

Minutes of the Board of Ward County Commissioners

Budget Hearing

July 14, 19, & 27, 2021

Chairman Fjeldahl called the special budget hearing meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. on July 14, 2021. The purpose of the meeting was to hear the 2022 Department budget requests. Present were Comm. Weppler, Comm. Rostad, Comm. Anderson and Comm. Pietsch.

County Sheriff Robert Roed appeared with his departments preliminary budget. Drug Task Force Grant matched \$11,000 last year but this year there was no match. Sheriff Roed is unsure if there will be a match next year so budgeted \$11,000 for this. In-car cameras went up \$2,000 due to them being older and having maintenance. Incident Command trailer up \$500 due to maintenance. The interview room video and audio recording warranty ran out so budget includes a maintenance plan for \$1500.00. New World Maintenance Agreement with the city increased \$6,000. Reserves line item is new. In prior years it was in the Emergency Management department but will now fall under the Sheriff's Department in the amount of \$7,500.00. Tower lease of \$7,000 was removed as it has not been used in 7 years. Transports and Civil Warrants Communications went up \$3,000 in order to issue cell phones for the investigators as the phones can become evidence after taking pictures and be placed as such. Would like to decrease the part-time Court Securities budget of \$55,419 by half and add a second full-time position in order to have one full time licensed officer on duty at all times.

Jail Commander Paul Olthoff appeared with the preliminary budget for the Juvenile Detention Center. Office supplies have gone up \$5,000. Since COVID, masks and gloves are significantly more expensive leading to this increase. Guardian software maintenance increased \$2,845. Office equipment increased \$1,300. Looking to add a position to help with 24-hour scheduling.

Mr. Olthoff continued with reviewing the County Jail Budget. Office supplies are up \$10,000 as the supply of shoes and blankets are being depleted. Uniform increased \$50,000 to purchase Officer Safety Gear in the form of vests to protect staff. Eaton UPS maintenance for the server is new at \$8,350. New contract with Trinity is up \$24,000. Prisoner board/meals up \$25,000. Jail capacity is 286 and currently we are averaging 144 prisoners. Nurse practitioners would like the jail to have a nurse on staff which may be looked at next year with Trinity.

In regard to 24/7, Mr. Olthoff stated the only changes are increased salary.

Randall Johnson, Senior Vice President of Hays Company, presented a health insurance comparison. If no changes are made to the current insurance, Sanford is proposing a 30% increase. NDPERS shows a \$82,000 increase. A BCBS option shows a 20.6% increase with \$5,000 out of pocket. BCBS through NDPHIT, which is a pool, has a 13% increase with a reserve amount of \$463,056.28 needing to be covered. If the county went with a self-funded option, cost would be approximately \$333 per employee but with a pool, it would be \$121 per employee. To help cut costs, the out of pocket maximum can be adjusted as well as high deductible and HRA plans can be offered. Will plan to work the NDPHIT option into the budget at this time and build around it for preliminary figures.

A 15-minute recess was called at 11:03 AM.

Meeting reconvened at 11:18 AM.

Human Resource Director Tammy Terras appeared with the preliminary HR budget. Office supplies and office equipment have come down due to the time and attendance project being mostly completed in 2021. Contingency is reduced \$7,220.95 due to the salary study. Remainder of budget change is salary and benefits. Ms. Terras is asking to reclassify the payroll technician to an HR generalist with an increase of \$12,427. This will enable Ms. Terras to cross train duties as well as having a backup for the other HR generalist.

Kristin Kowalczyk, County Recorder, presented the Recorder's Office 2022 preliminary budget. Her budget remains basically the same with increase in salary. There are two Administrative Assistant II positions and Ms. Kowalczyk would like to have the positions to be closer in pay. Rather than a 6% gap she would prefer a 3% gap which would be an increase of \$1309.

Recess for lunch was called at 11:53 AM.

Session was reconvened at 1:07 PM.

Library Director Kerriane Boetcher presented the County Library preliminary budget for the 2022 calendar year showing a decrease in book materials by \$2,000. This \$2,000 was shifted to library automation to cover Office 365. Salaries and benefits are up.

Facilities Management Director Leona Lochthowe discussed her department budget with the Commission. There are 14 full time employees in her department and she would like to add another staff to the jail due to continued increase in maintenance. Janitorial supplies are up due to COVID. Ms. Lochthowe stated she added \$32,500 to purchase a new pickup with a Tommy lift. The 2002 pickup needs a lot of repairs and the 2003 pickup does not have a Tommy lift. In order to discourage employees from bring tools from home, she added \$5,000 to the tool budget to purchase/rent tools. Another addition in the budget are water fountain fill stations at \$15,600. Repair and maintenance budget is down.

IT Director Jason Blowers presented his department's budget. Overall the preliminary budget is up \$10,000 from last year. Cisco phone system server upgrade of \$25,000 is a new charge as they no longer support the hardware in this building. Server maintenance is due to extended warranty on the servers rather than replace the servers at this point for \$4,200. Storage servers for backups are needed for an amount of \$15,500. Mr. Blowers is requesting to add an IT Specialist as workflow is increasing due to expanded personnel, and server maintenance. Total budget is up \$87,000.

State's Attorney Roza Larson presented her departments budget. Increases include the expert witness fees and non-expert fees. They have been budgeted as an increased total of \$24,000. There are increases in salaries and the final budget is up \$247,000.

Director of Tax Equalization Noreen Barton presented her departments 2022 preliminary budget to the Commission. She stated she is budgeting for a Xerox color printer for \$4,600. The Building Inspector is at 32 hours and Ms. Barton would like to increase him to 40 hours. Budget is up \$61,000 which includes salaries.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Doug Diedrichsen appeared with the budget for the County Planning & Zoning. Contingency Miscellaneous increase of \$2,500 for the ordinance rewrite project for things like publishing. GIS software is \$500.

At 2:57 PM a recess was called by Commissioner Fjeldahl.

At 3:07 PM meeting reconvened.

County Engineer Dana Larsen reviewed the Highway Department budget. He has decreased materials and supplies by \$200,000 due to limited funding. Highway user revenue averages about 5 million a year. Main changes to the budget this year are salaries and health insurance. Mr. Larsen also gave an update on 2022 and 2023 construction projects.

County Engineer Dana Larsen reviewed Rushville Township preliminary budget with the Commission. The Township is slowly pulling itself out of the hole since the 2011 flood. Expenses are being kept around \$25,000 and a payment of \$20,000 is the yearly goal to go towards the debt. There may be grant money in between \$5,000 and \$10,000 available.

Mr. Larsen continued with Vision Zero and stated the budget remained close to the same with additional money budgeted for travel.

Mr. Larsen reviewed the Park preliminary budget. He stated for the last 5-6 years the budget had been maintained at \$160,000 but this year it is up \$25,000. Additional funds were budgeted for equipment repairs and maintenance and park maintenance. Revenues are about the same.

Derrill Fick presented the Weed Control budget which showed a slight increase for office supplies. Chemicals up \$5,000 with access to chemicals being challenging. Contract payments up \$4,000. Part-time salaries went up \$6,500 for seasonal/temporary work. Overall budget is only up about \$2,000.

Emergency Management Director Jennifer Wiechmann appeared with her department's 2022 preliminary budget. The major change is contract payments up \$65,000 for updates that are necessary to remain part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Standard salary and benefit increases.

Larry Haug, 911 Coordinator reviewed his preliminary budget. Travel was brought down \$2,000 as the previously budgeted amount had never been fully used. Central Dispatch jumped significantly (up around \$83,000) for IT upgrade and replacements. Mr. Haug stated that Central Dispatch is looking also for an additional 3 dispatchers. No other major changes expected for 2022.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Weppler to recess at 4:32 PM until 1:00 PM on July 19, 2021. All voted aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Fjeldahl called the special budget hearing meeting to order at 1:03 PM on July 19, 2021. Present were Comm. Weppler, Comm. Rostad, Comm. Anderson and Comm. Pietsch.

Emily Burkett, Director of NDSU Extension Services, reviewed her department's budget with the Commission. She stated travel has been increased by \$3,000 due to the new horticultural agent moving from part time to full time and requiring more travel, educational purposes and reaching out in the county and state. Increase in salaries from moving a part time horticulture agent to a full time agent. In regard to possible moving to another facility, space will need to be addressed for storage. Ms. Burkett stated a freezer would need to be on site as well and a kitchen area would need to be addressed. When discussing moving costs to the 900 Building, an estimate of around \$10,000 was given. Unsure as to the additional costs of IT items and such.

Bradley Starnes, Director of Veteran Services presented the 2022 budget. The first proposal is to move the Assistant Veterans Service Officer from 32 hours to a full time position. Currently there is about a 3-week wait time that can be reduced to 1-1 ½ weeks with this change of position. Travel is increased due to having both Spring and Fall conferences for accreditations. Office equipment is holding up well.

Superintendent of Schools Jodi Johnson stated the change in her budget is due to salary and health insurance/benefits.

Planned break at 2:00 was taken.

Reconvened at 2:09 PM.

Bryan Quigley appeared on behalf of the Lake Region Historical Society of Kenmare. A new roof is being put on Hartland Church and insurance has been added for an increase of \$1,500. Mr. Quigley presented a \$1,000 increase for 2022 bringing the total requested to \$17,000.

Souris Basin Planning Council Executive Director Lyndsay Ulrickson appeared with her organizations budget request of \$39,000 which is an increase of \$1,000. SBPC has helped with a COVID-19 Recovery Revolving Loan Fund that helps new as well as established business to continue to operate (Vision 20/20, CleanTech, and Hanson Excavating). They also do interest buy-down from banks to help companies save money. SBPC covers 7 counties and approximately 60-70% of projects are in Minot with the remainder in surrounding areas.

David Leite of Ward County Historical Society appeared to discuss the \$99,116.00 request. Pioneer Village is now opened up fully. Two new buildings have been accepted - one has been made into a military museum and the second building is called the Eureka Township Hall. Both buildings have been renovated. With the help of Twice Blessed Campaign, the Ward County Historical Society received \$20,000 to renovate and put in a bathroom. Twice Blessed also helped with placement of handicap ramps throughout the area. There has been some major wind damage and repairs have been started. The Lutheran church does need a new steeple put on. Burlington Farmer's Market will be held on the premises this fall as well.

Berthold Economic Development requested \$29,500 for 2021 which is up \$4,500. Alecia Neubauer appeared on their behalf.

De Sour Valley Economic group was represented by Andy Fimrite. They are requesting \$64,000 to continue with the Burlington splash pad area - bathrooms are being worked on now.

Lisa Klug, Executive Officer of First District Health Unit presented their budget which is up approximately \$2,000. Data processing and pharmacy has gone up as well as salaries.

Jill McDonald appeared to discuss the DVCC fund request. The DVCC is requesting a \$5,756 increase for 2022 for a total request of \$43,756. The primary reason is our community had a gap in offender treatment programming with Lutheran Social Services leaving that needed to be filled due to a requirement by the state. The offender treatment program is being added in the upcoming year and there were fees associated with the program. Additional shelter staff is being added due to operating in multiple locations as well. There has been a 23% increase in services over the last year. In 2020 DVCC provided 2,650 nights of safety and served 702 individuals from Ward County.

Mr. Ryan Ackerman appeared to discuss the Souris River Joint Board's budget. Currently SRJB has construction ongoing that totals \$75 million and some of the projects include the 4th Avenue flood wall, utility relocations, 2 phases of construction in the Burlington area, and construction beginning soon in Terracita Vallejo. Mr. Ackerman stated that each dollar of Ward County Commission's support of the SRJB's budget, approximately \$70 is invested back in Ward County. SRJB is requesting a 2022 budget of \$670,000 which is the same as 2021.

Tom Klein appeared to discuss the Ward County Water Resource Board budget request of \$4,620,000. The Resource Board is working on getting things cleaned up from the flood yet and finishing up projects.

Kenny Rogers appeared to discuss ARBI (Assiniboine River Basin Initiative) 2022 request of \$7,500 which is the same as 2021. ARBI has had a struggling year. ARBI continues to work on conservation and drainage.

Auditor/Treasurer Marisa Haman reviewed the Auditor/Treasurer budget. General supplies are up \$200. Office equipment is up \$25,000 for new office furniture including front counter. There is an increase in salaries, retirement, and health insurance.

Under the County budget, property and liability insurance shows a 25% increase. Maintenance is up a bit across the board as well as postage. Election budget is up for 2022 due to 2022 being an election year.

Makoti Threshers Association requested \$24,000 and no one appeared on their behalf.

Ryder Historical Society requested \$6,585 and no one appeared on their behalf.

No one from Kenmare Economic Development appeared to discuss their \$65,000 budget request.

No one from Makoti Development Corporation appeared to discuss their \$1,000 budget request.

Moved by Comm. Wepler, seconded by Comm. Pietsch to recess until Tuesday, July 27, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Reconvened at 8:10 AM on July 27, 2021; all Commissioners present.

Ms. Haman began the meeting with the Library. The maximum mills for the Library is 4 and at the present the Library is at 4.17 mills. An amount of \$20,500 needs to be taken off the Library budget to get to 4 mills. Options would be to hold off on adding to the Bookmobile fund or keep the Library in the hole and continue to work out of the hole. A discussion was held regarding a possible Budget Amendment using the Commissioner's Contingency Fund.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Rostad to reduce the budget \$20,000 to be set aside for the bookmobile with the intention of making it up in the following budget years with possible consideration of other alternatives. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Historical Societies were next for discussion. The budget needs to be brought down \$61,701 to be at the \$85,000 level which is the maximum.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Wepler to approve giving the same amount to each historical society as last year. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Highway Road Operations will need their budget to be reduced by \$138,000 to stay under the maximum of 10 mills. Highway Engineer Dana Larsen stated a couple areas to look at reducing would be in general construction or general supplies and services which goes towards construction. A discussion was held. Mr. Larsen stated that if more adjustments are made within the budget, he recommends putting the monies back in to the general construction fund.

Moved by Comm. Wepler, seconded by Comm. Pietsch to reduce the preliminary budget by \$138,000 out of materials, supplies, and services with recommendation that any excess remainder from budget cuts be placed back into this area. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Senior Citizens requested amount had to be reduced due to the limitation of 1 mill, from \$345,000 to \$340,510.

Water Resources was also reduced from \$4,620,000 to \$4,225,000 due to being over their 4 mill limit. A discussion was held.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Anderson to approve 3 mills for Water Resources this year. Roll call; Pietsch, Anderson, and Fjeldahl voted yes; Rostad and Wepler voted no; motion carried.

Ms. Haman continued with the Commission budget. The contingency fund is at \$250,000. Travel and training have a combined increase of \$1,500. Salaries for Commissioners will be treated as the rest of the staff.

Human Service Zone has a preliminary budget of \$87,000. They went to their own insurance and are reimbursed from the state for indirect services. Discussion on occupancy of the Human Service Zone on the upper two floors.

Marisa will reach out to Craig and find out if there are surplus funds, is it wise to prepay bonds or not.

Emergency fund is at \$735,172. Marisa questioned if there is a certain amount they wish the fund to be at. Currently there is no levy for the emergency fund. Consensus was to leave the account as is.

NDSU Extension Center budget to be left as is as moving expenses will be done this year. If needed, a budget amendment can be done.

The 900 Building is in need of an appraisal. Ms. Haman contacted Craig, our external auditor, who recommended an external appraisal so it would be transparent. Discussion on using Minot assessor amounts and comps to help validate the value of the building. An estimate of \$2,000 for the appraisal and may take approximately 3-4 months according to Engineer Dana Larsen.

In the general cash reserves, the additional \$500,000 that had been added into the fund is to be removed, and 1.5 million for the building should be put into the preliminary budget. This can be changed with further direction from the State's Attorney or other counsel.

At 9:56 AM with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED THIS 19TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2021

Chairman, Ward County Commission

ATTEST:
