

WALDO COUNTY FY 2005 BUDGET COMMITTEE
2ND MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 2005

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Bill Sneed (Chairman), Samuel Butler, James Bennett, Richard Desmarais, Rachel McDonald, Timothy Biggs, Vicki Conover and Bradford Payne; County Commissioners John Hyk, Charles G. Boetsch and Amy Fowler; Treasurer David Parkman, Deputy Treasurer Karen Ward, Deputy County Clerk Veronica LaBreck, members of the press and County Clerk Barbara L. Arseneau.

REGISTRY OF PROBATE (1070) BUDGET REVIEW:

Present for discussion of this budget was Register of Probate Joanne Crowley.

When asked what air travel was for, J. Crowley explained that the Judge of Probate plans to attend two judicial conferences and one judicial college. The Budget Committee inquired about the increase in request for funding of Court Appointments. J. Crowley explained that court appointments have increased during the past year, as directed by the Judge.

R. McDonald asked that the agenda for the Budget Committee meetings be provided in advance so that the committee would know what to prepare for. B. Arseneau apologized, but informed the committee that one of the departments that had been scheduled by B. Sneed could not attend and it had been difficult to find a department that was available. She could not finalize the agenda until the afternoon of the day before the meeting. She explained that one week's notice was not always sufficient for the departments and usually the agenda was sent out in advance. She requested that the committee determine which departments they would like to meet with so that they could be notified in as far as advance as possible.

****R. McDonald moved, R. Desmarais seconded reducing the total Probate budget from \$181,063.00 to \$171,000.00.** Discussion: B. Payne asked R. McDonald for her rationale regarding this reduction. R. McDonald felt that it was better to vote for an overall reduction than to "nickel and dime" each department.

J. Crowley offered that the current Judge is looking at cases much closer than had been customary. She detailed the process for court appointments. Sometimes, when appointments are made, people have to be put on payment plans. V. Conover asked if that meant that some of the \$20,000.00 requested would be reimbursed. J. Crowley replied that it would, but it takes some time.

S. Butler noted that most of the large increases in this budget were contractual. He commented that he had "no problem cutting," but didn't think the Budget Committee needed to leave it all up to the Commissioners to figure out how to reallocate what remained. He felt that Technology could be cut "a lot," and expressed his view that there seemed to be a lot of duplication of work performed by the D.M.V. in Augusta.

V. Conover felt it would be helpful to know what could be recouped in the Court Appointment portion of the budget and requested an estimate. J. Crowley said that she would try to provide one before the Public Hearing in December.

The vote passed five (5) to three (3).

REGISTRY OF DEEDS (1065) BUDGET REVIEW:

Present to discuss this budget was Register of Deeds Deloris Page.

S. Butler explained that this was the first time in about three years that the Budget Committee had requested to meet with this department and described Deeds as being “a money-making department.” B. Sneed introduced D. Page to the Budget Committee.

When asked, D. Page detailed how the Deeds records books are made for the public.

****R. McDonald moved, S. Butler seconded approving the Deeds (1065) Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

TREASURER’S (1025) BUDGET REVIEW:

Present for this discussion were Treasurer David Parkman and Deputy Treasurer Karen Ward. S. Butler inquired about accounting software being listed in the Treasurer’s budget rather than under Technology. B. Arseneau explained that the Technology Consultant had asked that specialty software that is specific to the individual department be listed in that department’s budget. K. Ward further explained that part of this funding supported renewal of several licenses for that software.

R. McDonald inquired about the cost of the postage meter and asked why it was leased rather than owned. A. Fowler believed that Pitney Bowes leased and didn’t sell. S. Butler thought the postage meter in Winterport was owned, not leased. It was suggested that this matter be looked into to see if cost savings could be achieved.

****S. Butler moved, T. Biggs seconded passing the Treasurer’s Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

AUDITING (1090) BUDGET REVIEW:

****R. McDonald moved, J. Bennett seconded passing the Auditing budget as presented. Unanimous.**

DEBT SERVICE (1095) BUDGET REVIEW:

There was brief inquiry about what the County’s debt was and D. Parkman explained that it was annual payment of the Communications Center.

****J. Bennett moved, R. McDonald seconded accepting the Debt Service Budget as presented. Unanimous.**

INTEREST (2000) BUDGET REVIEW:

D. Parkman commended the Towns who had paid their Tax Assessments in full by the end of September. He stated that twelve towns had paid in full at this time.

D. Parkman explained that the tax anticipation note was not paid back as quickly as anticipated and the interest was now over expended. Therefore, he recommended increasing the budget request to \$40,000.00, rather than \$30,000.00.

S. Butler asked about the Maine State Retirement System buyback payment. D. Parkman informed him that the last payment had been made in January of this year. S. Butler then asked if \$5,000.00 increase would cover it, rather than the additional \$10,000.00 being requested. D. Parkman wasn't sure. D. Parkman claimed that the interest being paid by Bangor Savings had been better this year than Camden National's interest last year. He wasn't sure if this was because interest rates had simply gone up all over, or if this was Bangor Saving's doing. S. Butler felt that if you "got after the banks," they give better interest rates. He based that comment on recent experience in the Town of Winterport.

D. Parkman stated that Camden National had "done well" by the County, but because Bangor Saving's interest was lower, the County had to go with that. He reminded the Budget Committee that this is what the County has to do every year, and sometimes that means changing banks several years in a row. S. Butler commented that this was no way to have to conduct business, but acknowledged that this was a statutory matter.

B. Sneed asked if the T.A.N. were paid of early if the County could give a certain percentage back to the towns. D. Parkman did not know the answer to that.

D. Parkman submitted a copy of the proposed State Valuations for all Waldo County towns. There were several remarks regarding drastic increases in the valuations for several of the towns.

J. Hyk took the opportunity to thank the Treasurer, the Deputy Treasurer and the other people in the Commissioners office for the great job that has been done these past two years. He mentioned that, especially with the Deputy Treasurer's knowledge and capabilities with the technology provided in the office, reports could be generated and answers to questions learned "almost immediately, whereas you could not get that before." J. Hyk credited the technology with more accurate reporting on the part of the departments and employees, as well.

S. Butler commended Treasurer David Parkman for doing a good job.

****S. Butler moved, R. McDonald seconded increasing the Interest Budget (2000) to \$35,000.00. Unanimous.**

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (2025) BUDGET REVIEW:

County Clerk B. Arseneau started the discussion with the good news that the health insurance line was not going up 25% as initially projected by the agent. Instead, she had learned on Tuesday afternoon that the total increase would be 10%. Therefore, that line

could be reduced from \$950,418.00 to \$832,000.00. She had been told that if the Governor's Dirigo Health had not tagged a 4% charge to AETNA, the increase would only have been 6%.

There was brief discussion about the Deferred Compensation Plan offered by the County. J. Hyk explained deferred comp and retirement plans being crucial in keeping good employees from leaving for other agencies. J. Hyk detailed the background on Maine State Retirement System, which was first offered to the County in the late 1950's, the County supposedly withdrew enrollment in 1996, recognized this never formally happened by 2001 and had just recently finished paying off the buyback for that error. Some employees are enrolled in MSRS, some in the Deferred Comp Plan and some in both. The previous board of Commissioners allowed for an employee enrolled in both to receive the County's mandatory match for MSRS and in addition, the maximum of \$600.00 match to the employee's contribution to the Deferred Comp Plan. Starting in 2006, this will no longer be the case. If an employee is enrolled in both plans, the County will only contribute toward MSRS, as that is mandatory by law.

The new bottom line total for the Employee Benefits (2025) contractual section will now be \$1,248,972.00. The new total for the entire 2025 budget will now be \$1,249,272.00 instead of \$1,367,690.00.

R. McDonald asked if the Eye Care line had increased so much because of the Health Insurance increasing 10%. B. Arseneau explained that the two were not connected; that this was additional funding set aside for Dispatch Personnel because they sit in front of the computers for 10 hours each shift. The reason for the increase was because in the previous year, not all eligible employees had been budgeted for and she wanted to be sure that enough money would be available if all the eligible employees took advantage of this opportunity.

****S. Butler moved, J. Bennett seconded passing the Employee Benefits (2025) Budget with the amendments at \$1,249,272.00. Six (6) in favor, two (2) opposed (T. Biggs, J. Bennett.)**

B. Sneed suggested that, since the group was ahead of schedule, they continue to review a few budgets, starting with the County Commissioners (1020) Budget, not including Technology.

COMMISSIONERS (1020) BUDGET REVIEW:

B. Arseneau explained that the majority of the decreases made by the Commissioners in this budget reflected the decision NOT to go out for a referendum question on the Jail/Sheriff's building in 2006. The Commissioners felt that they needed to follow the recommendation of the Jail Research Committee, which was to do further study and hold off developing another referendum question in 2006.

B. Sneed asked why the County was funding an architect in the Professional Services (4015) line. B. Arseneau explained that the County has been using an architect for a

number of years for various small projects and advice in building maintenance but it had never been broken out separately. In order for more accurate budgeting, she had broken in out separately along with other items allocated under that line.

When asked, B. Arseneau explained that the Claims Adjuster at the MCCA Risk Pool supplied the liability insurance figure as a “best guess” of 33% projected increase. This figure had been supplied to all the Counties enrolled in the Risk Pool insurance. There was brief discussion about counties not having much success finding companies that wished to cover them. There was also brief discussion about the possible impact of Knox County’s illegal strip searches on the other counties.

It was noted that the Advertising, Personnel (4730) line had been increased. B. Arseneau explained that the amount allocated this year had not been adequate to cover the turnover in employees and subsequent need to advertise. This account was severely overdrawn at this point.

Commissioner Hyk noted that as a result of the turnover this year, the Severance Reserve Account would be overdrawn by the end of November.

R. McDonald commented on the fact that the cost of renting the Postage Meter was shared by both the Commissioners and Treasurer’s Offices made it even more expensive than she had first thought and recommended that the offices look into something less expensive to own, rather than lease.

B. Sneed commented that the Statutes funding request had increased by quite a bit, and B. Arseneau told the group that the cost of keeping the Maine Revised Statutes Annotated current in the office just continues to rise each year. There was no way around that.

J. Bennett said he had some thoughts regarding the personnel line of this budget but wished to wait until he had reviewed the other counties’ salaries first and come back to this at a later time.

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE COOPERATIVE EXTENSION (2005) BUDGET REVIEW:

The Budget Committee decided to review this budget now, since they were still ahead of schedule.

The Committee felt that the request for the ten (10) folding tables was too high and recommended reducing that from \$1,500.00 to \$800.00 because “these tables can be purchased at Sam’s Club for a lot less.” A. Fowler assured the Committee that the U. of M. Extension Office is very careful to keep expenditures down and felt that there must be a good reason that these tables were budgeted at \$1,500.00.

****R. Desmarais moved, R. McDonald seconded reducing the amount budgeted in Capital Outlay for folding tables to \$800.00. Passed seven (7) to one (1), with B. Sneed opposed.**

WALDO COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION (2035) BUDGET REVIEW:

For the sake of those new ones serving on the Budget Committee, a brief explanation of what Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District does for the county was offered by the more experienced in the group.

****R. McDonald moved, B. Sneed seconded accepting this budget as presented. Unanimous.**

ADVERTISING & PROMOTION (1080) BUDGET REVIEW:

There was brief discussion about Eastern Maine Development Corporation's initial request of \$10,000.00 being reduced to \$2,000.00 by the County Commissioners and Time & Tide RC & D requesting funding again after being cut from the County Budget the past two years. The three Commissioners explained that the reason for Time & Tide "slipping in" on the budget was because they had requested meeting with the Commissioners before the Commissioners made any decisions. The Commissioners decided that they did not wish to meet with them and would let the Budget Committee use it's good judgment to decide whether to fund their budget request or not.

****R. McDonald moved, B. Sneed seconded removing lines 4716 (Eastern Maine Development Corporation) and 4718 (Time & Tide RC & D) from the Advertising & Promotion (1080) budget request, reducing that budget total to \$3,500.00. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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