

**WALDO COUNTY 2023 BUDGET COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 23, 2022
In-person and Remote Teleconference (Zoom)
6:00 p.m.**

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Joshua Gerritsen (Lincolnvile), Thomas Wagner (Waldo), Linda Payson (Searsport), Tammy Higgins (Winterport), Penny Sampson (Unity), Elaine Higgins (Freedom), and Bob Kurek (Palermo). Also present were County Commissioners Amy Fowler, William D. Shorey, and Betty I. Johnson; Finance Director Karen Trussell, IT Director J-sun Bailey to run the teleconference, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Fowler called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the flag salute, and read the policy for remote participation, roll call for votes, etc.

INTRODUCTIONS: Commissioner Fowler introduced the Commissioners and staff.

BUDGET PROCESS OVERVIEW:

A Fowler stated that Finance Director Karen Trussell will be leaving for another job, which prompted moving the budget process along sooner. There was brief discussion about the ongoing vacancy in the Treasurer's position, as the Governor has not appointed one, and that nobody is running for that position in the current election. The Treasurer position is mostly a "figurehead". The Finance Director takes care of all the financial work.

ELECT BUDGET COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN:

****P. Sampson moved, B. Kurek seconded to nominate Joshua Gerritsen as Budget Committee Chairman for 2023.**

****T. Wagner moved for nominations to cease.**

Roll call vote for Joshua Gerritsen to serve as 2023 Budget Committee Chairman: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.

2023 BUDGET DISCUSSION:

J. Gerritsen asked all the Budget Committee Members to introduce themselves, and then started the 2023 Budget Review.

Projected Revenues:

K. Trussell submitted changes in the Projected Revenues explaining that EMA's projected revenues, which increased about \$18,000.00. She realized she was missing a few months of reimbursements because the Federal government's fiscal year goes from October through September.

A. Fowler explained that the budget format was a little different this year because they were using the accounting budget software.

1020 Commissioners:

There was some question about the personnel line and B. Arseneau explained the pay steps that the Commissioners were reaching according to the pay scale. Significant reductions had already been made in some of the budget lines. The telephone bill had increased because laws and policies related to confidentiality and criminal justice information have necessitated that certain personnel use work cell phones and not have this information on personal cell phones.

****T. Higgins moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 1020 Commissioners Budget at \$322,051.00 as presented. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

1025 Finance Director:

****B. Kurek moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 1025 Finance budget as presented at \$82,051.00.** Discussion: The Finance Director is leaving, and the Commissioners believe the current pay scale will be sufficient to hire someone with an accounting background, even with experience. **Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

1035 Information Technology:

IT Director J. Bailey was asked to speak. He explained FBI standards for CJIS (Criminal Justice Information Systems), and that no personal device should have certain information on it. A work device must be able to be tracked, locked, and wiped if it is lost. The County is currently running on office phones from 1998 and if they stop working, finding parts is a problem. He's researching a new system that is in the cloud, voice-over-internet, and would be paid for as a lease, or monthly. He's also looking at phone and internet bills and plans that may offer better deals. The Commissioners have permitted certain employees to have laptops to work from home on snow days, and the employees could take these phones home with them to answer them just as if they were in the office. Provider options were briefly discussed. Most are through U.S. Cellular, a few are Verizon, and one has AT&T, just to try them out. Messages also must be archived for 7 years. This would allow for compliance.

****T. Higgins moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 1035 Information Technology Budget at \$86,246.00. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

1090 Audit:

K. Trussell reported the actual total for the Audit as around \$11,000.00 because the Jail budget pays a portion. The County uses Brantner and Thibodeau for auditing. They've been short-staffed shortage, and been dealing with illness, as has also been the case with other auditors. The 2020 Audit should be completed soon, but K. Trussell doesn't know if they can even do the 2021 Audit. Audits must be performed by law, and it will be very hard to obtain any loans without the 2020 Audit. The County has been with this auditing firm for about 8 years and as it is recommended to change auditors periodically, once they've finished these audits, they will hire another.

****B. Kurek moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 1090 Audit budget at \$8,500.00. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

1095 Debt Service: The County has no debt.

****P. Sampson moved, E. Higgins seconded to accept 1095 Debt Serve as presented at zero dollars. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

2000 Interest:

K. Trussell said that interest rates will go back up. Currently it is at 1.75% and she doesn't think it will go terribly high. She believed that there would be funds leftover from this year, so she thought the budgeted amount could be reduced.

****B. Kurek moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 2000 Interest budget at \$19,000.00.**

Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.

2025 Employee Benefits

A. Fowler explained that there was an increase in the insurance line this coming year. 15 years ago the County became a self-funded insurance plan for the County. The Commissioners met with Malcolm Ulmer, who is a plan administrator, and he showed them that the plan cost has only been increasing about 1% each year. Other counties and municipalities insurances are increasing by double digits every year. The Commissioners will be asking employees to pay a larger portion of the premium. P. Sampson asked why, and A. Fowler explained that the County is basically the insurance company, and it has kept the cost status quo since 2013, and should be increasing the funds, so they need to start doing that. B. Kurek asked where the funds go and K. Trussell said it goes into the health insurance plan to fund the account. 15 years ago when the budget committee at that time told the Commissioners that this was the last year they would approve this amount and that the Commissioners needed to figure something else out, the cost then was \$1.1 million dollars then. The Commissioners formed a committee to meet, did a lot of research, and this plan is what they came up with. P. Sampson asked why Workers Comp was decreased for 2023. K. Trussell explained that the Human Resources Director has written up some safety-related plans that reduced the County's cost. There was some discussion of whether the health insurance budget had increased in recent years, which it had a few times, but not up to the amount it was 15 years ago. J. Gerritsen asked for a layman's explanation for the health insurance increase of \$123,469.00. The Commissioners looked back at expenses, and felt that amount would be comfortable, along with the employees' paying more. A. Fowler said that they would try to get a better answer, but this increase was what the Adjuster and they came up with that would work. It is based on a careful study and consulting with the people who write the County's policy. W. Shorey said that there is a small number of employees in the County, and it is hard to manage the plan. J. Gerritsen asked how many employees there are on the plan, and when the last time was that the County looked at insuring with MMA. K. Trussell estimated about 70 employees are on the plan, and A. Fowler said MMA this year is double the cost that the County pays. They also looked at a "like" county as compared with Waldo, and that was also double what Waldo is paying. J. Gerritsen asked if the County has invited the municipalities to be part of the plan. The Commissioners stated that part of the reason is that the plan they have not is because the plan is "grandfathered". W. Shorey suggested that several towns might get together to research it and possibly talk with Malcolm Ulmer about forming their own plan arrangement.

****P. Sampson moved, E. Higgins seconded to accept the 2025 Employee Benefits budget as presented at \$186,139.00. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

2040 Records Preservation Budget:

B. Arseneau explained that because of COVID, the County had to wait to move the County records from the current Archive because they need help from the Reentry Residents due to the amount and size. Now that the residents can safely work in close proximity with others, and the garden is finished for the year, the goal is to finally move those over this fall. The 2022 budget will be expended, as a

computer and appropriate sized scanner/printer/copier have been ordered. Records disposition was discussed, including the current requirement to microfilm all permanent records, and whether it may at some point be sufficient to scan documents as a backup. The goal in 2023 is to find a company that will microfilm the most recent permanent records that must be filmed.

****P. Sampson moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the Records Preservation budget at \$4,000.00 as presented. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

2045 Reserves:

The total budget request is \$25,000.00 for the Severance/Assistance line. B. Kurek asked if this is funded at the level it should be, and what the auditor says about it. K. Trussell reported that the Auditor has addressed it several times, that the County is trying to raise it, and is about halfway there, It will take several more years to get it where it needs to be. A. Fowler said that the Commissioners have tried to estimate what they will need each year for retiring employees and severance payouts as employees leave. B. Arseneau explained that way back, retirements and subsequent accumulated vacation and sick leave were paid from that department's budget, which at times crippled the department because it was unexpected. Therefore a reserve was established. P. Sampson asked about limiting the amounts of vacation, sick, comp, etc. so that it won't be as much liability, as they had gone through something similar in Unity. P. Sampson said she is concerned about increasing taxes as this will impact people the people under age 65 because they will have to make up the difference and felt raising taxes should be done carefully. When asked what the average severance was, K. Trussell said they run about \$19,000.00 and under. The reserve has more in it now than it ever has. P. Sampson asked what the ballpark figure is for undesignated funds and was told roughly \$700,000.00. B. Kurek asked how Waldo compares with other counties in unfunded liability, but this is unknown at this time.

****P. Sampson moved, E. Higgins seconded to approve the 2045 Reserves budget as presented at \$25,000.00. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – no, T. Higgins – yes. Passed with 6 in favor, and 1 (B. Kurek) opposed.**

FUTURE BUDGET MEETINGS:

The Committee set the next budget meeting for Saturday, October 22, 2022 starting at 10:00 a.m., with lunch and cake.

The Committee set the 2023 Public Hearing & Final Budget Meeting for Friday, November 4, 2022 starting at 6:00 p.m.

****B. Kurek moved, E. Higgins seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m. Roll call: P. Sampson – yes, J. Gerritsen – yes, T. Wagner – yes, L. Payson – yes, E. Higgins – yes, B. Kurek – yes, T. Higgins – yes. Passed unanimously.**

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