

STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

District

1 Betty I. Johnson (207) 323-3767
2 Kevin J. Kelley (207) 306-9225
3 Timothy A. Parker (207) 306-9232



Barbara L. Arseneau
County Clerk

39-B Spring Street
Belfast, ME 04915

Phone (207) 338-3282
Fax (207) 338-6788
E-mail: countyclerk@waldocountyme.gov

Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL COURT SESSION
SEPTEMBER 11, 2025**

PRESENT: Commissioners Betty Johnson (Chairman) Kevin Kelley, and Timothy Parker. Staff Present: Finance Director Kari Hunt, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau took minutes.

Call to Order: Commissioner Johnson called the court session to order at 9:01 a.m.

2026-2027 Budget Requests were presented and reviewed as follows:

Jail Budget Request – presented by J. Trundy, M. Curtis, and M. Magnusson. Brief discussion of the history regarding why the jail budget was separated out from the rest of the County budget in previous years. Commissioner Kelley had recommended moving some of the Jail budget lines into the County side of the budget, particularly facilities, benefits, etc. K. Hunt stated that she was still clearly identifying which items are related to the Jail for Corrections reporting purposes. The 2026-7 jail budget was reviewed line by line. Explanation pages show the reasons for wage increases for union employees, and non-union employees. The non-union administration wages must be addressed as they are falling behind especially compared with the union employees wages, therefore some of those lines have been requested higher than the 2.7% COLA. Health insurance renewal costs are not available yet so the benefits are based on current employee status of single, married, or family rates. Vacancies are estimated at the fully burdened family rate. At times when the vacancy occurs, the unpaid wages balance out any additional benefit cost for a new hire. The Community Liaison position is a community-based co-responder who responds with the patrol staff to some of the calls. It was shifted into the corrections budget because that is where most of this position's work occurs. A new medical provider is coming on, which includes medical malpractice. It seemed more appropriate to move the salary for the medical provider in the part-time line as this position will be per-diem. When asked who would fill in while the medical provider is on vacation or ill, a backup is still being worked on. It was noted that at times the ill or injured person is taken to emergent care. Medical mal-practice claims on the provider have been reviewed. Discussion on using P/T employees to fill gaps in coverage and to minimize overtime. Often, they are tied up with vacancies, to assist with community volunteer projects, or on the County Garden detail. The jail must have at least 2 staff present. Transports were discussed. Only one employee is transport-trained and must be a deputy. Union language also dictates how some of this is handled. Ankle monitors are covered in part by the offender and also by some grant funds.

Inmate Medical/Dental Line: The current inmate boarding contract with Two Bridges covers most of the medical costs, but major medical is not. The Reentry Center is currently taking State inmates and reserves the right to send them back if necessary. Discussion of either adding more funding than requested, as it has typically always been expended and often the reserve is pulled from or funding the reserve. The Commissioners recommended increasing Inmate Medical/Dental/Surgical line to \$60,000.00 for 12 months and \$30,000.00 6 months, for a grand total of \$90,000.00 for the 18 months.

VOA Reentry Contract Line: Discussion on the services offered and it was noted that whoever is in the position may impact things. M. Magnusson said the current level is excellent. Some of the services offered were mentioned. There

is an 8.7% reduction in recidivism, which is excellent, and residents are being returned to the community. Only 16 hours of community drivers is being budgeted to take residents to classes and substance abuse meetings. DOC also credits every inmate funding and this is accounted for on the revenue page. The more bed days in the Reentry, the more credit. Discussion of how to enroll more residents into the Reentry. There aren't enough sentenced people and/or some agencies don't want to send them and won't send them. When asked if they were comfortable with the request amount, the answer was yes.

Boarding Line: This line increased from \$1.1 million to \$2.1 million. They are working with the District 6 Collaborative to reduce housing rates. The history of the prosecutorial district was mentioned. Two Bridges, the current boarding entity, has the capacity to hold inmates. They currently house Penobscot and Waldo inmates, and the Federal Government has a guaranteed 25 beds that cannot be used by other counties; nor can federal and county inmates be housed together. The current contract is not sufficient. Waldo's numbers are increasing and it has been exceeded (some are held at Knox based on needs). Two Bridges is full. There was brief discussion of building a prison. T. Parker wondered if a jail could be built on the land, while demolishing the current jail. J. Trundy said an 80-bed facility could house males, females and the Reentry. Based on the average cost to build, with a bond over 20 years, current staffing, and medical contract, the operating costs would start at \$8 to \$10 million per year. This would increase it from a \$3.6 budget to an \$8 to \$2 million budget, and it was believed that Waldo citizens would never vote for that. There needs to be a broader conversation with the history. In 2010, there was a budget of \$1.3 million. There are more than enough beds in the district and they need someone to run it as a district instead of separate jails. Basically they are trying to keep the flagship Jail, Two Bridges, open. M. Magnusson said 45 beds are needed per year. What needs to be negotiated is what to do with some of the unused beds, such as using the beds for other counties' inmates, and could that revenue be deducted from Waldo or used as revenue. If Waldo pays the \$2.1 million, the contract with the Federal Government would go away. They are still in negotiations and are trying to work as a District along with Knox County because they are an integral part of making the whole system work. K. Kelley suggested that the Sheriff calculate the \$2.1 million by inmate housing cost to help the budget committee understand how this was reached.

Capital Outlay Line: This is for leasing one vehicle and for OSHA mandated updates.

Brief discussion on whether it would be appropriate to utilize OPIOID settlement funds because so many of those in the jail deal with this. It was stated for the record that the only amount used from OPIOID settlement funds as of this date is \$73.00, plus \$1,000.00 approved in 2022 but not processed.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Jail Budget for Jail to with the exception of increasing the inmate medical from \$40,000.00 to \$90,000.00 for the 18 months period.** Discussion: Friendly edit by T. Parker to make it specific to the department's request. K. Kelley disagreed because it was the Commissioners who increased it from the original request. T. Parker agreed to stick to the original motion. **Passed unanimously.**

Sheriff's Budget Request – Presented by Sheriff J. Trundy and Chief Deputy M. Curtis.

Discussion of Cruisers: Fuel has remained fairly steady. Question was raised about the status of call-sharing with the State Police. The Sheriff had been told that call-share was being phased out but the new Lieutenant has been fighting to keep the call share agreement. Kennebec and Waldo are the only ones who still have call-sharing agreements.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Sheriff's Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

Information Technology Budget Request – presented by IT Director J-sun Bailey.

B. Johnson asked that there be more discussion on the webpage and Public Facing Digital Platforms and had met with J. Bailey separately for more information, so she would like to move forward with discussion and a vote. J. Bailey mentioned that SMARSH is social media archiving, and noted that by 2027, all websites must have the capability for ADA compliancy.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve going with CivicPlus and SMARSH as presented.** Discussion of requesting a 3-year budget. **Unanimous.**

Waldo County Commissioners Court Special Session – September 11, 2025

J. Bailey explained that many lines in previous years are blank because most lines in this budget are new. The Overtime line is for another F/T Person. The P/T line is zero because of requesting a F/T person.

Travel expenses include two employees rather than one.

Telephone lines include the Jail employees, as well. Telephone and internet increases are estimated at 5%. He has applied for a grant for new laptops and cell phone/data connections, which have been budgeted for. When they upload the camera, it interrupts service. Software licenses, such as multifactor authentication, which is mandated by CJIS, were briefly discussed. An over 5-year-old invoice came from Motorola in the amount of \$23,000.00 that Motorola forgot to bill the County for data conversion. After months of waiting and searching, they say it still needs to be paid. The networking system is nearly 20 years old and must be replaced. New fiberoptic cable will be run to the Communications Building because the current is full and backup is needed. Backup equipment is also needed.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the recommended amount for the Information Technology Budget for 2026 and 2027. Unanimous.**

J. Bailey requested that unspent technology funds be moved at the end of the year into a Technology Reserve.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY BUDGET: Presented by EMA Director Dale Rowley.

Personnel increases were higher because of 2.7% COLA, 27 pay periods, and both EMA Director and Deputy EMA Director are reaching 20-year pay steps.

Vehicles: The newest vehicles is 8 years old. The staff vehicle has had some issues. He had planned to find out everything wrong with it but learned that it is in fairly good shape. When the 1995 command truck goes, he will try to consolidate into the other command truck. Tires are needed on the command vehicles. Web Portals were briefly discussed. He has removed a collaborative program that is \$84.00 per year that he no longer subscribes to and can be removed from both 2026 and 2027. Both 2026 and 2027 lines for EMA Web Portals could be reduced to \$4,754.00.

Most of the training for EMA is provided free by the State, etc. The Food line is for training events, as it makes it more possible for them to attend. It is less than ½ for 2027 because the larger events occur later in the year.

Cleaning Supplies: All the janitorial work is done inhouse.

He informed the Commissioners that the legislature passed a bill for the State of Maine to be a sanctuary state. It is sitting on the Governor's desk and it will remain to be seen what impact this may have.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the Emergency Management Agency 2026-7 budget with the recommended reductions. Unanimous.**

District Attorney's Office Budget Request – presented by Prosecutorial Assistant Eric Harvey and Legal Secretary Felicia Gray. District Attorney Natasha Irving sent her apologies that she couldn't be there as she was in court.

E. Harvey explained that there has been a deduction in the budget, which is good news. Some lines have increased due to increasing costs. Telephone is a shared expense with District 6, based on \$30.00 per month – ¼ of the cost for the District Attorney. The Courthouse Lease has been the same and it does not fall in the first part of 2027, so is not included. The photocopier lease contract ended, but they wish to keep the maintenance/supply contract for it. K. Kelley stated that when that copier goes away, the hard drive needs to be pulled out and left with the D.A.'s office because it would have confidential information on it.

The Liability Insurance line is for the prosecutors. The Commissioners requested that a copy of this be kept on file. Dues are also for the prosecutors.

The postage and meter lines are combined because the meter is no longer needed due to having software to share files, reducing the need for postage.

Document Disposal was changed to a different company when the D.A.'s Office moved last year. The new company costs \$5.00 less per bin.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve District Attorney's Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

1076 Communications Center Budget Request – presented by Director Michael Larrivee.

In conversations with the H.R. Director, historically there have been three (3) Shift Supervisors. He attempted to have a Deputy Director but that fell through so he believes there needs to be a fourth (4) Shift Supervisor. This would be a new position but not with an additional person. The H.R. Director should be on Zoom soon to discuss this further. He has enough funds to support the new supervisor now and would like to fill the open vacancy. T. Parker said that, for the record, he is fine with that.

IamResponding is a program provided to the Fire Departments notifying them to report to a fire, and they can respond on that. This contract is increasing. Tower site contracts were briefly mentioned.

The scheduling program line and another policy program line that was paid from Capital Outlay have been combined under the Program Software line.

The Vehicle Fuel line was kept the same due to not knowing what fuel will cost. The Commissioners recommended reducing \$1,000.00 from that line.

The Office Supplies line was discussed. K. Hunt recommended a vendor that has better prices. The Commissioners recommended reducing the Supplies line to \$3,000 for 2026 and reduced to \$1,500.00 for 2027.

****MOTION K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Communications budget with the reductions and with the friendly edit of the newly redefined Supervisor position as requested. Unanimous.**

Facilities Management Budget Request – presented by Facilities Manager Christopher Bryant.

The vehicle Maint/Gas/Tires was reduced because they did work on the vehicles this year, and C. Bryant now lives nearer to the County buildings.

Electricity: The EMA solar energy reduces the electricity in all but the Public Safety buildings. His research has been that CMP is estimating that electricity there will be 13% to 18% higher in the next year. EMA's costs are basically covered by their solar energy. When asked about the electricity for Dispatch, C. Bryant didn't feel it should be reduced. He had requested this amount last year, it was reduced by the Budget Committee, and it will go over budget this year. Dispatch doesn't have solar and is a 24-hour facility. From May 2024 to May 2025, it increased 20%. K. Hunt stated that C. Bryant has been paying very close attention to the electricity bills.

City of Belfast Water and Sewer sent a notification that their costs were increasing, and then an additional notice that they needed to calculate even higher. The budget request reflects this increase. A well test has to be done at the EMA/Garden property, so that is included.

Tower site costs were discussed. There are propane tanks, and this will be over budget this year. He would prefer Tower Site Electricity line be \$13,000.00 for 2026 and \$6,500.00 for 2027. The Commissioners agreed.

Snow removal was discussed. The contracted amount is reflected in what is requested. It has been contracted with the same company for years because that contractor is the least expensive. Discussion has been held regarding having the current part-time person in two different county positions, and who does some plowing for some of the other buildings, to possibly do more plowing. There was discussion of whether this, and other work, is put out to bid each year. Salting is done separately by another contractor. Potential Overtime was mentioned. The Commissioners

recommended a cost analysis. The current Jail and Sheriff's budget does not include the plowing. If an employee performs the service, the County assumes all the liability. The Commissioners felt that the current process should be continued with the exception that it must be put out to bid in the future.

The Cleaning Supplies line in Sheriff's Office was increased because they are over budget this year, and that building uses a lot of supplies.

Jail Electricity can be reduced from \$39,600 to \$36,000.00 for the 12 months, and down from \$19,800 to \$18,000.00. The Commissioners agreed.

Without the Jail, the budget from 2025 was \$299,302.00. For 2026, without the Jail it is \$311,000. The Jail is adding \$110,000.00.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go with the recommended budget for Facilities Management along with the changes in the budget. Unanimous.**

Human Resources Budget Request – Presented by Human Resources Director Tracy Benton.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to go into executive session for brief discussion of a personnel matter at 1:02 p.m. at the request of H.R. Director Tracy Benton. Unanimous.**

The Commissioners resumed public session at 1:09 p.m. No action was taken.

H.R. Director Tracy Benton presented the 2026-7 Human Resources Budget Request.

In view of recent circumstances, she recommended to increase the Professional Services line from \$10,000.00 to \$15,000.00.

The Equipment Costs were increased to reflect the shared costs between the three departments of H.R., Finance, and County Commissioners. Postage and Postage Meter will be combined at a total of \$913.72. Unanimous.

T. Benton did not see a need for funding the printing and engraving line for 2026 and half of 2027.

T. Benton is bringing a donated printer and photocopier with her from her previous job.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Human Resources budget request with the following changes: Postage and Postage Meter lines will be combined for a total of \$911.90. Unanimous.**

Health Insurance line: T. Benton presented. The health insurance renewal packet had not been sent as yet and should be coming near the end of December, and recommended adding 20% to the current check registers, estimate to the end of the year, and add 20% to that. K. Hunt stated that, to date, the check registers are \$2.1 million. Tariffs are going to heavily impact this cost. The estimate is \$4.8 to \$4.9.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to put a "soft number" of \$4.9 million for the health insurance line in the 2025 Benefits Budget until more solid numbers can be obtained. Unanimous.**

Waldo County Soil & Water Conservation District Budget Request – Presented by Andrew Reed and Gene Randall.

The current 2025 budget is still unexpended, and they mentioned that the District is due to be paid.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go with the recommended amount of \$37,500.00 for Waldo County Soil & Water Conservation District as presented. Unanimous.**

U. of M. Cooperative Extension Budget Request – Presented by Executive Kerry Chasteen, Assistant Extension Professor/Sustainable Agriculture and Farm Business Management Educator Brett Johnson, (look at role in contacts) and Matt Clifford, Treasurer. K. Chasteen described the function of this organization, including state law. The request

Waldo County Commissioners Court Special Session – September 11, 2025

is \$56,764.00 for 2026 and \$25,773.00 for the first half of 2027. The Extension Building is a County-owned building, which they are very grateful for, and is utilized by eight (8) U. of M. Extension Members. This space is also used for Statewide Training. The requested funds support one administrative staff member and the physical County address.

The 6-month request is for a 4% cost of living pay increase as a union employee. The budget is a little less than before. K. Chasteen's position is new, and the reduction is programs and supplies that they were not utilizing in different areas.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go with the recommendation for the 2026-7 request of \$76,537.00.** Discussion about family services and possibly doing more advertising about what is offered. **Unanimous.**

Registry of Probate Budget Request – Presented by Register of Probate Sharon Peavey.

Sep increases and longevity have been accounted for. Travel and lodging were reduced as there has been less need for them. Many lines had no change in the requests. The Registry is currently 25 cases ahead of last year at this time, so there are more costs associated with that. The P.O. Box rental has gone up, as have Publications and Notices. QuickBooks has been moved from Recording fees to the Capital Outlay.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the Probate Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

Registry of Deeds – Presented by Register of Deeds Stacy Grant. When asked what amount of funds must be sent to the State, 90% of the fees must go and 10% is kept by the County. A new legislative bill starts next month. Instead of keeping 10%, for two years only 9.2% will go to the County, and the rest will go to the State. After that it will revert back to 10%. However, for sales over \$1 million, the tax will increase to \$6.00 per \$500.00 so this will more than offset the deficit from the 2% fees that are going to the State. She discussed the new flat fee and how much revenue is estimated to increase. There was brief discussion about whether or not the K. Hunt should increase the projected revenue. Travel costs have increased. S. Grant has consolidated many of her lines to make it more uniform and consistent. Meals, mileage and lodging are now merged into a line called "Travel/Meals" and is requested at \$1500.00 for 12 months. One of the lines is now called Equipment Repair/Maintenance for the copier and typewriter.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Registry of Deeds Budget for 2026 and 2027 as presented. Unanimous.**

Firefighters Association Budget Request – Presented by Ken Clements, Firefighters' Association President.

Training was discussed. All towns in Waldo County participate, and some other agencies also train there. There is a Basic Fire School every spring. First, there is all classroom and learning to pull hoses, etc. which is followed later by actual fire burns for training. Pumps class is held in the fall and travels to different departments. Emergency Vehicles Class is also offered.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the recommended amount for the Firefighters Association budget request as presented. Unanimous.**

Finance Budget Request – Presented by Finance Director Kari Hunt.

K. Hunt briefly reviewed the increases in the budget.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the Finance Budget as requested. Unanimous.**

Audit Budget Request – presented by

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to increase the Audit Budget request from \$20,000.00 for 2026 and increase from \$10,000.00 to \$15,000.00 for a total \$40,000.00. Unanimous.**

Debt Service Budget Request – presented by Finance Director Kari Hunt.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pass the Debt Service budget as requested.**

Interest – Presented by H. Hunt

K. Hunt totaled the request for the 18 months at \$517,890.00. She said she would like to branch out further for Waldo County Commissioners Court Special Session – September 11, 2025

from banks for interest. The County is having a lot of trouble because the financial audits aren't completed and updated yet.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve Interest as presented. Unanimous.**

Employee Benefits Budget Request – Presented by K. Hunt

K. Hunt said she would like a second set of eyes on the numbers she has presented for Maine State Retirement (MainePERS), Jail Retirement/Annuity, MSRS-Insurance, Jail MSRS – Insurance, Workers Compensation, and Jail Workers Compensation. K. Hunt has tried to fill in where H.R. normally does the budgeting. Workers' Comp will not have rates and solid numbers until later in the fall.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to tentatively approve Employee Benefits for 2026 and 2027 as presented. Unanimous.**

Reserves Budget Request – Presented by K. Hunt.

Her best guess, with input from the Department Heads would be nine (9) retiring. This does NOT include buyouts, terminations, other unplanned.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve Reserves as presented. Unanimous.**

Commissioners Budget Request – Presented by County Clerk Barbara Arseneau.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Commissioners Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

Records Preservation Budget Request – Presented by County Clerk Barbara Arseneau.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Records Preservation budget as presented. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to go into Exec Session for a personnel discussion at 2:50 p.m. as permitted by MRS Title 1§405(6)(A). Unanimous.**

The Commissioners resumed public session at 2:59 p.m.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the conditional offer of employment for Office Associate to Danielle Murray. Unanimous.**

Projected Revenue 2026-2027 Request: Presented by Finance Director Kari Hunt.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Projected Revenue for 2026-2027 as presented. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to recess at 3:04 p.m.**

The Commissioners reconvened at 3:15 p.m.

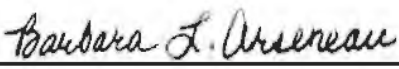
Waldo Community Action Partners Budget Request – presented by Monica Pettengill.

Programs in Transportation (Midcoast Transportation) was briefly discussed. When asked about services, Early Head Start and Head Start, Energy Dept (HEEP); other community services programs were mentioned. WCAP is working on long range plans to provide housing in the future and are working with a housing director to hopefully eventually create up to 60 unit, CHIP Central Home Improvement Program, and some that target seniors over 60 to be able stay in their homes. The CEO is very passionate and brings a lot of training for staff in connection with elders. Non-emergency medical transport is free and paid for by MaineCare. Some people don't have those resources so there is a pool of grant funding that's private and they try to help. When asked, WCAP can connect people with the State cell phone program. She provides a sheet to all the organizations that are helped and will have 2024's numbers in a few weeks. They have vehicles that they own and busses that charge only \$3.00. There is transportation to Bangor, and some of the longer routes, etc. They offer dialysis and cancer trips through private grants. Case workers work with the homeless. When asked, sometimes the only option at the disposal they have given a tent. T. Parker said that in

Unity, the person had been given a tent. It was explained that on rare occasions, that is all that is available but they always try to do whatever they can. T. Parker said he had promised to raise the following question: Is it possible to get to Belfast and can't get a driver's license because they can't get into town? M. Pettingill said they are constantly evaluating the needs in the community and would love to solve all the problems - and there are lots of problems - and process that has to be followed. They might be able to develop the program. The case Managers work really hard with individuals and work closely with landlords who partner well. WCAP is always looking at ways to do better. The tent situation is the most egregious example. The way to show local support is when citizens help provide for the match funds for the federal funds. The Community Block Grant is in danger and WCAP is trying to fight and stay and do their best work.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the Waldo Community Action Partners Budget Request as presented; K. Kelley made the friendly edit to increase to \$7,500.00 for 2026 and \$3,750.00 for 2027. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to adjourn.**

Respectfully submitted by  Waldo County Clerk
Barbara L. Arseneau