

**WALDO COUNTY 2025 BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 16, 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), 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 via Zoom, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Bob Kurek called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the flag salute and introductions.

MINUTES

The minutes from the October 5, 2024 Budget Committee Meeting were reviewed for clarification of a vote, which was that motion was made by Timothy Parker and seconded by Robyn Tarantino to approve budget 2035 Waldo County Soil & Water Conservation District as requested at \$25,000.00.

****R. Tarantino moved, D. Thomas seconded to approve the minutes from the October 5, 2024 Budget Committee Meeting with this amendment. Passed by 6; 1 abstention (W. Norton).**

1070 REGISTRY OF PROBATE

Register of Probate Sharon Peavey presented the budget request. She had reduced the Court Appointment line by \$3,900.00 to \$26,000.00 for 2025. It is for indigent people who can't afford to pay an attorney, and funds a guardian ad litem when needed. It is statutory that an attorney be appointed for the parent. Probate tries to recoup the funds by setting up a payment plan, although the Probate Court often absorbs the cost. About \$3,000.00 in restitution is collected annually. For years attorneys worked for Probate for \$50.00 per hour, but it has increased to \$150.00 per hour because that's the rate in other courts. Probate collects about \$50.00 per passport application, when photos are taken, and there are about 800 passport applications per year. Capital Outlay pays for technology software specific to Probate, for Quik Books, or a new scanner if needed. The Judge's chair has been replaced. The post office box is \$300.00. There was brief discussion of whether Quik Books should be a subscription or a Capital Outlay item. Probate Court Restitution is projected revenue at \$160,000.00 along with proceedings, filings, etc.

****D. Thomas moved, M. Mortier seconded to approve 1070 Registry of Probate at \$329,835.00. Unanimous.**

1065 REGISTRY OF DEEDS

Register of Deeds Stacy Grant presented this budget request. 2024 revenue received in fees and transfer tax so far this year is a little over \$313,000.00, higher than this time last year. It is anticipated that it will be around \$390,000.00 by year end. The only budget increase is the 3% COLA. The Alarm line was removed as it is now in the Facilities Budget. The balance in the Microfilming line was questioned and S. Grant explained that the balance is about \$24,000.00, and there are three (3) more payments before the end of the year. There is a fee of \$3.90 per document paid to IQS for processing. Deeds generates a fair amount of revenue with it. It is impossible to know from year to year how much

microfilming will need to be done. It is reduced based on recordings, high or low interest rates, etc. Any revenue goes into the General Fund. When asked if the revenue generated goes toward the Deeds budget expenditures, it was explained that it does not, that the County can only keep a percentage of the total budget in its coffers, and it is often used to fund the County Reserves. There were additional questions and answers related to the Reserve Accounts, how they are funded, and what they are used for. It was noted that the County has at times requested reserve funding in the budget when needed.

The Committee held discussion regarding the Commissioners often agreeing with the Departmental requests. The Commissioners explained that they meet with the Department Heads, review the questions line by line and determine if they agree with those requests. Some on the Committee felt that 10% was a huge increase this year and said they would like to see the original departmental request and what was reduced. It was noted that it appeared the Department Heads had heard the Committee's concerns last year and had done their best to keep costs down as much as possible even with inflation and cost of living increases. The Committee expressed appreciation for receiving budget information earlier this year. It was noted that so far, the Budget Committee had increased the budget rather than decreasing it. When asked if Deeds was fully staffed, S. Grant explained how vacancies were filled, and how longevity can affect the wages at hire. She said that some of the wages were still low and not where they should be. The Committee asked if the Microfilm budget line could be reduced, and it was explained that the vendor must be paid, each year the totals can be different, and that the cost includes service, programming, a storage fee, and the physical equipment. From 2010 to 2020 it was in the \$12,000.00's. In 2021 it was over \$14,000.00, in 2022 it went down, and this year it is already higher in documents than last year. The trend is starting to increase again. When asked if the Deeds fees will increase, S. Grant said the Registries of Deeds are trying to lobby for a flat fee which would increase revenue considerably for Counties starting in 2026, if it passes. Transfer tax would stay the same. The Committee asked the Commissioners if reserves could be used rather than increasing the Deeds budget. It was explained that Deeds-related reserves are specific, and that the Deeds budget would end up in the negative. The Committee discussed reducing Microfilming to \$50,000.00 based on previous years' expenditures.

****M. Mortier moved, R. Tarantino seconded to reduce microfilming to \$50,000.00. Unanimous.**

****M. Mortier moved, H. Harnden seconded to approve 1070 Registry of Deeds at \$249,081.00. Unanimous.**

1076 COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Director Michael Larrivee presented the budget request. Question was raised regarding why line 3200 Shift Differentials had increased so much. M. Larrivee explained that negotiations with the Communications Association were underway when he prepared his budget, and later this is what was negotiated. The Commissioners said that it is difficult to staff places that have 24-hour shifts. M. Larrivee noted that an additional \$3,510.00 is needed in that budget line because the final cost was not determined then. The base wage shift differential comes from the same full-time line. He reduced the Travel line to \$500.00. Vehicle maintenance increased because the truck he uses will need tires. Radio maintenance lines were discussed. There are two contracts – one protects the FCC licensing. The other is a 3-year maintenance contract at \$71,556.69 and includes all warranties for all the new equipment, firmware upgrades, radio maintenance and upgrades, and dispatcher's headsets. He just had a rectifier break due to a lightning strike which wasn't covered by the other contract. The Committee asked about reducing the 4600 Radio Repair/Maintenance by \$5,000.00 and

M. Larrivee felt that, based on experience, he would prefer another \$1,000.00, but felt it could be reduced by \$4,600.00.

Training was discussed based on current expenditure. In November, six (6) employees will be in training and one (1) will be at the Academy for most of December, so the budget will be expended. Capital Outlay is for the policy program which handles policy updates/changes and automatically notifies the dispatchers. It has gone up in price. It was noted that line 4605 Radio Maintenance Contracts also includes the towers. M. Larrivee explained this covers from antennas all the way to the ground and is a contracted amount broken out over 5-years.

The Committee went back to line 3200 and calculated that it should be \$20,692.00. Question was raised regarding if there was a balance sheet for reserve accounts, and if there is a reserve associated with the Communications Center that could provide for capital repairs. There is a Communications Reserve with about \$90,000.00 because grant funds had replenished it. The Committee requested that there be a sheet of Reserve balances provided, and that this be a topic at the next meeting on October 26, 2024; what the reserves are, what they are for, how they are incremented, and how they are decremented. It had been mentioned by the Committee last year, as well. It was explained that some are restricted reserves, some are active reserves, and some are capital reserves. Prior to the next meeting, the document verbiage and uses of those reserves will be provided by Finance Director K. Hunt. The County must report what those reserves are going to be used for, and if there will be a change to how a reserve is used, the State must be notified. There is a difference in how the Towns can use reserves and how the County can use reserves.

Budget changes made by the Committee included increasing the shift differentials line 3200 to \$20,692.00 and decreasing the 4605 Radio Maintenance line by \$5,000.00.

****M. Mortier moved, H. Harnden seconded to reduce 4600 Radio Maintenance by \$5,000.00 so it would now be \$5,000.00. Unanimous.**

****M. Mortier moved, H. Harnden seconded that 3200 Shift Differential increase from the number listed of \$17,182.00 by adding \$3,510.00, as informed by the department head, so this line would now be \$20,692.00. Unanimous.**

****M. Mortier moved, E. Lenharr seconded that the new total for 1076 Communications Center budget is \$1,361,484.19. Unanimous.**

The next budget meeting is **October 26, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** and the Committee will meet with the District Attorney, Facilities, Jail, and Sheriff's Budgets along with discussion of the reserves. Finance Director K. Hunt will email the reserve information in advance.

ADJOURNMENT

****R. Tarantino moved, H. Harnden seconded to adjourn at 7:10 p.m. Unanimous.**

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