

## MINUTES

### BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Meeting – Budget Workshop  
Wednesday, October 10, 2012, 9:00 a.m.  
Commissioners' Conference Room  
Benton County Courthouse, Prosser, WA

**Present:** Chairman James Beaver  
Commissioner Shon Small  
Commissioner Leo Bowman  
County Administrator David Sparks  
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

**Benton County Employees Present During All or a Portion of the Meeting:** Deputy Administrator Loretta Smith Kelty; Finance Manager Keith Mercer; Planning Manager Mike Shuttleworth; Central Services Manager Randy Reid; Assessor Barb Wagner; Treasurer Duane Davidson; Erhiza Rivera and Nick Kooiker, Treasurer's Office; Clerk Josie Delvin and Deputy Clerk Elaine Osborne; Jacki Lahtinen and Dixie Jameson, District Court; District Court Judge Joe Burrowes; Auditor Brenda Chilton; Van Pettey and Pat Powell, Auditor's Office; Skip Gest and Sharlene Vowels, Noxious Weed; Margaret Ault and PA Andy Miller.

#### Assessor

Barb Wagner reviewed her requests including an increase in two Appraiser salary line items where employees were placed a higher pay step, vehicle fuel, professional services (recording fees), and road professional services. Her requests included a reduction in professional services to more accurately reflect the anticipated needs of defending valuation of properties at the State Board of Tax Appeals.

#### Treasurer

Duane Davidson, Nick Kooiker, and Erhiza Rivera presented the Treasurer's budget and discussed the 2013-2015 strategic plan and following requests: fuel, tax statement services, postage, and contract services. Additionally, Mr. Davidson said they reallocated 50% of the investment officer into the new Investment Pool. Mr. Sparks commented that it was a startup program that was starting in a deficit position with an interfund loan and the Board should know there was a potential of it affecting current expense because they didn't know what kind of fees it would generate.

Additionally, there was a brief revenue recap that included real and personal property tax, investment interest, admin refunds and levy transfers, and liquor excise tax. Mr. Davidson said there was a new WACO priority bill that could potential increase the admin refunds and levy transfers revenue in 2014.

## **Noxious Weed**

Skip Gest, Sharlene Vowels, and Keith Mercer presented the Noxious Weed budget and Mr. Mercer said the fund had reduced revenues so initially it was out of round. He said he met with the Noxious Weed Board and employees and came up with a plan to reduce expenses by \$173,000 so the new baseline had a surplus of roughly \$53,000; they were also looking into long-term strategies. Mr. Sparks asked if the Noxious Weed Board would re-adopt the new budget and Ms. Vowels said hopefully they would adopt the new budget October 16 and schedule an assessment hearing to set the assessments.

## **District Court**

Judge Burrowes, Jacki Lahtinen, and Dixie Jameson presented the budget and discussed the following court improvements to assist the public: changes in courtroom and jail to better provide service (video and audio), digital reader boards, modernizing dockets, potential of going paperless. Additionally, discussed the following requests: Judge Pro Tem for additional \$32,000 for two years (cities will pay 45.55% of that cost); Professional Services increase of \$24,500 for two years (cities will pay 45.55% of increase) to raise contracted hourly rate for interpreter from \$40 to \$50.

The Board briefly recessed, reconvening at 9:42 a.m.

## **Prosecuting Attorney**

PA Andy Miller and Margaret Ault presented the Prosecuting Attorney budget and Mr. Miller said the only changes were to the Travel/Training budget due to reimbursements received and the increases were offset by revenue in the same amount. Additionally, he said they were asking for an additional car due to the need to have a reliable vehicle for attorneys to travel for required training.

Commissioner Small commented that Benton County didn't have hard numbers yet, but WSAC reported that 30 of 39 counties reported 8.1% reduction of FTE's. The budget was more than operational costs, including fixed costs, infrastructures, and IT costs and Benton County had \$100,000+ million in physical assets that needed to be maintained and operated. He said that footprint reduction had been talked about for the last 1 ½ years and how to survive the recession and the County was going to have to look at making cuts.

Chairman Beaver said the Board had tried to invest in IT and had talked about footprint reduction for some time. During the last biennium there were 37 of 39 counties in trouble and Benton County was one of the two that were okay and any information or ideas were welcome to help Benton County stay in that position.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:55 a.m.

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Clerk of the Board

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Chairman

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#### Clerk

Josie Delvin reviewed her request for a new Archive Records Manager as part of her goal to go paperless. The position would be paid 60% from Auditor O & M, 20% from Clerks Collection, and 20% from Current Expense. She said they were nearly out of record storage space and would require a secure facility to access those records. Additionally, this position would also assist District Court in its effort to go paperless. Ms. Delvin said her goal to go paperless was a multi-step process: she needed to have a person continually audit records in addition to being scanned, because they had to be audited before they could be destroyed. She estimated the process taking 3-5 years if it was pushed forward; there would initially be a cost to set up, but eventually a cost savings by eliminating file folders, storage costs, and temporary employees.

#### WSU – Benton County Extension

Marianne Ophardt reviewed her budget requests, including three contract increases for copiers, messenger service, and WSU agreement; part-time employee (lateral transfer within county); publications (previously cut from budget so now paid from supplies; an increase for purchase of publications would include an increase in revenue because they would charge for the publications); and postage (federal postage support ended).

## **Juvenile Justice**

Sharon Paradis, Jennifer Bowe, and Judge Cameron Mitchell reviewed the Juvenile budget. Ms. Paradis said that Franklin County's at risk population was outpacing Benton County, therefore Franklin County's portion had increased and Benton County had decreased (about \$47,000 decrease bottom line for Benton County). Ms. Paradis said basically their requests were to restore back to 2010 levels, and Benton County's share was approximately \$334,315 and that Franklin County had preliminarily approved all enhancement requests. Additionally, she said the Juvenile Facility had facility needs, specifically the HVAC would need to be replaced (approximately \$250,000); however, there was a critical need in the approximate amount of \$71,000 as a replacement cost for electronic components. She also requested the Bi-County boards meet with Juvenile to come up with a five-year capital facilities plan to address these issues.

## **Superior Court**

Pat Austin and Judge Cameron Mitchell presented the Superior Court budget and discussed the following requests: COLA and medical increase for bi-county staff, comparable to other non-bargaining employees; increase Court Commissioner from .50 FTE to 1 FTE; Adult Drug Court; 7<sup>th</sup> Superior Court Judge; new Criminal Case Manager; .50 FTE Guardianship Monitoring Case Manager; print/bindery and messenger service; and association dues.

## **Coroner**

John Hansens reported that state reimbursement for autopsies had been received and were up to date. He discussed his requests, including fuel and part-time employees (asking for a full year). He said he would be receiving approximately \$8,000/year from Franklin County from a contract for their use of the Benton County facility to perform autopsies that should cover the additional requests in his budget.

The Board briefly recessed, reconvening at 10:08 a.m.

## **Sheriff's Office**

Sheriff Steve Keane, Undersheriff Jerry Hatcher, and Julie Thompson presented the Sheriff's Office budget. Sheriff Keane discussed what they had done to try and reduce the footprint, specifically in the jail: reduced staffing by nine positions (correction officers and one clerk through attrition) and possibly looking at two more positions; reduction in overtime by 50%, reduced DOT transports; negotiating reduced medical rates; expanded hours for medical staff to reduce late night hospital runs; new kiosk; and looking at a radio system in the jail to reduce costs. Additionally, in Dept. 121 he would not be replacing any patrol vehicles unless they had 100,000 miles and would look at a five-year rotation instead of a four-year rotation. He discussed increases from SECOMM and Bi-Pin that they had no control over. He discussed requests to the budget, including but not limited to fuel, jail clothing/bedding, small item equipment, security, food services, office equipment rentals, vehicle repairs, training supplies/ammunition and said the requests totaled approximately \$361,000.

## **Auditor**

Brenda Chilton discussed the Auditor's budget, specifically reallocating the Auditor and Prosser Office Manager under the new BARS coding and an increase in office rent that was driven by contract. Ms. Chilton also presented the Strategic Plan for the Auditor's office, 2012-2014 and discussed in detail its objectives and accomplishments, savings, new pilot projects, grants received, and training programs.

Chairman Beaver thanked everyone for the presentations and said it was good to hear that everyone recognized there were some things they didn't have any control over and money was always an issue. He said the County would have to deal with these issues and it would take some time, but he was encouraged by the things already done and was happy the elected officials were talking about footprint reduction.

Commissioner Bowman said that budgets come and go, as well as good times and bad but he believed it was Benton County's turn in the barrel the same as the other 37 counties. He said he was very concerned about losing people and not just through attrition, but knew the right people were working on that and would provide the right numbers. He mentioned that even though building permits were not very good and sales tax was down, the good news was he heard from his grandson that he might get hired back at Hanford under a new contract after being laid last September, so maybe some things were on the uptake. He said the biennial budget was not going to be that good, but if proper preparation was done it would save down the road a long way. He stated he was very pleased with the cooperation of elected officials and their understanding of tough decisions that would have to be made.

Commissioner Small said the Board had not yet discussed the revenues and expenditures but hopefully next week that information would be available for everybody. He said it was not looking good but his goal was to hold on to what they had for the next two years and hope that revenues would increase. Once the numbers were in they would be asking for some input to get through this financial challenge.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:17 a.m.

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Clerk of the Board

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Chairman