

September 3, 2015

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners  
Public Hearing on the F/Y 2016 Budget  
held September 3, 2015  
in the Commissioners' Conference Room  
Machias, Maine**

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Attending the meeting were:

Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner  
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.  
Commissioner Vinton E. Cassidy  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administration  
Nathan Pennell, Washington County Soil & Water Conservation Service  
and Down East RC & D  
Jean Savard, Washington County Firefighters' Association  
David McVicar, Washington County Firefighters' Association  
Dick Fickett, Cherryfield  
Lorraine Robbins, Trescott  
Dianne Tilton, DEI  
Joanna S. Billings, Bangor Daily News  
Susan Hatton, SCEC  
Melanie Small, Buildings & Grounds  
Billy Howard, City of Calais  
M.F. Hinerman, EMA  
Josh Rolfe, RCC  
Alan Majka, University of Maine Cooperative Extension  
Lewis Pinkham, Milbridge  
Harry Fish, Jr., Jonesport  
Barry Curtis, Sheriff  
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy  
Dorathy Martel, Next Step  
Sally Rier, Next Step  
Sharon Strout, Deeds  
Judith A. Alexander, Treasurer's Office  
Bill Kitchen, MVNO  
John Sutherland, Lubec

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Commissioner Gardner called the Public Hearing to order at 4:00 p.m.  
on the proposed F/Y 2016 County Budget.

Commissioner Gardner announced that the caucus for District 2 was held  
just prior to the hearing. Lubec Town Administrator John Southerland  
was unanimously selected to fill the open seat for the three-year  
term.

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Before hearing from the Third-Party vendors and formally turning the budget over to the Budget Advisory Committee, Commissioner Gardner summarized the budget process. He explained that before the budget is prepared Department Heads assess and compile their needs for a starting point. The proposed budget is then turned over to the Budget Advisory Committee. The BAC represents the taxpayers of the forty-seven municipalities of Washington County. Commissioner Gardner stated that the Commissioners defer to the Department Heads as being the experts of the business. The Commissioners also lean upon the BAC to review the budget and make the tough decisions. Commissioner Gardner reported that the 2016 proposed budget to be raised by taxation is \$5,677,924. That is an increase of 6.09% from last year's budget. The LD growth factor limits the county to a 3.34% increase. This is an increase of \$326,377.77. Commissioner Gardner pointed out that the increased benefit costs for insurance and "extras" is a large factor in the increased budget. Commissioner Gardner concluded that the BAC will need to make some very tough decisions this year. The Board of Commissioners respect the work that the BAC does and expects, as in the past, that the Committee will bring a budget back to the Commissioners that can be accepted. With no further comments from the Board of Commissioners or the public, the Third-Party requests were heard.

Washington County Firefighters Association is requesting \$6500.00. President David McVicar stated that this request is the same as last year. He noted that the money comes right back to benefit the county by looking for projects that will do the most good. Vice President Jean Savard noted that the association buys equipment within the County when possible. Commissioner Gardner remarked that the small towns are struggling to keep volunteer firefighters and the services they provide in existence. Commissioner Gardner thanked the Firefighters Association for their service.

Diane Tilton, Executive Director of the Downeast Institute of Applied Marine Research and Education, thanked the Commissioners for their support in the past and asked that DEI's funding remain at \$5,000.00. Ms. Tilton stated that the DEI's mission is to improve the quality of life for Washington County residents. DEI produces soft shell seed for stock enhancement; researches commercial shellfish for the purpose of improving opportunities in shellfish aquaculture; and provides Marine Resources and Education for Washington County children and teachers. Commissioner Gardner praised Brian Beal's work and stated that "it has put Washington County on the map".

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Dorathy Martel and Sally Rier were present to represent Next Step. Next Step's fund request remains at last year's request of \$850.00. Ms. Martel explained that Next Step covers Washington and Hancock Counties. The organization helps people in domestic abuse situations by providing housing and education. Commissioner Gardner inquired if any funding was received from Hancock County. Ms. Martel responded that they do receive several thousand dollars annually. Commissioner Gardner stated that the request of \$850.00 is a modest request. He advocated for the program pointing out that most dangerous and volatile situations involve domestic violence. This is a much needed program providing additional support to the law enforcement agencies.

Budget Advisory Committee member Billy Howard pointed out that all third-party requests were conservative; remaining the same as last year. Commissioner Gardner concurred.

Billy Howard inquired as to what budget lines were increasing. Commissioner Gardner replied that the insurance was the cause of most of the increase. There were also some staff changes adding to the increase. Commissioner Gardner pointed out that it does not take many changes in just a few lines to make big changes and increases.

Commissioner Gardner introduced the BAC members present: Dick Fickett of Cherryfield, John Sutherland of Lubec, Lewis Pinkham of Milbridge and Billy Howard of Calais. Ten members make up the Board; three representatives from each district selected by their own Municipal Officers and one legislative member selected by the Legislative Delegation.

The Budget Committee members and County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald adjourned to elect a chair and establish dates and times of their next meetings.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**4:25 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

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Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.**