

WALDO COUNTY 2024 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 5, 2024
In-person and Remote Teleconference (Zoom)
9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Budget Committee Members Chairman Bob Kurek (Palermo), Robyn Tarantino (Lincolntonville), Mary Mortier (Belfast), Tammy Higgins (Winterport), Elizabeth Lenharr (Stockton Springs), Herbert Harnden (Waldo), Tim Parker (Unity), and Douglas Thomas (Montville) arrive partway through the meeting. Wesley Norton (Searsport) was absent. Also present were County Commissioners Betty I. Johnson, Amy R. Fowler, and William D. Shorey (who participated by Zoom); 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.

****M. Mortier moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve minutes from the September 20, 2024 Budget Committee Meeting. Passed by 7; T. Parker abstained.**

INTRODUCTIONS: B. Kurek asked all to introduce themselves. He stated that Town of Waldo Selectperson Herbert Harnden and Montville Selectperson Douglas Thomas were selected to fill vacant seats for their towns.

****M. Mortier moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve Herbert Harnden and Douglas Thomas as Waldo County Budget Committee Members. Unanimous.**

1021 HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources Director Annette McLaggan presented the budget request and answered questions regarding the Part-time Office Assistant, which was moved to the Commissioners' budget, and explained the Professional Services line, which will have unresolved legal issues into 2025.

****R. Tarantino moved, H. Harnden seconded to approve 1021 Human Resources at \$101,560.45 as presented. Unanimous.**

2025 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Human Resources Director Annette McLaggan and Finance Director Kari Hunt presented this budget request. Employee benefits are broken into two budgets – County 2025 budget and Jail 1050 budget. A. McLaggan submitted a spreadsheet regarding the new Maine Paid Family Medical Leave law and Workers' Compensation, including costs to the County/employer and the cost for the employees. W-9 certificates of insurance are required of outside contractors but if they do not submit one, they must be treated as non-independent contractors under Workers' Comp.

Workers' Comp decides what the rate will be based on wages and claims. Wages were lower last year mostly because of vacant positions. There were some workers' comp claims in 2024, including lost time and surgery. This changes the experience rating. Light duty is assigned wherever possible.

The health plan was briefly discussed. Billing packets are roughly \$135,000.00 per month, and Stop Loss insurance costs are also factored in. Self-insuring has been the best option for the County. Health plan costs are managed by reducing caps for expenses, increasing by the premium, 15% of which is paid by the employees, and by researching other possible savings. Gym membership reimbursements are offered to employees and their families. Employees receive Wellness bags with health-related items

at least once per year. The health fund is a separate account, so any leftover funds remain in that account.

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

1010 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

EMA Director Dale submitted a handout explaining the need to increase a line item over the initial request because the State of Maine has sent a notice that effective December 1, 2024, the state will no longer fund satellite phones for Counties. \$870.00 must be added to the 4820 Dues budget line for this purpose, increasing it from \$363.00 to \$1,233.00.

The request for the GIS Planner position has gone from 24 hours per week to 26 hours. This position also assists with IT an average of 4 hours per week.

The current fuel budget will be over-expended before the end of the year, due to working on building projects in Swanville and Belfast. Those projects are completed, so it won't be an ongoing shortfall. A fuel reservoir is maintained with marine-grade stabilizer for potential power outages. The fuel is used by the end of winter so it won't go bad. The non-employee-related part of the budget has been reduced.

Solar power pays for electricity at the Emergency Management Agency, the storage buildings, Probate/Commissioners Courthouse, and one tower site. Electricity costs for the U of M Cooperative Extension and Sheriff's Office are reduced by solar power. The EMA building is heated by wood stove. The Repairs & Maintenance Equipment line is now named "Equipment," and Office Supplies is named "Supplies". The EMA Web Portal is dedicated to emergency management, so is not in the IT budget. Communications back-up measures during power outages were mentioned.

Training/Education line 4940 was reduced and Food line 5100 was increased by \$50.00. EMA holds trainings for the public, including civil defense/preparedness training, first aid, stop-bleeding training, mass care, etc.

****T. Parker moved, R. Tarantino seconded adding an additional \$50.00 to the Food line since there are so many trainings, increasing the total budget request to \$179,042.00. Unanimous.**

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve the EMA budget at \$179,042.00. Unanimous.**

1080-4715 WALDO COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERS

There was question of how outside agencies become part of the County Budget, and why some are not being funded in 2025. The Commissioners explained that the County Clerk used to notify former requesters when the budget committee meetings would start, and they would submit their requests. The new Finance Director designed a form that that must be completed along with supporting information, and since only two agencies submitted this, they were the only ones included in the 2025 budget.

Present were Monica Pettengill and CEO Donna Kelley. Services and programs were listed. WCAP is required to demonstrate a local match, which is the primary reason they request 2.5% from municipalities and 1/3 of 1% from the County. Some communities cannot pay it, and the County's portion helps with whatever the towns cannot do. This past year, only 58% of what was requested was paid. This impacts the people who are most vulnerable in the towns. Service costs have been

increasing due to impact from the pandemic, but also the drastic reduction in service revenue, and fewer resources. More people need assistance and the resources are decreasing. When asked which municipality didn't give funds, the response was that it was Palermo likely due to the Town no longer having a post office box, the request arrived late and was not funded. Questions were asked about which towns had paid the full request, which ones hadn't, and which ones paid less than the total request but paid more than the previous year, and M. Pettengill responded with towns and figures.

There was discussion about whether a town not giving funds might be subsidized by the other towns who did give funds and different opinions on this. Also discussed were services and funding, a pool of funds to cover gaps in services, that some funds are state, and some are federal, etc.

1080-4721 BELFAST CREATIVE COALITION

Lorraine Brown presented the budget request and described some of the services offered. There is information about addiction, information services, blankets, cell phones, and other things families can't afford, etc. All work is done by volunteers. Over 125 people have been helped by this organization. Many of those helped are those leaving Jail, and their families are also helped. Volunteering is also done at the Maine Coastal Regional Reentry Center in Belfast. There are educational programs and there is a specific focus on people who have been incarcerated for long periods of time. Services for children are done with Betty the Art Van. There are efforts made to find and support the children of incarcerated people. It is believed that by helping the children, it helps stop the cycle from continuing. Art is put at the center of difficult conversations and helps people to act.

****T. Higgins moved, T. Parker seconded to approve funding \$5,000.00 for WCAP and \$2,000.00 Belfast Creative Coalition in the 1080 Advertising and Promotion Budget for a total of \$7,000.00. Unanimous.**

2005 U. OF M. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Sustainable Agriculture and Farm Business Management Educator Brett Johnson presented the budget request and submitted a document. He is a county liaison with Cooperative Extension, serves part-time in Waldo County and is shared with other surrounding counties. He assists with site suitability for replacing agricultural enterprises on the land, soil testing and nutrients, and integrative pest management in an environmentally and sustainable way. When asked if the reduction in funds from the County last year resulted in personnel reduction, he explained that it resulted in the loss of a ½ time administrative specialist position and the extension office hours were reduced from 5 days to 4 days with the 5th day by appointment only. The goal in 2025 proposal is to hire the ½ position again. It was noted that for every dollar spent, there has been a return of \$10.00. He will meet with anyone regarding services offered by U of M Extensions, including the Prenatal and Parenting training for new parents to teach health and safety for young infants and for parents to connect and find community. The Waldo County budget provides the building, maintenance, plowing, trash removal, etc. for the Extension. When asked if Waldo could combine with the counties to share those expenses, it was explained that there are different facilities and financial relationships to the counties that are served. Some on the Budget Committee noted the Extension's improved community outreach to their towns.

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 2005 U of M Cooperative Extension at \$53,678.38. There was brief discussion about that being an incorrect figure. The vote was 1 in favor (H. Harnden) and 7 opposed.**

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 2005 U of M Cooperative Extension at \$60,200.00. Passed by 7; opposed by 1 (H. Harnden.)**

1035 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information Technology Director J-sun Bailey presented the budget request. The Committee asked some questions about the Technology Technician position. J. Bailey explained that the Technician also owns his own business, which does the wiring for the County, so he has been doing that. In 2025, the Technician will be working for I.T. Department the full 20 hours per week.

There was brief discussion about whether departments could function without the I.T. department and J. Bailey explained that backup measures are in place to try to keep the departments functioning. The Committee acknowledged that I.T. is very important to the departments and functions of the County.

J. Bailey has applied for CDS funding to upgrade all Waldo County law enforcement agencies' mobile Spillman software.

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to fund the 1035 Information Technology Budget as presented at \$229,548.00. Unanimous.**

2035 WALDO COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Board of Supervisors Andrew Reed and Gene Randall were present. There were no questions from the Budget Committee.

****T. Parker moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve budget 2035 Waldo County Soil and Water Conservation District at \$25,000.00 as presented. Unanimous.**

1020 COMMISSIONERS

The Commissioners presented their budget request. The part-time Office Assistant position has replaced what was historically the Deputy Clerk position and assists Human Resources, Finance, and Commissioners Offices. Last year it was temporarily placed in the Human Resources budget and has been moved back to the Commissioners' budget.

The Professional Services line is the same as 2024 because there are certain fees paid from this that are related more to the Commissioners than to Human Resources.

The Committee asked if the training line needed more funding with two new Commissioners being elected for 2025. A current grant reimbursement program reimburses up to \$1,200.00 per employee per year for training, so this can be utilized. New Commissioners can take New Elected Official and Freedom of Access Training with Maine Municipal Association, and some training is offered by the Maine County Commissioners Association (MCCA). There was question about why the mileage budget was so small and it was because in recent years there was less travel to MCCA meetings and annual conventions. Many trainings can be done by via webinars. It was noted that new Commissioners may need to travel more. Liability Insurance was considerably higher at the recommendation of the Risk Pool Manager since costs have increased with law enforcement, Jail, and cyber security measures.

****M. Mortier moved, T. Higgins seconded to increase training to \$700.00. Unanimous.**

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

2040 RECORDS PRESERVATION

County Clerk Barbara Arseneau explained that there has been no budget request partly because the permanent and long-retention records had to be moved from the Old Superior Courthouse archive because the building was sold. They were moved to the new EMA warehouse. The records at the Old Jail Archive are being moved as well due to ongoing issues with that building. Many records are generated digitally now, and short-retention paper records are being scanned so fewer paper records are generated. Records Preservation Reserve Account funds have been used in recent years rather than requesting funds from 2024 Records Preservation. There will be very little left that reserve so next year there will likely a request in the 1040 Records Preservation budget.

****R. Tarantino moved, T. Higgins seconded to fund 2040 Records Preservation at \$0.00.**

Discussion: The Committee felt there should be documentation of why this budget has been unfunded for several years because it was being paid from a Records Preservation Reserve Account, and they would like that balance written. **T. Parker amended that there be a caveat that there is a written explanation next year stating that a reserve account had been funding this. Unanimous.**

1025 FINANCE

Finance Director Kari Hunt presented the budget request. The wage increase for Finance Director was based on the 3% COLA. There was brief discussion of WEX (automobile fuel credit card company) charging late fees even if they receive payment on the due date and process it the next day. They've charged County \$1,800.00 in late fees, so she now pays them online and has reminders set up to pay as soon as the bill comes electronically. The Training line was increased by \$100.00 to cover training as a certified treasurer. The Capital Outlay line is for the finance software.

****T. Parker moved, R. Tarantino seconded to approve 1025 Finance as presented at \$82,489.37. Unanimous.**

1090 AUDIT

Finance Director Kari Hunt presented the budget request. The County finally found one auditor to provide a quote after contacting 30-plus auditors. The auditor is working on 2021, 2022, and 2023. 2023 will carry over into 2025. She has not signed the contract yet, but the auditor has agreed to also do 2024. It should not go over the \$13,500.00 for both County and Jail. ARPA funds were used for the separate ARPA audit.

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 1090 Audit as requested at \$8,100.00.**

Unanimous.

1095 DEBT SERVICE

Finance Director Kari Hunt presented the budget request. The County has no debt.

****R. Tarantino moved, M. Mortier seconded to accept the budget at \$0.00 for Debt Service.**

Unanimous.

2000 INTEREST

Finance Director Kari Hunt presented the budget request. She inquired of First National Bank, and they provided a quote of 5.86% interest, and if it is lower by the time the County votes on it, the bank will adjust to the lower rate but won't increase above the quoted rate. The bank quoted \$355,506.67 total, \$231,079.34 for the County and \$124,427.33 for the Jail portion. The interest rate for 2024 was 5.18%. M. Mortier asked if the best interest rate possible will be available by the Public Hearing on November 6, 2024. K. Hunt will request it.

****B. Kurek moved, H. Harnden seconded to approve 2000 Interest at \$231,079.34 as presented. Unanimous.**

2045 RESERVES

Finance Director Kari Hunt presented the budget request.

****T. Parker moved, T. Higgins seconded to approve 2045 Reserves as presented at \$0.00. Unanimous.**

The next budget meeting is **October 16, 2024 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.** and the Committee will meet with Registry of Deeds, the Registry of Probate, and the Communications Center.

Budget Committee requested updated documents. Additions to the budget were \$720.00 for 1010 Emergency Management Agency, \$300.00 for 1020 Commissioners, and \$6,530.62 for U of M Cooperative Extension.

ADJOURNMENT

****T. Parker moved, H. Harnden seconded to adjourn at 1:38 p.m. Unanimous.**

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