STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

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Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
FEBRUARY 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Kevin Kelley, Breanna Pinkham Bebb, and Timothy Parker. Staff present were Human Resource Director Tracy Benton, Finance Director Kari Hunt, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau took minutes. Staff present via Zoom were Register of Probate Sharon Peavey, Register of Deeds Stacy Grant, and Treasurer Own Smith. Eric Buch and Gary Hazard were also present.

1. **Welcome / Call to Order:** Commissioner K. Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. **Review / Revise Agenda**

**T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the amendments to the agenda.

3. **Consent Agenda**

a) Finance Report
b) Minutes: 2/5/2026, 1/8/2026 Tax Abatement Appeal Minutes Pet.#387, 4/3/2025, 4/10/2025
c) VOTE: Consideration of action to approve the consent agenda

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve all minutes in subsection b). Passed by two; B. abstained.**

4. **Public Comment**

E. Buch said he was present to speak about OPIOID funds. He reviewed the history of distributions awarded beginning in 2022 through 2037 and mentioned a support center being created to assist Counties in determining distribution of funds in the most effective way to help with OPIOID addiction. After reading a study in the Maine Monitor in 2025 listing OPIOID fund awards and expenditures in cities and counties in Maine, Dr. Tim Hughes, retired Journalist Jay Davis, and E. Buch set out to learn how Waldo County funds were being distributed, and what future plans were. The Commissioners asked if the City of Belfast was awarded funds and was told it has not. It was noted that the population of Waldo County was the equivalent of some of the cities in Maine. Over several months, they ascertained there was no process to make determinations for how funds would be spent, $2,000.00 was allocated to Belfast Creative Coalition, and there was no clear accounting for about $138,000.00 that went to the County Jail and may have been used for issues related to addiction. Eventually the County of Waldo started receiving help from MOSS Support Center. K. Kelley thanked them for bringing this matter more to the fore. E. Buch said he was pleased with the progress, that the Standing Opioid Committee met along with the MOSS Center , and has identified eight (8) needs, and the intention of the Committee to release an application, proposals, and funding recommendations process for the OPIOID funds. He said it was important that the process be followed and that he, and T. Hughes, and J. Davis believe it is inappropriate for Commissioners to think that because they have the final say over where these funds are used, that they can use over $100,000.00 for 20 Waldo County inmates receiving addiction treatment when that decision didn't go through the committee's process. A formal proposal should be submitted requesting use funds for this purpose. He spoke briefly with Somerset County Administrator Tim Curtis and asked how they fund treatment for their inmates and was told that it is a combination of OPIOID settlement funds, and grants written by a medical professional in Portland for a few of the Counties. He wasn't sure if anyone had followed up with that professional.

K. Kelley stated that each of the medical treatment shots for addiction cost $1,630.36 each time, and he noted this because OPIOID funds are being tracked to the penny.

B. Pinkham Bebb said it is largely an issue of timing and maybe the OPIOID committee might be in favor of that. While it is important to do things the right way, currently the process isn't fully up and running and if the committee would be saying yes either 4 months from now or now. Taxpayers have issues and poverty is also a factor in addiction. E. Buch said it has been almost four years and the funds haven't been spent because the County didn't act on the process, and if the application process was in place, much of it would be spent by now. They hope within a month or two to present this process. E. Buch said these funds are not the answer to the County's financial problems. Perhaps it could be used for the MAT (Medical Assisted Treatment) program but should be considered alongside other proposals through the process. He didn't think that was fair or appropriate. He also felt pursuit of the grants should have been done as soon as the County of Waldo signed a contract with Somerset County. The County has lost time to potentially obtain more grants.

B. Pinkham Bebb expressed surprise that some OPIOID funds went to Belfast Creative Coalition, and T. Parker explained that there are events that BCC utilizes to highlight addiction awareness. E. Buch stated that the commissioner chair at the time was on that committee. B. Pinkham Bebb said she was not focusing on what happened before, the current board of commissioners have to move forward and try to do better and they are hearing a lot of complaints about the budget and this idea fits the use. T. Parker said that, while he hates this saying, he finds it to be true, that the wheels of government turn slowly. It's time to talk about having county administrator and perhaps the sins of the past could have been avoided if an administrator was there to make things run better. Budget proposals to be constantly revised and changed is to the point that it is like comparing apples to oranges.
K. Kelley noted the changes have been at the request of the Budget Committee. K. Hunt said that the Committee is focused on revised numbers and not the original columns for Department and Commissioners' requests.

E. Buch noted that totals were not provided for the actuals for 2025 and he had to calculate totals to compare to 2025. T. Parker asked how much had been pulled from reserves, and E. Buch accused the County of not engaging in any planning, forethought, or looking ahead. K. Kelley said that the focus for this year was to put as much information on the table as possible to point out the issues. The previous Commissioners were clear that they had a problem with health insurance issue, knew his background, and told him he would need to address this issue. They also expressed concern over the accounting system. This Board of Commissioners is trying to have realistic numbers. E. Buch said he appreciated receiving the most recent version of the 2026 budget proposal but noted that the formatting had changed and he found it difficult to compare. There was brief discussion about what had changed in formatting. E. Buch said that the actuals were not totaled, and it seemed there was a deficit in the budget. A mistake was made on the Jail budget in the past, the Budget Committee took care of half and County had to come up with the rest. He told the Commissioners they needed to do better managing the county's money and stated his ideas of what needed improvement.

K. Kelley stated that the are working to get through the 2023 and 2024 audits and go out to bid for 2025. Went out to bid for 30 auditors last year and only one responded. The County has no long-term debt and is now moving forward on the OPIOID Committee process. The Commissioners are trying to be proactive, not reactive. The County Jail's roof is a potential problem and will be at least $250,000.00 to address. K. Kelley agreed with T. Parker that the County should have held at the 17%.

B. Pinkham Bebb said that the cuts from 17% to 14% is through paying some other way and is still creating cliffs.

E. Buch criticized the wage increases in the Sheriff's Office/Jail at 20%. T. Parker said it is fiscally responsible to provide people the real numbers. He illustrated that when an employee works a 12 hour shift and is told they have to work another, and that job includes mopping up [various bodily fluids], dealing with people trying to kill themselves and other officers, and that employee is told they don't get to go home, those people deserve to be paid what they get paid. These people had no voice and no representation, but now do with the union.

Gary Hazard from Thorndike spoke. He noted he has a private sector mentality that if you succeed your costs are less than your revenue; if not, you go out of business and nobody hears from you again. To T. Parker, he said that he appreciates the support of officers in Thorndike but has questions. Officers chose to be in that field. A 20% increase would not be done in the private sector but might be done for a few based on performance. He recommended doing cost-shifting in the future. He noted things cost more in 2026 than the past, and that that employees' participation in costs should be considered so the taxpayers are not paying all of it.

T. Parker said there is history of cost savings in the past that have already been happening. When the Jails were consolidated in 2008, the County changed the Jail to a Reentry Center and reduced the number of employees. Those employees left have been there a long time, and now have union contracts are such that if you don't honor those by budgeting, it will be paid to fight it in court.

K. Kelley said the Commissioners listened very attentively to all constituents who spoke at the Public Hearing on December 12th including remarks that had been made regarding the IT budget costs. They are doing what they can with licenses, etc. Budget All the jails were consolidated in 2008, and Waldo County Jail was shut down, gutted, changed, and cannot go back. It would cost $800.00 per square foot or $18 million to build a new jail verses $ in boarding vs Jail. The building can't ever go back to being a Jail. Back then, cut employees, and running the Jail with 2 to 3 people. He hears what Hazard is saying, but cost savings have already been happening.

K. Kelley said that the IT professional said there should be lower IT costs. Licenses might be able to be saved but based on the timing of software contracts, this would have to be staggered. The Commissioners do listen and are looking for pieces of the puzzle and that's why we listen. Once on the radar with OPIOID, picked up speed. 93 employees. There are one-person departments – County clerk, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and the Commissioners took an administrative person and moved it to Finance. He noted it is routine for employees in those departments who are routinely still at work at 6:30 p.m. This is burning out people, and the ripple effects have been here for years. The County has an operating system that needs a major upgrade in three years, not a patch. The County is required to have software based on department of justice for security compliance.

T. Parker spoke about Corrections Officers being trained well and providing everything the State does and better. Back in 2014, he was in charge of VOA. They are running both the 72-hour hold and Reentry facilities with the same staff. At that time, it cost $27,000.00 per person in waldo, and the State was doing it for roughly $69,000. It is truly the most cost effective way to do the boarding.

G. Hazard asked about county assigned vehicles and was told in EMA, 2 vehicles that were paid with grants and a jeep that is older, 2 vehicles for facilities, 4 in Corrections for transporting, and roughly 18-20 in the Sheriff's Office, and there is call sharing with the State Police and saves the County about $1,000,000.00. It is cheaper for the Towns to utilize the Sheriff's Office rather than have their own police department. Chief Deputy Matt Curtis, present in the audience, also explained why there are trucks in the fleet – they are actually cheaper than the SUV's and they have better residual value when it's time to sell them. And going to the new fleet program avoids cliffs and is an incremental increase each year that can be planned. He said he has pinched pennies in the fleet for years. G. Hazard said he was trying to be creative and not nit-picking and thanked the Commissioners for hearing him.

K. Kelley closed the public comment at 9:54 a.m.

H.R. Director Tracy Benton requested that due to time constraints for the interested parties, that the executive session be moved up on the agenda.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to go into executive session at 9:54 a.m. for labor discussion for the Waldo County Deputy Sheriff's Association - MRS Title 1§405(6)A. Unanimous.**

The Commissioners resumed public session at 10:11 a.m.

****MOTION: B. Pinkham Bebb/T. Parker to approve the MOU. Unanimous.**

5. Proposed 2026 Budget Discussion and Roll Call Vote

Commissioners reviewed most recent revision of V-4. K. Kelley rattled off numbers.
Audit – it was originally it was $20,000.00, the Budget Committee increased it to $30,000.00, then dropped it back to $20,000.00 and because now there is a known 30% increase to perform the 2025 audit, the Commissioners are increasing it to $26,000.00
K. Hunt and T. Benton reviewed personnel savings and found that one Facilities position went from F/T to P/T and reduced that, and reduced County Commissioners budget because the administrative position that was in that department has been moved to Finance.

K. Kelley listed personnel savings in all departments as follows: The shared Office Associate was switched from Commissioners to Finance department, the proposed accountant position in Finance was not funded, the proposed second full-time position was not funded, an EMA grant position ended December 31st and has gone away, and another 27 hour per week grant position was reduced 3 hours and the grant is covering 9 of the 24 hours, a F/T Facilities position is reducing to P/T on March 8th, and because there is a new county commissioner, there was a reduction in the salary for that department. There was also a savings as the Commissioners no longer are receiving benefits. These 7 positions resulted in a savings of $408,201.92.

K. Hunt reported that the Sheriff also reduced about $50,000 on Sheriff's side and $42,000 from the Jail side. K. Hunt worries that these reductions could potentially lead to using funds from reserves. K. Kelley read all the lines that were reduced from both Sheriff and Jail budgets. That reduction is $53,054.00 more. It was noted that there are OSHA issues in the Jail kitchen. B. Pinkham Bebb said the original quote was $75,000.00. B. Pinkham Bebb asked if they should put the Capital Outlay items back in. T. Parker said they might need an actual number. The situation was discussed: ceiling, flooring, countertops and it was noted that the Jail is currently grandfathered on fire suppression, and too many changes could effect that. The Commissioners asked that a telephone call be made to the Sheriff or Chief Deputy to obtain an actual number.

K. Hunt said that the reductions have brought the proposed budget down from 13.99% to 13.64%. K. Kelley reviewed the budget proposal changes from start to current as 37. 17.36% to 13.99% to 13.58% and 13.64% increase which will bring large "cliffs." B. Pinkham Bebb said she could not support the 13.64. K. Hunt said to get back to a somewhat comfortable level it should go up to 17.36% and that is still with some cliffs. She is concerned that departments are just slashing, there will be sacrifices and going without. She will need to reduce her training that she needed, and she has an office association who needs additional training. She is very concerned about the Health Insurance budget as there are major cliffs there. Currently there is $330,000.00 in the health reserve account right now. T. Benton said that January has been light, but they are going to start seeing some very large weekly registers and it is very possible that the health reserve could be wiped out by one single register.
One weekly hit could wipe out the health savings account. In the benefits, to the penny is $1,381,770.77 has included three family plans for three vacant positions that. The Jail Insurance is $461,880.15 to the penny. The Employee premium offset is $355.72 for 15% premium has been taken out. Dental insurance $36,087.61. Stop Loss Insurance premium is $585,759.36 and increased to increase a little of the risk. Weekly claims actual is $2,584,983.48. Stop Loss Claims Overage is $426,076.84 is what the County is at risk. One hit could wipe out the health savings reserve account.

K. Hunt said Workers Comp has not been accurately calculated in the past which has created a $22,000.00

invoice for the County and has not been calculated in this budget. T. Benton said that this is because they do not know the results of the Workers' Comp audit. This is only the premium. When asked, T. Benton said at least $250,000.00 needs to be added back in "to be able to sleep at night."

E. was allowed to speak – he said there was a lot of give and take whether the county is establishing an accounts receivable for an amount we know we are eventually going to receive from Stop Loss. He thought that was the issue and he's like the answer to that so that the County would know what they would be reimbursed. K. Kelley said that how much time goes by between a claim and the actual reimbursement has been discussed. T. Benton said it varies a lot. It was over $300,000.00 for 2025. K. Hunt said that the funds that come back stay in the health reserve fund account. The float out there is roughly $82,000.00.

Other cliffs:
1.) IT - $90,000.00 removed from the 2026 Budget for Edmunds finance software and CivicPlus will have to be paid in 2027 ($11,000.00 for CivicPlus and $52,000.00 for Edmunds.)

2.) Sheriff's - $33,000.00 potentially may need to come from reserves due to adjustments made, which she doesn't have detail for.

3.) Corrections: - housing, medical, unexpended funds were used. Housing is $1.9 million and it was reduced it down to about $1.6 million by using $125,000.00 from reserves and about $200,000.00 from unexpended funds. There is an invoice that will be paid today for one month of medicated assisted treatment that is almost $22,000.00 in undesignated funds, and it can fluctuate based on number of people.

4.) Severance: In the hole by $55,000.00. Potentially 9 people and possibly 10 may be leaving in 2026. This is about $450,000.00 for retirees, per K. Kelley. If there are any RIFs, there will be more to pay.

5.) The Information Technology Reserve is in the red.

T. Parker said they had been presented by Bob Kurek a rough estimate of what it would cost each town with a proposed County budget, and he said he himself has asked for one but was refused, is to have a breakdown of the percentage of increase for each town based on either this version of the budget or whatever will be presented to the Budget Committee.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley for a breakdown of what percentage of increase would be estimated for each of the Towns based on the most current State valuation.** Discussion: He was told that he needed a motion to get this data put together. K. Kelley said the concern is when the budget first came out, people said it was a 50% tax increase. The Commissioners have had to consistently say what the percentage of increase is now. The issue of putting soft numbers on the table, is they are looking for a number they can sink their teeth into. For himself personally, at the 13.58%, he used ChatGPT based on what he pays for the county, municipal, and school components his tax would go up $80.54 per year or about $6.36 cents. Then he tested ChatGPT again and put the total of $4,500.00 property tax and the system said the County tax bill would be $800.00. So he knew that the test he did with ChatGPT worked. He said he understood what T. Parker was saying but the only way he would agree to do this is to have a firm number to plug in. The other discussion K. Kelley wanted to have related to Statute 30-A§706 and if the budget is not approved, the County can spend money for health and safety. He did not want to utilize it if it could be avoided. The premise of this budget process was to put realistic numbers on the table. There are two sets of books because the Jail was set up to be under the State in 2007 and when Jails went back to the County, the State never closed the books. And now the County put those lines where they belong. To give soft numbers out to the public has too many variable. T. Parker said the Budget Committee presented this to the public with soft numbers. Now the Commissioners would be giving back soft numbers to the Budget Committee. K. Kelley said the numbers need to be accurate.

B. Pinkham Bebb said she would rather have a 17% increase this year and a reasonable amount next year than have 13% this year and have a 30% increase next year. T. Parker said that many people don't understand that their town is only paying a portion of that 17%. According to what the soft figures the Budget Committee gave out, some towns in District 3 were not going up even 1%. T. Parker said that the Commissioners would be setting a number and could do this sheet based on that. B. Pinkham Bebb said she has sat at the other side of the table. As a former committee member, she would rather have the County come back and say they tried to get all the numbers down and have realized that there is over $400,000.00 that would not be a responsible decision and won't solve any problems and will put more costs on the 2027 budget. If the Budget Committee is dedicated to the lowest number possible, it would be on the Budget Committee. If they want to do the responsible thing, she personally would be able to stand in integrity with herself if she went back to the budget committee with a similar number to last time and with a list of reasons why. State valuation is out for 2026. B. Pinkham Bebb asked if they would use last years or the current. K. Kelley said that the County needs to decide which budget they would go with, and therefore he is leaning toward not approving the vote if no decision was made. It was agreed to have a friendly edit. **T. Parker said the friendly edit is that whatever budget is being submitted, that there be soft numbers based on the state valuations.** There was more discussion. K. Hunt said that this would be a tax assessment that must be given to the Commissioners for review. She wished to clarify that she has not done this because the budget numbers change by the minute and she doesn't want to confuse the public anymore. Based on the motion, she would not have any problem putting in soft numbers but she would add a disclaimer to it that it is subject to change at any moment and would not want the public to think this is carved in stone, and then something changes and the public comes back to the County and says, "You said THIS was it."
Vote: T. Parker in favor, K. Kelley and B. Pinkham Bebb opposed. Motion failed. K. Kelley said he heard T. Parker's point and understood the reason behind it, which is why he calculated his own taxes. B. Pinkham Bebb recommended to those present there and on Zoom to look at their tax bill for last year and figure it themselves.

The Commissioners gave K. Hunt the numbers to calculate and asked her to include notes, including the one for the $90,000.00 IT bill. K. Hunt would add them back in after her Finance Report.

- Put notes in 1035 IT that there will be $90,000.00 in 2027 budget cycle
- $22,000.00 for Workers Comp Audit
- $250,000.00 for health benefits
- $100,000.00 K. B. Pinkham Bebb asked that OPIOID funds not be considered, so add this amount back in for the Jail Medical
- $75,000.00 for Jail Kitchen renovations (OSHA)
- $125,000.00 When asked how much would be left in the Revitalization reserve, K. Hunt said there is $297,000.00, rounding up. B. Pinkham Bebb expressed concern that this was about half, and it was explained that this reserve was created to help with spikes in inmate boarding fees.
- Medical line – Inmate/Residents. It was decided it may be alright as it is.
- $236,000.00 Severance – K. Hunt said this account is $55,000.00 in the red. K. Hunt asked for $236,000.00 for the 9 potential retirees. It was agreed to add $55,000.00 back in.

The Commissioners asked for the EMA Report before the Finance Report since EMA Director Dale Rowley was present.

6. Department Reports/Requests

6.1 EMA Report

a) MEMA Performance Subrecipient Grant: D. Rowley said this grant application had been discussed at a previous Commissioners' session. The Commissioners had been concerned about ICE/DHS language in the original application. D. Rowley explained the changes in the document since the State won the case. The Dept of Health and Human Services has been shut down, but when they come back, Waldo County can request what has been spent each month. If the decision is vacated, the EMA budget is already set, and it is basically for labor which is already going to happen. The worst that happens, the County submits, whatever has been spent will be covered, but none for the future. If vacated, the language goes back in, and the risk is the ICE/DHS language. $67,927.63 is what is at stake.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the grant for $67,927.63 based on the federal requirements.** K. Kelley said if the decision is vacated, it goes back to the original language. D. Rowley said that whatever has been submitted would be covered, and then the County could opt not accept any more reimbursements. Many times the federal government adds various language to the grants. D. Rowley said he submits monthly, which hasn't been submitted for the last four months. The funds have been shrinking over time. Right now the County is on the 3-year grant. If it vacates, it could just go until it runs out. Usually the amount only reimbursed for about 8 months of the EMA submission because of the amount. B. Pinkham Bebb asked if the language changes, does the county give the money back? D. Rowley said the money would just not be requested anymore for reimbursement. **Motion passed; two in favor, K. Kelley opposed.**

K. Kelley briefly explained his personal perspective on this. T. Parker said if the language changes, the County could just not comply. D. Rowley said that if the State of Maine doesn't comply, funds won't come through to the County anyway. T. Parker said he would like to not miss out on money but if the language changes, the County could just not comply and not take any more funds. He would have voted differently if the language was still there. B. Pinkham Bebb thanked K. Kelley for sharing his perspective.

7. County Clerk Report

a) None

8. Commissioners Old Business

a) Finalize who would serve as proxy on both the Maine County Commissioners Association Board of Directors and the Risk Pool. B. Johnson was on the Risk Pool, so K. Kelley moved to the board.
****MOTION: K. Kelley put a motion on the table for the Risk Board of Directors Proxy. Pinkham Bebb volunteered/T. Parker seconded. Unanimous.**
****MOTION: K. Kelley put a motion on the table to assign B. Pinkham Bebb as Proxy for K. Kelley for the MCCA Board Directors/T. Parker seconded. Unanimous.**

b) A Proxy is needed for the K. Kelley, who is Co-Chair on the Legislative Committee which is weekly on Mondays 1:00 p.m. to monitor which bills that are in the State House, see which ones are being supported or not, and possibly give testimony. T. Parker volunteered and if he cannot make it, the County Clerk can fill in.
****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to serve as Proxy for K. Kelley on the Legislative Committee** m Volunteered.

c) Commissioner Representative for Communications Center Advisory Board. J-sun Bailey was recommended by M. Larrivee – already attending meetings, works with the Comm. Center Staff, and handles the County's technology.
****MOTION: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to nominate IT Director J-sun Bailey to serve on the Communications Center Advisory Board. Unanimous.**

9. Commissioners New Business

a) Miscellaneous - None

10. Human Resources Report T. Benton

a) Pay step Increases to be noted:

Promotion for Administrative Assistant to the Sheriff Michelle Hooper to move to the F/T Criminal Analyst Position, which has no additional pay or vacation as it is a lateral move, effective February 22, 2026.

****T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve promoting Michelle Hooper to F/T Criminal Analyst effective February 22, 2026. Unanimous.**

b) Because the assistant Finance position was unfunded and frozen for 2026, because there is a critical need and recommended by the auditor, she presented a contract employment agreement from February to June to bring in a person to perform check reconciliations and data analysis for up to 30 hours per month and it is Liza Clark, who has worked for the County before and has done an excellent job. There is no room in the budget for this. K. Kelley recommended funding this from County Savings. B. Pinkham Bebb expressed concern about not funding the recommended Finance assistant and recognizes that the workload on the Finance Director will be increasing with learning the new software around the same time that the next budget process will be starting. K. Hunt stated that the audits are behind and a huge part is reconciliations. Those need to be done and otherwise it would be $150.00 per hour. K. Kelly stated that L. Clark is very talented, and they are very lucky to get her back to do this. She has a varied and excellent skill set and is pursuing a degree in data analytics. There is money in the reserve to do this. If need for further months, the contract could be extended.
c) **MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the contract employment agreement between the County and Liza D. Clark. T. Parker asked if this contract was violating union rights. T. Benton noted that this is a temporary hired contract position. **Passed by two; T. Parker abstained.**

Budget Discussion continued. K. Hunt added in the numbers she was given earlier. This brings the budget to $14,968,570.14 for a total of 17.14%. T. Parker said that by adding these numbers back in he felt that both the 13% and 17% budgets should be presented to the Budget Committee as options. Include the risks and cliffs potentials and discuss where the County would find the money if the lower amount was approved. B. Pinkham Bebb said offering two options, higher and lower, was something she wrote to them about in an email the previous week. T. Parker said he thought B. Pinkham Bebb was in an awkward position she should abstain if she wishes. B. Pinkham Bebb said she has a different perspective. Context is important. Here is our budget recommendation and notes. Providing two options and explaining the difference could be very helpful. K. Kelley said he gets nervous on the health side – if a catastrophic hit happens, the health plan is gone in one check. Putting $250,000.00 back in there gives breathing room. There have been savings, and he feels that the risk number has gone down a little. The Commissioners will need to put all this information on the table for the Budget Committee to decide on.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to submit both Option 4 and 5 to the Budget Committee. Friendly edit by B. Pinkham Bebb to include the numbers of these budgets and the reasons for them. Unanimous.**

6.2 Finance - Finance Director Kari Hunt.
a) 2026 Mileage Reimbursement - tabled from 2/5/2026. The 2026 milage rate was presented on 1/22/2026 and again on 2/5/2026. The motion was initially made for all elected officials, no decision was made, and K. Hunt also provided a statute MRS Title 30-A subsection A. T. Parker said the intent was that if benefits were being removed from the Commissioners, this should include travel reimbursements. Travel allowances are permissible for county commissioners who live more than 5 miles from the county seat. Discussion: B. Pinkham Bebb asked what was voted on. K. Hunt read minutes from 1/8/2026 as follows:

*****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay the federal mileage reimbursement rate of 72.5 cents.*** *Discussion: T. Parker said that because of the budget, he believed mileage reimbursements should be done away with for everybody – or at least the elected positions. Employees must receive mileage reimbursements for traveling. K. Hunt asked if this was all elected positions, and if this could be done statutorily, B. Arseneau said that she didn't know, but counties were advised years ago that if there aren't records of milage reimbursements, it's hard to prove to insurance when an employee had an accident while driving on county business. T. Parker said the employees should receive a mileage reimbursement but he didn't feel the Commissioners needed it. He said he would approve it but he would not be submitting anymore for mileage because of the budget cuts. K. Kelley said he was not clear on the statute. B. Arseneau recommended researching because she wasn't sure employees could be asked to drive for county business without being reimbursed. T. Parker said he had moved away from employees, he said elected officials, and elected officials are not employees. Employees have the right for mileage. He felt that because of budget cuts they had an obligation to reduce the budget and the Commissioners should not receive mileage reimbursement. K. Kelley asked if T. Parker would be willing to table this until* *receiving a legal review and T. Parker agreed. T. Parder said that the mileage rate they were giving employees was different than the Commissioners anyway and that the Commissioners had been receiving higher mileage reimbursement than the employees. K. Hunt stated that the mileage reimbursement has been the same for all at .70 cents per mileage. T. Parker said he was pretty sure that they were getting a higher rate than the employees because he recalled talking about it during a workshop. K. Kelley asked if he could restate the motion to approve the new rate for employees and T. Parker said that his motion was to approve the 72.5 cents, and then got into a discussion and he said that he felt that the Commissioners should not be taking mileage. The motion was already to approve it, that they were in discussion now and they were two totally different things.* **Unanimous.**

The Commissioners noted that the motion was killed, and there isn't a different mileage reimbursement rate for Commissioners than employees. It is the federal rate of 72.5 cents. T. Parker said again for the record that that the intent was do the Commissioners need to be taking a mileage check because they have other elected officials here but there is a difference between an elected official and an employee of the County of Waldo. Those employees of the County of Waldo are entitled to that benefit. As an elected official, we are here to serve. That was clarifying again. B. Pinkham Bebb said she would leave that up to the discretion of each individual to say whether they feel they should be submitting for mileage. T. Parker asked if B. Pinkham Bebb was going to make a motion. B. Pinkham Bebb said she didn't see why it was even needed because they state that they pay the federal mileage rate necessary and T. Parker said that was because they would have to go with the new rate. B. Pinkham Bebb asked if it was done for the employees but not for the elected officials. K. Hunt said that is how she is taking it from the minutes of the meeting. T. Parker said he thought they were going to wait for a legal review but if that's what B. Pinkham Bebb thinks, too, the Commissioners should be making the motion that they go to that rate.
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go to the Federal rate of 72.5 cents as recommended.** Discussion: K. Kelley said there are some trips he has made out of the County that he has NOT charged mileage for and when he thinks it's prudent, he doesn't charge mileage for. Even in the private sector he was very sensitive to expense reports and credit cards. The County has credit cards that are monitored and maintain certain limits and focuses very hard on conferences for the staff as it all goes to networking and education and also reimbursable expenses that are incurred based on vehicle maintenance. There is one instance he drove over 100 miles on his own dime. He doesn't mind doing that. Personally, on a routine basis, he is coming here more often than not, he should be putting in for mileage. If combining trips for personal and county he tends to look at it seriously and puts it toward himself and not the County. He signs off on all his mileage reports, so there are checks and balances. K. Kelley asked for the motion to be re-read by the Clerk, who said she had a little trouble and asked if it could be repeated. T. Parker said he moved to go with the recommended Federal rate of .725 as outlined in the Finance Director's report. There was brief discussion and confusion about whether this motion was just for elected officials, as that was what appeared was being discussed. **Unanimous.**

b) IT Expenditures - tabled 02/05/2026. K. Hunt provided a list of IT expenditures. Spillman was paid out of the Technology Reserve. K. Kelley asked if this could be tabled until the next meeting. K. Hunt said ideally, she would say table, but the concern is that Spillman is used by multiple outside agencies. B. Pinkham Bebb asked if any of the Spillman invoices were spread over all the departments and K. Hunt explained no, that IT is still working off the 2025 budget which is salary, telephone, office, and travel.
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay this out of IT invoices from reserves because it has protected information, etc.** Discussion: K. Kelley asked which accounts it would come from. K. Hunt said she did some research and there is an option and this is one of those situations where the Commissioners could use the emergency statute because this is related to health and safety. Considering the audit and budget, this would be the cleanest. But it also mentioned that before doing this, a legal opinion could be obtained before making a motion. Any time expending anything from IT a clear motion would need to be made by the Commissioners. It needs to be clearly tracked. K. Kelley thought the statute was clear, and quoted statute as 34-A MRSA §706 regarding that if a county must prepare a budget, if a committee fails to adopt a budget, commissioners can sometimes act to prevent critical services from shutting down. Essential services such as public safety, courts payroll, IT, etc. that supports these critical services may require temporary funding when no appropriation

resists but the Commissioners must declare a formal emergency, state the nature of the emergency, must be generally unforeseen and urgent, and actions must be documented clearly in the minutes.

The Commissioners reviewed the IT invoices and which ones would have a late fee or finance charges. They discussed whether it was a good idea to pay from reserves and whether that would impact their decision. It was noted that this has been past practice with IT invoices. B. Pinkham Bebb felt that Spillman was extremely important. It was noted that another county spent all its reserves and had difficulty getting a TAN. It was noted that there is only one reserve that carries the amount needed but isn't earmarked for this kind of expenditure. The issue is paying it back. B. Pinkham Bebb said she wouldn't support funding from a reserve. The total would be roughly $1,994,022.00. Trying to rebuild the reserves would be extremely different, and the County is trying to be strategic. T. Parker said that Commissioners would be preparing for this emergency and being pre-emptive. B. Pinkham Bebb said she felt this was important context for the Budget Committee meeting on February 24, 2026. K. Kelley said the Commissioners should provide the list of IT bills with due dates and that the Commissioners are considering declaring an emergency. **MOTION FAILED ON THE TABLE.**

K. Hunt provided a list of Reserves and their uses to B. Pinkham Bebb. The warrants were read and are documented further up in these minutes.

c) **** Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 2/19/26 MCRRC (Jail) Warrant in the amount of $110,017.36 and the 2/9/26 payroll in the amount of $42,067.25 for a total of $152,084.61. Unanimous.**
d) **** Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 2/19/26 County Warrant in the amount of $153,238.29 and the 2/9/26 payroll in the amount of 173,158.70 for a total of $326,396.99. Unanimous.**
e) ****Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 2/19/26 OPIOID Warrant at $0.00. Unanimous.** Beginning balance as of 12/31/2025 was $501,666.02, interest earned was $1,215.64, ending balance of 1/31/2026 $502,881.69.

****MOTION: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to adjourn at 12:01 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Barbara L. Arseneau Waldo County Clerk
Barbara L. Arseneau