

MINUTES

BOARD OF BENTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Special Meeting - Budget Workshop
October 19, 2010, 8:15 a.m.
Commissioners' Conference Room
Benton County Courthouse, Prosser, WA

Present: Chairman James Beaver
Commissioner Leo Bowman
Commissioner Max E. Benitz, Jr.
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; Assessor Barb Wagner; Auditor Brenda Chilton, Rosie Sparks and Pat Powell, Auditor's Office; Dave Pettey, Sheriff's Office; Central Services Manager Randy Reid; Superior Court Administrator Pat Austin; Superior Court Judge Carrie Runge; Treasurer Duane Davidson; Superior Court Judge Cameron Mitchell; Juvenile Administrator Sharon Paradis; Jennifer Bowe, Juvenile; Deputy Treasurer Erhiza Rivera and Nick Kookier; District Court Judge Terry Tanner; District Court Administrator Jacki Lahtinen; Dixie Jameson and Reva Kirby, District Court.

Assessor

Barb Wagner reviewed her requests including reinstating a full-time Personal Property Specialist position that was cut to half-time last year. She said she needed to bring back the position to full-time to reduce the bottleneck that was happening. Additionally, she requested money in the Engineer Services line item for car repairs performed by the Road Department.

The Board briefly recessed, reconvening at 8:45 a.m.

Juvenile

Sharon Paradis, Jennifer Bowe, and Judge Mitchell presented the proposed Juvenile budget. Ms. Paradis said her department was 30% dependent on non-county funds and they took a 5% reduction last year, 10% this year, and anticipated approximately 6% for 2011. The requests included an additional probation counselor and work crew counselor; three detention officers and associated relief; 100% Juvenile Drug Court program; increased security; vehicle maintenance; and reclassification of Administrative Services Manager to grade 18. Additionally, Ms. Paradis discussed the guardian ad litem program and said if they couldn't provide volunteers, they were required by law to provide attorneys.

Ms. Paradis stated they met with Franklin County a week ago, but do not have a clear picture of what they were considering.

Chairman Beaver discussed the formula for bi-county Juvenile operations and that he believed it should be changed. Ms. Paradis said she agreed the legwork and research needed to be done so the costs could be formulated and Judge Mitchell said they were willing to facilitate that process.

Commissioner Bowman asked Ms. Paradis if she would have done anything different in light of the previous budget cuts and whether the bi-county percentage was evaluated on an annual basis. Ms. Paradis said she would not change the cuts they made because they evaluate the programs on a regular basis and the percentage was evaluated yearly (but averaged over five years).

Commissioner Benitz asked if Juvenile was requesting the County to fund the state's proposed reductions and Ms. Paradis said no, they were knocking on the State's door. Additionally, he asked about uncollected fines and forfeitures and Ms. Paradis said they didn't anticipate collecting at a higher rate for juveniles. However, once they turned 18, they could be converted to judgments and the Clerk's office had taken over that responsibility to collect into their adult years.

Superior Court

Pat Austin, Judge Mitchell and Judge Runge presented the Superior Court budget. Ms. Austin said the Court knew that not all of the needs could be met, but they wanted the Board to be aware of them and discussed the following requests: Court Commissioner increase from ½ time to full time (Ms. Austin provided information on the State's estimated need of 9.61 judicial officers and they were currently staffed at 8.5); Secretary/Receptionist position (grade 4); Adult Drug Court program; clothing allowance for bailiffs; jury supplies; messenger service, postage, and print/bindery; association dues; change in Family Court Services program from telephone line item to Blackberry phone.

Commissioner Bowman asked about funding commitments from the community for Drug Court and Ms. Austin confirmed that Andy Miller was very confident all the money would be received.

David Sparks discussed the proposed increase in user fees for Drug Court offsetting the cost of the program. Ms. Austin said they used conservative numbers based on what was projected and received in the past. Mr. Sparks said if it was approved, maybe it could be adjusted based upon participation fees between Benton and Franklin County.

Judge Runge stated the Court's priority request would be an increase in court commissioner from ½ time to full time.

District Court/Probation

Judge Tanner, Jacki Lahtinen, and Reva Kirby discussed the District Court/Probation Assessment budget. They discussed the following budget requests: Judge Pro Tem; Prosser part-time Clerk position (18 months during the two-year budget); supplies; professional services

(court interpreter program); social security, and possible impacts from a retiring judge and increased salary for judges.

Prosecuting Attorney

Andy Miller and Margaret Ault (via/videoconference) reviewed the Prosecuting Attorney's budget. Mr. Miller said a couple of things were up in the air with the State (typically it would not affect current expense, but a special fund) and he said they would have to adjust accordingly once they heard from the State. Additionally, he was waiting to hear about the West Richland contract. He said he had not filled that position and was waiting to see if they approved the contract.

Commissioner Benitz asked about whether the funding request for Drug Court included 30 participants or 45 and Mr. Miller said it was 45 and based on the information received from Superior Court.

Budget Recap

The Board rescheduled the budget recap for November 2, 2010 at 9:00 a.m.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Clerk of the Board

Chairman