

Union County Budget Meeting
May 17, 2018

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure
Commissioner Jack Howard
Commissioner Donna Beverage
Stacey Candlish, Budget Committee Member
Bob Coulter, Budget Committee Member
Gene Hardy, Budget Committee Chair
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer and Budget Officer

Chairman Gene Hardy called the meeting to order.

Assessment/Taxation

Cody Vavra, Union County Assessor and Tax Collector, stated that there were not many changes from the previous year; staffing and revenue would remain the same as the previous year. They are receiving more support in-house for GIS services and will continue to contract some work for those needs. Vehicles are kept longer and accruing more miles than in the past and it is working well.

Commissioner Howard asked if a foreclosure trend was noticeable. Mr. Vavra stated that the warrant list produces payments, but there is no noticeable trend.

Accounting/Treasurer

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, stated that this is a small department vital to the county. Some IT services provided by this department have been moved to the IT Department. This will not result in staffing changes, but will allow the accounting employee to spend all her time on accounting/treasurer responsibilities. The travel budget is slightly higher this year to allow for the payroll specialist to attend financial workshops.

Clerk

Robin Church, County Clerk, stated that this department is completing the microfilm project, which was funded by the equipment reserve fund. The elections budget changed due to payroll law changes, but there are no other changes.

Board of Commissioners

Mrs. Burgess stated that there was little change to this budget; staffing will remain the same. Many books and publications are now available online, resulting in a decrease in expenses and requested funding in that category.

Facilities

Mrs. Burgess stated that this department employs two full-time positions and also contracts out for minimal janitorial services. Building improvement upgrades, including ADA needs, and some cosmetic upgrades are budgeted. Debt service for the courthouse will continue through 2033. Rent revenue from tenants are included in this budget.

Computer Services

Jason Fouts, Information Services Manager, stated that materials and services were the same as previous years. More labor is done in house, resulting in an increase in personnel costs and decrease in materials.

Commissioner Howard was impressed that this department was providing the GIS services in-house. Mrs. Burgess stated that it was amazing that this department was able to operate with limited staff considering the high demands from multiple departments. Mr. Fouts stated that the GIS system is important to the Planning, Public Works, Assessment/Taxation, Clerks, and Weed Program Departments.

District Attorney Office

Kelsie McDaniel, Union County District Attorney, stated that personnel changes included the addition of one employee and restructuring of Deputy District Attorneys. An increase in travel funding is a result of the new system rollout from the Department of Justice for child support and support enforcement; training for the new system is out of the area and will require overnight accommodations. The new Juvenile Victims Advocate/Restitution Clerk position is funded through the Justice Reinvestment program in collaboration with Parole and Probation; it will make it easier for offenders to make restitution through community service and job shadowing. The Medical Examiner program was funded better last year than years past, but the amounts are still less than neighboring counties.

Commissioner Howard stated that the Medical Examiner services are statutory and the funding concerns must be addressed. Ms. McDaniel stated that the County would be well served by compensating the contracted services adequately. Commissioner Howard would like to see a request for three or five year program.

Juvenile

Ben Morgan, Juvenile Department Director, stated that there is more investment in evidence-based practices, prevention and diversion in keeping with state trends. Programs include collaboration with CHD and Head Start, as well as mentoring opportunities for teens. Sex offense cases are on the rise and overall caseloads have increased. Overall, less offenders are lodged and there is an increase in tracking and the use of bracelets. Lodging for most cases do not present funding concerns, but long term cases consume the budget quickly. A \$15,000 request for a used Ford Escape is included in the budget to replace the 2001 vehicle that has been in the shop frequently.

Ms. Candlish asked if a Ford Escape would be large enough to fill the needs of the department; Mr. Morgan stated that it would be rare to need seating for more than five people.

Planning

Mrs. Burgess stated that this budget is very similar to previous years. It includes funds to contract with Anderson Perry & Associates for special projects if needed, but the first choice is to use staff. This department received a grant for a Place-Based Water Planning Project.

Emergency Services

JB Brock, Emergency Manager, stated that the goal of this department is to prepare for and respond to emergencies. There are not many changes from the previous year. The budget includes the addition of office space rent and a proposed increase in communication funding. He stated that he is part of the Incident Management Team that serves as a liaison between the team and local entities. When he is deployed, the County is reimbursed for the costs; it has been helpful in providing training on complex issues.

Commissioner Howard asked about Homeland Security Grants. Mr. Brock stated that those grants will not pay for personnel and are not a dependable funding source.

Special Accounts

Mrs. Burgess stated that this fund includes personnel costs for Vector Control, telephone and postage expenses, Senior programs, the Career Technical Education program, the GED program, as well as other programs previously presented.

Mr. Coulter noted that proposed funding for Blue Mt. Community College and Eastern Oregon University were less than requested. Mrs. Burgess stated that it was determined that funding needs were less than originally requested.

Commissioner Beverage asked about funding for the Predator Control Program. Mrs. Burgess stated that the proposed budget includes funding for a half-time position.

Transfers/Animal Control

Mrs. Burgess stated that this is where general fund money is transferred for the Animal Control Fund and the contract for Blue Mt. Humane Shelter. Other revenues come from the City of La Grande for an Animal Control officer, the City of Union contract for Animal Control services, the City of La Grande for the Animal Shelter contract, and dog licenses, fees, and fines.

Sheriff

Boyd Rasmussen, Union County Sheriff, stated that there were no changes to animal control and mediation. The budget includes an additional School Resource Deputy to service outlying schools; if a grant is not awarded, participating schools will pay for the services. Aging vehicles will continue to be rotated out and replaced. Routers for patrol vehicles are needed and included in the proposed budget.

Corrections

Sheriff Rasmussen stated that personnel shifts were trimmed a little bit. He would like to purchase a scanning device in the jail to monitor the inmates. It is currently done manually and presents some liability concerns.

Commissioner Beverage asked about contract negotiations with the City of Union. Sheriff Rasmussen stated that he has had positive interactions with the new city manager and is hopeful that a new agreement will be in place within the next year.

Ms. Candlish asked about a transfer in from Wind Energy. Mrs. Burgess stated that it is to help with the capital purchase of vehicles.

Commissioner Howard asked about medical care costs at the jail. Sheriff Rasmussen thought that the expenses were the lowest in the state; the nurse is efficient and a good use of county funds.

Mr. Coulter asked about the jail security contract. Sheriff Rasmussen stated that it is run through the city contract and they made the increase.

Commissioner Beverage asked about the Mentor program. Sheriff Rasmussen stated that the program helps connect inmates to jobs. A grant had covered the program but has been transitioned out. The program has been very successful and they continue to track data. It is a good investment of taxpayer money and he continues to support the program.

Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

Budget Committee Discussion & Deliberation

Mrs. Burgess stated that the Clerk's microfilm project can be funded through the clerk reserve fund. The Juvenile Department vehicle request can be funded from the vehicle reserve fund. The jail budget was out of balance when submitted, but after further review and work it was determined that their funding request was inadequate. The proposed budget includes the purchase of software for the jail as requested, but will not take place until it is known if revenues will support that purchase.

Mr. Coulter noted that the Sheriff's Department is over budget in many categories and asked if there are understaffing challenges creating overtime expenses. Mrs. Burgess stated that the Sheriff's Department will utilize the Reserve Deputies more in the future to reduce overtime expenses. If overtime expenses are out of line, then the requested software purchase will not be made.

Mr. Coulter noted that vehicle repairs in the Sheriff's budget were over budget the last few years and the proposed budget reflects a lower expense; he asked if the proposed expense was adequate. Mrs. Burgess stated that the Sheriff's Department plans to follow the budget.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the proposed budget includes a half-time position for Predator Control. Funding was not increased for the Medical Examiner services as it looked like the amount proposed would be adequate.

Ms. Candlish stated that the vehicle request from the Juvenile Department seemed inadequate and proposed increasing its funding to \$25,000. Mrs. Burgess stated that the fund has \$81,000, with \$20,000 earmarked for the Assessor's office. Mr. Coulter stated that setting aside \$25,000 for the Juvenile Department would leave adequate money in the fund.

Ms. Candlish noted that Wallowa County is funding their Medical Examiner (ME) better than Union County and stated that she supported increasing the program funding to \$5,000. Mr. Coulter suggested reducing witness and jury fees by \$2,000 and increase ME funding to \$5,000. Commissioner Howard was hesitant to reduce witness and jury fees as they are inconsistent; he would prefer a flat approval of the ME funding.

Mr. Hardy would like to see increased funding for the Predator Control program, but was unsure where additional funding would come from. Mr. Coulter asked if there was a risk of losing this service. Mrs. Burgess stated that if the County willingly takes on responsibility to fully fund the position then the State will not; the program can be sustained with the current funding. Commissioner Beverage proposed to keep Predator Control program funding the same as the previous year.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the Chamber of Commerce requested \$25,000; the proposed budget includes \$20,000 for the Chamber. The Conference Center requested \$25,000 and the proposed budget has their funding listed as \$20,000. Additional funding for these items could be found by reducing the TRT contingency.

Mr. Coulter stated that Mr. Kavanaugh is doing a great job; he encouraged more funding for the Chamber. The Conference Center is needed in the community; he suggested funding at the requested level. Funding could be taken from the contingency fund. Ms. Candlish concurred.

Mrs. Burgess stated that the contingency fund is maintained to balance funding amounts since TRT collections fluctuate year to year. It allows steady funding even when collections may be declining. The last several years have shown an upward trend. Using contingency funds to fully fund requests for the Chamber and the Conference Center would reduce the TRT contingency to \$122,000.

Mr. Coulter moved approval of the FY2018-19 Union County Budget as amended. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hardy adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorcinda Johnston
Sr. Dept. Specialist