

WALDO COUNTY 2025 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 26, 2024
In-person and Remote Teleconference (Zoom)
6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Chairman Bob Kurek (Palermo), Robyn Tarantino (Lincolntonville), Mary Mortier (Belfast), Elizabeth Lenharr (Stockton Springs), Herbert Harnden (Waldo), Douglas Thomas (Montville), Tammy Higgins (Winterport) and Wesley Norton (Searsport). Timothy Parker (Unity) was absent. Also present were County Commissioners Betty I. Johnson, Amy R. Fowler, and William D. Shorey; Finance Director Kari Hunt, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Bob Kurek called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. with the flag salute and introductions.

MINUTES

Minutes from October 16, 2024 were not finished but the County Clerk had a draft available for checking previous votes, etc.

1015 DISTRICT ATTORNEY

District Attorney Natasha Irving and Prosecutorial Assistant Eric Harvey were present. The Budget Committee asked questions about mileage, meals and lodging and if online training was possible. There is a Prosecutor's Conference every year, while courts are closed, and is held in Bar Harbor, and Drug Enforcement and other agencies attend which increases the importance of attending. One year Assistant District Attorney Bill Entwisle received an award at this event. The entire State has been using this forum to train. Another important training for Prosecutors and Victim Witness Advocates is non-fatal strangulation, which is usually a domestic matter and highly likely to progress to homicide and/or mass shooting. The D.A. would like to use discretion in sending staff for other training and certification. E. Harvey reported vacancies in Prosecutor and Victim Witness Advocate positions. Many hours are mandatory training for the staff. Regarding court case backlog, it is back to where it was pre-pandemic. The Commissioners mentioned to the D.A. that there is an Alford Grant that reimburses training up to \$1,200.00 per employee per year.

Law requirements regarding disposal of records was discussed. E. Harvey noted that the document shredding contract for 2025, one of which was reduced by \$5.00 by bin, was expended more than usual this year because the D.A.'s Office moved out of Superior Court this year. More records are digital now, so there will be less paper in future. 4930 Question was raised about statutes books rather than reading statutes online. The D.A. prefers books during court cases due to being able to put markers in them and it is faster to flip through paper than web pages. Books are considered the actual law and are updated regularly.

Revenue: The VOCA grant is administered from DHS. Waldo's should be increasing this year. Court-ordered fees come in from defendants via deferred dispositions and the numbers are best-guess estimates. The incarceration process was explained. Contracted Equipment was explained and includes licenses, data space, etc. Postage was questioned by the Committee and the explanation is that it jumps from small amounts to high amounts from year to year. F. Gray explained the history of paperwork that had to be mailed, and that they stocked up on postage on the postage meter, which lasts for a long time.

As soon as the postage meter lease expires, they will do away with that as they decide it is no longer needed. The Committee felt that the postage could be reduced based on previous years' information.

****M. Mortier moved, R. Tarantino seconded to reduce line 4835 to \$250.00.** Discussion: T. Higgins asked if this would reduce it too much. R. Tarantino and E. Lenharr stated that they believed it should remain at \$500.00. **Failed unanimously.**

There was brief discussion of digital security in connection with records, and the need to place some sort of enclosure to prevent seeing the files and boxes that are currently easily visible. Paper files are still used in court. There were questions about whether expenses in Corrections would remain the same. The judiciary is going less incarceration for non-violent crimes and the goal is to achieve justice and safety with as little incarceration as possible.

****T. Higgins moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1015 District Attorney budget at \$313,533.00. Unanimous.**

K. Hunt and A. Fowler reminded the committee that there were two State technology programs used by the D.A.'s Office had increased after the D.A.'s budget had been submitted, the D.A.'s staff received that information, notified the Commissioners on September 14, 2024, and the Commissioners gave notice to the Budget Committee. For line 1015-4930 the new request is \$11,190.00 and for line 1015-4015 the new request is \$20,750.00.

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to correct the grand total for 1015 District Attorney from \$313,533.00 to a new increased number of \$328,863.00.** Discussion: This number turned out to be incorrect due to the figures on the paper not being correct. It was supposed to total \$328,473.00. The motion was restated as:

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve the new corrected motion for 1015 District Attorney's correct grand total be \$328,473.00. Unanimous.**

1030 FACILITIES

Facilities Manager Christopher Bryant presented the budget request. The Committee noted that the committee had reduced the Facilities budget quite a bit last year, and C. Bryant said he managed to do well with it. There was discussion about whether the electricity could be reduced. C. Bryant explained that solar panels had been installed on the Sheriff's building last year and had generated credits for itself only. Weather impacts the results. In February and March of 2024, it generated roughly \$600.00 in credits of the bill. In the summer months, it generated roughly \$900.00 to \$1,000.00 in credits off the bill. He hadn't been sure how the fluctuations would be, so it has been hard to predict the costs. The Sheriff's Office is right on point in that 70% of the budget has been spent. The ones that stood out for him was line 4302 Cooperative Extension. The Emergency Management Agency solar power generates credits for the EMA buildings, Cooperative Extension, Windy Hill Tower in Frankfort, and the Commissioners/Probate Court building. In March, April, and May, very little spent because of the credits that were taken off the top. Now the credits are starting to run out. Last month the Cooperative Extension was \$274.00. He expects it will even out to be about \$170.00 to \$200.00 per month, but this is just the expectation. Line 4303 was slightly overestimated, and he felt he could reduce the increase to be \$2,000.00 to \$11,000.00. K. Hunt said the credits really impact the CMP accounts. They still don't know how those credits are really affecting the buildings because they are only impacting some of the buildings. With the EMA system, all the credits are being used. The Sheriff's building is set up

with a different solar company with a different system for credits. No credits are leftover. Any extra credits are sold to other companies and a check is issued to the County and goes into the general fund. The Committee thought that the budget was higher than the actual expenses would be. C. Bryant said his is still getting about \$700.00 in bills for the S.O. each month but has reduced the request even though he is still trying to figure out the exact true number because it doesn't have an entire year history yet. There was discussion of solar power reducing electricity costs. 4302, 4303, 4304 seem like they are way too high. C. Bryant stated that he is asking for less funding than the previous year. Projected year end number was discussed. Different methods for calculating anticipated costs for the remainder of the year were discussed. It was thought that perhaps the electricity budget 4302 through 4307, minus the Superior Court, could be reduced by \$10,000.00. C. Bryant said that money is being saved since the solar was installed, but he believes the credits didn't start up until several months later. The EMA Director reviewed the bills and found that the credits were not being applied correctly, and now the credits have been slowly going down as the amount is getting reduced now that it has been made up for. Dispatch and Jail are not on solar. C. Bryant said he believed it was a priority order of how the credits are allocated. The Committee discussed reducing all the electricity lines by \$10,000.00 up to \$20,000.00. C. Bryant said all the credits generated from EMA are used up now. It is still not fully understood how the credits are used, but not being applied appropriately resulted in some lines looking so low. The Committee felt that it didn't matter which line was reduced but believed that there was too much budgeted and wanted to reduce all the electricity lines but left it to C. Bryant to decide how.

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to reduce the electricity lines by \$20,000.00 to \$39,500.00. Unanimous.**

Question was raised about the equipment cost and if there were actual savings. Solar was funded from ARPA funds. The Budget Committee asked how much it cost to install the solar panels and C. Bryant said he wasn't here for the other installations, but he knew the Sheriff's Office installation was under \$40,000.00.

Line 4613 Dispatch was questioned. C. Bryant said a flooring project was just completed and now cove base, paint, etc. are needed for the walls. There is electric work that needs to be done for the consoles. There is also some electrical work that needs to be done. It was noted that grant funds were used for much of the Communications Center projects.

Fuel lines were discussed. YTD spending has been \$13,825.00 and some felt it should be reduced. C. Bryant said he had prepared this in August and felt there could be a reduction. It wasn't a very cold January and February in 2024, so that is why the numbers don't reflect being as high.

****B. Kurek moved, E. Lenharr seconded to reduce the fuel lines by \$5,000.00. Unanimous.**

D. Thomas asked if the fuel was all under one contract. C. Bryant believed all were except for one tower.

The Committee asked if line 4309 could be reduced to \$1,000.00, line 4313 reduced to \$1,625.00 and 4314 reduced to \$1,200.00. C. Bryant felt that he could do that.

****M. Mortier moved, E. Lenharr seconded to reduce the six (6) water/sewer budget lines total by \$775.00. Unanimous.**

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1030 Facilities at \$295,252.00. Unanimous. 1050 JAIL**

Sheriff Trundy and Chief Deputy Matthew Curtis presented the budget request. Question was raised regarding the statute for the Jail limit of 4%. The Commissioners explained the history of Corrections, including the State takeover of jails in 2008, turning it back to the counties, and with Waldo County's mission change to a 24-hour-hold/Reentry, Waldo's inmates are boarded out. The growth factor statute was to limit how much the counties could increase their Jail budgets. J. Trundy added that work groups were sent out to gather information, a corrections board was created, and the intent was to oversee corrections into the state of Maine, but it really turned into an oversight of the county jails. They froze budgets so that taxpayers would only pay that fee, and the State would pay the rest. This dragged on for years, there were changes, and Governor LePage brought it to an end. The State never really took care of its portion of the difference. When it ended, the shortfall fell under an arrangement that has now set a percentage cap for each year. Counties have been in a shortfall almost consecutively since 2008 and this is why counties are in the dilemma they are. Corrections must go through many points, eventually through the Governor, and Appropriations has the final say.

A District 6 Collaborative was developed last year, which includes Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc Counties. Lincoln and Sagadahoc have a joint jail called Two Bridges Regional and is governed by a Jail Authority. Knox has a Jail, and Waldo has the reentry facilities. In Maine, sheriffs have operational role over jails, so Two Bridges had to go through a legislative process to have a Jail Authority. From 2016 on Waldo County's has had to go from one facility to another for the best rate for Waldo's inmates. The 2017-18 boarding rate was \$68.58 per person, or \$1,000,000.00. In 2019 it increased to \$1,300,000.00. Somerset County Jail's rates were \$65.00, \$66.00, and \$67.00. Somerset is not in Waldo's prosecutorial district, and this caused a lot of problems with courts, and with the population in the jail. Then Knox County worked out a nice arrangement with Waldo County. It was \$350,000.00 the first year as a partnership. Waldo provided 10 beds for Knox at Waldo's Reentry. 35 of Waldo's inmates were only billed as 25 in trade, and this lasted 3 years. The Jail population fluctuates. At one point 10, then 70 to 75. Since Sheriff Story's time, Waldo County became aggressive about alternative sentencing. Most incarcerations are Pre-trial. County Sheriffs increased from 10 to 17, but for 30 years, there has never been more than two (2) Asst District Attorneys, and this is a state-wide issue. The District 6 Collaborative figured out how to structure the population between the three facilities, sharing staff when facilities are low, and stabilized the staffing issues. There was a 6-months trial that ran a little longer. All agreed it was working, it's been great progress, and are wondering how to formalize, including considering MOU, contract, creating a board, or a 4-County Authority. J. Trundy said he believes in the Authority. This year's boarding cost has increased. \$1,300,000.00 is the worst scenario. The collaborative has contacted SMRT to see how a four-county authority could become a reality, and it would cost about \$35,000.00 for each county. Meanwhile Two Bridges has had a shortfall and negotiated a staggered temporary agreement at the \$1,300,000.00. The Budget Committee discussed what it could do to motivate the State Legislature. Question was asked about what would happen if the Budget Committee didn't fund the increase for 2025. J. Trundy said it would be the same as what the State did all these years. Counties went to the legislature with a bill to create a county tax, which died immediately. Other types of taxes have been brought up and failed because the State wants it to stay property tax. Currently nationwide, these are the only four counties collaborating with their jails, and it has generated a fair amount of interest. There have never been four counties that are working together like this. He said the Budget Committee could help by voicing support for what the Collaborative is doing and for a Jail Authority. It would need to be for the benefit of all the counties in District 6. When asked if there are funds in the County Budget for the SMRT

services, J. Trundy said he's spoken with the Commissioners to see if there might be funding in the reserve.

(Lunch Break)

K. Hunt explained that the reserve is not created yet, is a work in progress and would be dedicated for this purpose.

K. Hunt reported that the Two Bridges contract ran out this year and boarding costs went up to \$1,200,000.00 to deal with that. About \$300,000.00 would be needed. Discussion on Community Corrections Act funds, the Corrections budget, and inmate boarding continued. Line 1050-4030 Inmate Boarding will be overdrawn this year. The Commissioners looked at ARPA funds to deal with the current dilemma while also planning for the future. Community Corrections Act (CCA) funds can be used for Maine Pre-trial and Volunteers of America. This will allow for savings in line 4030. Since boarding costs are unknown for next year, the unexpended funds in the boarding budget line for the 2024 would be put into a reserve for boarding costs. Question about line 1050-8001 Community Corrections 20%. \$829,000.00 is from the State, 25% of that is the \$207,338.00. The Waldo County Garden and other CCA expenditures were not reflected in this budget. Question was asked if Food line 1050-5101 needed to be raised since the reentry population is low. He explained that if they the population increases where it should be, that amount is fairly accurate. They do cost savings as much as possible, including cooking in-house, using the produce from the County Garden, etc. It is about \$55.00 per day per each resident. It doesn't generate immediate revenue, and the State will pay roughly that amount for its residents each day. The jails within the Collaborative can house more than the district needs. Two Bridges thought they would rent out their rooms and fund their own jail, but it didn't work out that way. Discussion would be needed regarding how to utilize the buildings in that collaborative system. It would require an Authority to figure out which facilities to keep, restructure, or close and would need a unified boarding rate. When asked, J. Trundy said that everything in the budget is for Waldo's Jail/Reentry except the boarding funds are paid to the jails housing Waldo's inmates. There was discussion about the current Waldo County Jail/Reentry being built in 1976 and it was asked if it should be closed. J. Trundy explained that there still needs to be a 72-hour hold, and that can be run along with the Reentry with the same number of staff. Beds need to be available for those who meet the criteria to come to the Reentry. J. Trundy explained the populations in the District 6 Correctional Facilities.

Commissioner Fowler reported that C. Bryant had to leave for a previously scheduled meeting but offered a few reductions in some of the facilities-related parts of the Jail Budget. Line 1050-4302 Electricity can be reduced by \$3,000.00, and line 1015-4303 Fuel/Heating can be reduced by \$3,000.00. 1050-4621 Rubbish removal can be reduced by \$500.00. Line 1050-4293 Gasoline varies from year to year. The P/T line varies based on who is available. As part of the contract with Knox County in the collaborative, staff can backfill shifts at other facilities. This creates stability with staffing. It wasn't getting coded quite right and now those have been corrected to the right personnel lines. Line 1015-3209 P/T is there because occasionally they can find someone to work but could be reduced to \$28,000.00. C. Bryant telephoned and said 1050-4602 Repairs/Maint-BLD Structure can be reduced by \$3,000.00. Line 1050-3609 Educational Stipends has not been all paid out yet. Uniforms were explained and usually reimbursement is paid toward the end of the year.

****M. Mortier moved, E. Lenharr seconded to reduce the Boarding line 1050-4030 to \$1,100,000.00. Unanimous.**

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to reduce line 3209 P/T Employees to \$28,000.00, line 4030 Inmate Boarding be reduced to \$1,100,000.00, line 4302 Electricity be reduced to \$25,000.00, line 4303 Fuel Oil/Heating Oil be reduced to \$10,000.00, line 4602 Repairs Main. BLD Structure be reduced to \$17,000.00 and 4621 Rubbish Removal be reduced to \$2,500.00. Total Jail budget is \$4,105,620.33. Unanimous.**

1075 SHERIFF

J. Trundy presented some changes in the budget. He explained the process of purchasing vehicles up to this point, and they budgeted to continue that way. They learned that Enterprise has a law enforcement vehicle lease/purchase program and submitted documents to the Budget Committee. During their last court session, the Commissioners voted to enter a lease arrangement with Enterprise for patrol vehicles. The budget was also built with a 3% COLA based on what Commissioners voted for non-union employees. Union negotiations are currently underway with the Deputy Sheriff's Association, and the changes in the budget try to reflect what they believe will be negotiated. He reviewed how the lease/purchase/outfitting/maintenance for the vehicle contract worked. Searsport Auto entered the agreement and will negotiate directly with Enterprise on the type of and cost of maintenance. At the end of the 5-year lease, the County will own the vehicle, or the County can send the vehicle back as equity toward a new vehicle lease, based on what the Commissioners choose to do. It will result in savings over the 5-year lease. There was discussion about the details of the lease arrangement, what was included, etc. how maintenance and parts are handled, etc. Enterprise agreed to partner with Searsport Auto, which was great because there is a lot of sensitive equipment in a Sheriff's Vehicles.

Line changes were reviewed. Personnel lines were discussed. When the Deputies Association started, it wasn't long before wage compression started with the non-union command staff. This issue has continued over time and has never been fully dealt with. The Lieutenant was recently added to the union. The Sheriff is right; with salaried positions, you may not make as much as the person under you who can work overtime, court time, etc. while not having to adhere to a set schedule. J. Trundy said he understands that with overtime or comp time, any employee can make more than one of the command staff. The problem is when there is a base wage that puts the staff higher than the command staff. He illustrated with Chief Deputy, Matt Curtis, stating that he is absolutely essential to the operation of the Sheriff's Office, and he is making less than some of the people working under him. It is not right, and the Chief would be better off going back to being a road sergeant and work a little overtime because he would make more.

Part-time employees are now shown on the budget, even though the Civil Service officers are actually paid from the Detail 0259 reserve.

Dues was questioned. Part of this is for the Dirigo program that updates the Sheriff's Policies. Dues also covers some training and maintenance. He inadvertently left them off. They have also signed up for the Statewide Executive Fraternal Order of Police which offers some attorney coverage. He put part of his dues into the Office Supplies Line.

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve the 1075 Sheriff at \$2,564,300.00, which is an increase of 2.6%. Discussion:** D. Thomas asked if this included the changes made so numbers were quickly rechecked for accuracy. **Unanimous.**

RESERVE ACCOUNTS

The Budget Committee asked questions about the reserve accounts. B. Kurek said he had reviewed the documents K. Hunt had emailed about the reserve accounts, he had looked at statutes online, and other than learning that the County had to have a contingency account no greater than 1.5% of the annual county budget or \$100,000.00.

Health Insurance and Severance accounts were replenished this year with the first payment on the sale of the Superior Courthouse.

The Budget Committee asked which towns had not paid their 2024 taxes yet. K. Hunt read the list as follows: Troy, Swanville, Prospect, Northport, Monroe, Lincolnville, Jackson, Islesboro, Frankfort, Brooks, Belmont, and Belfast.

K. Hunt said that when funds come in, she asks the Commissioners what they want to do with those. If a vehicle was in an accident and funds from the liability insurance came, it would go into the vehicle reserve until the Commissioners decided what to do with it.

There was discussion about what is done with revenue. There are many reserves that are funded with undesignated funds and not requested in taxes. The Commissioners are looking closely at their reserves to see if some can be combined, or are no longer needed, or whether targeted amounts have changed. The health insurance account is not a reserve but is an account by itself and strictly used for health-related claims and expenses. K. Hunt read the amount that was in that fund today, stating that it fluctuates weekly due to claims being different every week. When asked if ARPA funds were moved to other reserves, the Commissioners said no, ARPA funds are in separated accounts as their use must be reported. They must report what they used them for, such as some of the building projects. D. Thomas asked if there were any large capital projects coming through and said there were none known at this time, and the Facilities Manager keeps them current with work on the buildings. It was recommended that the Reserve Accounts information be given to the Budget Committee in the future at budget meetings. K. Hunt was asked to bring an up-to-date TAN interest number for the Public Hearing.

The Commissioners stated that Commander Raymond Porter has done an excellent job figuring out where to house Waldo's inmates that also kept costs down.

B. Arseneau asked if the Jail budget increasing over 4% must be voted on. All decided to vote on the budget first as follows:

1010 Emergency Management Agency:

****R. Tarantino moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1010 Emergency Management Agency at \$179,042.00. Unanimous.**

****T. Higgins moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve the 1015 District Attorney budget at \$328,473.00. Unanimous.**

****W. Norton moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1020 Commissioners at \$270,957.00. Unanimous.**

****E. Lenharr moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1021 Human Resources budget at 101,560.45. Unanimous**

****T. Higgins moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1025 Finance Office at \$82,489.37. Unanimous.**

****H. Harnden moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1030 Facilities Management at \$295,252.00. Unanimous.**

****E. Lenharr moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1035 Information Technology at \$229,548.00. Unanimous.**

****D. Thomas moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1065 Registry of Deeds at \$249,081.00. Unanimous**

****T. Higgins moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1070 Probate Court at \$329,835.00. Unanimous**

****R. Tarantino moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1075 Sheriff at \$2,564,300.00. Unanimous.**

****W. Norton moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1076 Communications/Dispatch at \$1,361,484.19. Unanimous.**

****H. Harnden moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1080 Advertising and Promotion at \$7,000.00. Unanimous.**

****E. Lenharr moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1090 Audit at \$8,100.00. Unanimous.**

****D. Thomas moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1095 Debt Service at \$0.00. Unanimous**

****T. Higgins moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 2000 Interest at \$231,079.34. Unanimous.**

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 2005 U. of M. Extension at \$60,200.00. Unanimous.**

****T. Higgins moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 2025 Employee Benefits at \$2,413,060.00. Unanimous.**

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 2035 W. C. Soil & Water District at \$25,000.00. Unanimous.**

****D. Thomas moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 2040 Records Preservation at \$0.00. Unanimous.**

****D. Thomas moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 2045 Reserves at \$0.00. Unanimous.**

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve the total proposed 2025 Waldo County Budget at \$8,736,461.35. Unanimous.**

****W. Norton moved, E. Lenharr seconded to approve the total 1050 Jail Budget at \$4,105,620.33. Unanimous.**

W. Norton asked if a vote for the Jail budget going over 4% was required.

****E. Lenharr moved, H. Harnden seconded to acknowledge that the Jail Budget was over the allowed 4% legislative cap.**

****T. Higgins moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve the grand total budget at \$12,842,081.68. Unanimous.**

The next budget meeting is **November 6, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. starting with the Public Hearing and immediately followed by the Final 2025 Budget Meeting.**

ADJOURNMENT

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Higgins seconded to adjourn at 4:13 p.m. Unanimous.**

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