue for Election Cost Reimbursement (Object 55850). Shively said the City, airport authority, and school district are awaiting final bills, which total \$300,000.

Schorr asked about \$500 for a chair. Shively said they took the old chairs from the previous office and he wanted to start replacing a few each year. He agreed to look at cost options.

In response to Meyer's inquiry about the increase in health insurance, Shively said it was due to one employee becoming full time.

Corrections (671)

Present were Mike Thurber, Director of Corrections, and Angie Koziol, Business Manager.

Thurber distributed a summary of the budget (Exhibit F).

Thurber said they will keep calculating city prisoners, and he felt by this time at the end of the year, they would serve 18,711 beds. At \$7,724 per day, it equals around \$1.3 million. This is money that would have been received from the city, but it will not show up in this year's revenue.

Thurber talked about pharmaceutical costs. To date, they have spent \$372,477, and he feels it will be over \$435,000. Various options in reducing costs were discussed.

Thurber discussed other increases in costs, mostly due to the population growth.

With regard to boarding contracts, Thurber said they are budgeting for 70 people.

Thurber added he would like to move \$10,000 per month to the mental health budget.

Hudkins asked about Cell Phone Service (Object 64825). Thurber said moving from Alltel to Verizon has resulted in a price increase. Hudkins asked Thurber to review this item.

Thurber said there was previously \$37,000 in the budget for rewriting the inmate management program, but the new budget only has \$32,000. He would like to increase this amount back to \$37,000 as the program is not user friendly and should be updated to a windows version.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Schorr moved and Workman seconded adjournment of the departmental budget hearings at 3:58 p.m. Heier, Schorr, Hudkins and Workman voted aye. Motion carried.

Dan Nolte
County Clerk