

Minutes of the Budget Meeting of the Board of Ward County Commissioners

September 30, 2021

The Budget Meeting of the Ward County Commission was called to order by Chairman Fjeldahl at 10:03 AM with Commissioners, Pietsch, Rostad, and Weppler present. Also present were department heads Bradley Starnes, Dana Larsen, Derrill Fick, Jason Blowers, Jennifer Wiechmann, Jodi Johnson, Kerriane Boetcher, Kristin Kowalczyk, Marisa Haman, Noreen Barton, Robert Roed, Roza Larson, and Tammy Terras.

Auditor/Treasurer Marisa Haman appeared and gave an update on what the Department Heads discussed at their meeting in regard to budget cuts. The Auditor Department proposed a reduction in travel/training and office equipment of \$14,000; HR Department proposed a reduction in travel/training of \$12,000 as well as a group agreement to postpone the salary study implementation until next year for a savings of \$367,000; Facility Management Department proposed a reduction of \$84,760 with the removal of a new position and removing water fountains; Jail Department proposed a reduction of medical emergency funds of \$75,000; Sheriff's Department proposed a total of \$39,000 in reductions covering 9 separate areas; Tax Equalization Department proposed a reduction of a printer, software, and travel/training totaling \$9,900; and IT Department proposed a reduction of battery backups, informacast tier II system, and a new position totaling \$90,215. Total proposed reduction by Department Heads of \$691,875.00 with a mill reduction of 2.05.

Dana Larson, Highway Engineer, appeared to discuss Highway Department budget areas and amounts. Discussion on use of ARPA funds for decreased revenue and if these funds can be used for the Highway Department. Also discussed spreading the 900 Building payment over 4 years.

Bradley Starnes, Veterans Service Director, appeared and stated that their department would be willing to wait to move the part-time position to full time if it would help with the budget.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Rostad to approve a 2.5% step increase and save the salary study until it is further reviewed for each of the positions. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Comm. Anderson entered meeting at 11:13 AM

Noreen Barton, Tax Equalization Director and Jennifer Weichmann, Emergency Management, appeared regarding class cost and travel for Planning and Zoning. Doug Diedrichsen appeared and explained budget and travel expenses for the same.

Jason Blowers appeared regarding the District Court Capital Project using a grant and the need to do hard wiring rather than WIFI. He also spoke regarding IT Department equipment and having a large balance at the end of the year due to possibly being unable to get PC's.

Dana Larsen appeared to discuss tax deed sale profits and foreclosed property profits. Tax deed sale profits have been used in the past for special projects. Foreclosed property monies go back to those who have an interest in the property or it gets sent to unclaimed property through the state. On foreclosures, there are no profits.

A discussion was held on the Facilities Management Utilities budget. One area that was focused on was the Repairs and Maintenance section.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Pietsch, to reduce the Facility Utilities Repairs and Maintenance line item 2506 by \$50,000 and also to decrease the Maintenance Plus cleaning contract from \$28,100 to \$12,000, making a total reduction of \$66,100. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Anderson to remove the jail window film coverings off line item 2705 from the Office/Jail Building budget in the amount of \$30,000. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Chairman Fjeldahl, seconded by Comm. Pietsch to cut half 0.48 mill from the Highway Road Fund which will leave the mill at 8.5 and bringing a reduction of \$163,551. Roll call; Comm. Pietsch, Anderson, Fjeldahl, and Weppler all voted yes; Comm. Rostad voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Anderson to reduce funding by 10% to Assiniboine River Basin Initiative, North Dakota State Fair, and historical societies. This total 10% reduction amount is \$48,930. Roll call; Comm. Pietsch, Anderson, Weppler, and Fjeldahl all voted yes; Comm. Rostad voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Chairman Fjeldahl, seconded by Comm. Pietsch to reduce Economic Development funding by 10% but to leave Ward County Advertising and Promotion at \$500. This total 10% reduction amount is \$15,500. Roll call; Comm. Fjeldahl, Pietsch, Anderson, and Weppler all voted yes; Comm. Rostad voted no; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Pietsch, seconded by Comm. Rostad to adopt the remaining Department Head changes presented. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

Moved by Comm. Weppler, seconded by Comm. Rostad to reduce the medical line item 2812 under the Jail budget by \$50,000. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

State's Attorney Roza Larson appeared regarding her department's budget. Budgeted \$25,000 for non-expert fees but can take that down to \$10,000 resulting in a \$15,000 savings. Travel budget can be reduced down to \$7,000, saving \$3000. Lastly, contract attorney can be reduced from \$60,000 to \$30,000 with decreasing her total budget by \$48,000.

Moved by Comm. Rostad, seconded by Comm. Weppler to reduce State's Attorney budget \$48,000 as directed by Ms. Larson. Roll call; all voted yes; motion carried.

With all the above reductions, the final budget will be up 0.33 mills or \$112,000.

At 1:37 PM with no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

ACCEPTED AND APPROVED THIS 19TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2021

Chairman, Ward County Commission

ATTEST:
