

September 10, 2020

**Minutes of the Washington County
Public Hearing on the
Proposed Budget for FY 2022
held September 9, 2021
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton E. Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administration
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer
Dianne Tilton, Downeast Institute
Harry Fish, Jr., Jonesport Selectman
Lewis Pinkham, Milbridge
Nancy Oden, Jonesboro
Jean Savard, East Machias
Carlene Holmes, probate
Jen Lobley, UMaine Cooperative Extension
Kyle Winslow, Washington County Extension Association
Susan Hatton, Sunrise County Economic Council
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, Sheriff's Office
Rich Rolfe, Sheriff's Office
Tammy Gay, Registry of Deeds
Dean Preston, Unorganized Territories
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Mike Crabtree, Sheriff's Office
Sarah Strickland, East Grand
Lisa M. Hanscom, Emergency Management Agency
Nate Pennell, Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District
Nancy Harrison, Lubec
E. Harrison, Lubec
Dorathy Martel, Next Step

Commissioner Gardner called the Public Hearing to order at 4:00 p.m. on the proposed County Budget for FY 2022.

Commissioner Gardner turned the floor over to County Manager Betsy

September 10, 2020

Fitzgerald. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated representatives were present for those organizations requesting third-party funds.

Jean Savard was present to represent the Washington County Firefighters Association. Jean stated the Washington County Firefighters Association is requesting the same funding as in years passed. In previous years the WCFFA has requested \$6500.00. The funding from the County is used for training and equipment. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners give their full support for the funds requested by WCFFA.

Executive Director of the Downeast Institute of Applied Marine Research and Education, Dianne Tilton was present. Ms. Tilton stated DEI requests the same amount of \$5000.00 each year; their request remains the same. Ms. Tilton stated the generous funding of Washington County allows DEI to use the funds to acquire matching funds for other grants. Ms. Tilton stated DEI also uses the funds for education purposes and conservation efforts. Ms. Tilton pointed out that DEI helps economic development in the fishing industry and by employment opportunities in the area. DEI is open to the public for a tour by appointment. Ms. Tilton encouraged people to come see their facility and learn about their programs. Commissioner Gardner stated the DEI is a worth-while cause and the Board of Commissioners offer their full support of the requested funds.

Dorothy Martel was present to represent Next Step Violence Project. Ms. Martel stated that Next Step's fund request is for \$900.00. The request of \$900.00 has not changed from last year. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners support the request and understand the services provided by Next Step support law enforcement. Commissioner Gardner noted the services is a support in the community for family violence that would cost more if provided by law enforcement.

The Commissioner thanked all third-party representatives for their presentations.

Commissioner Gardner stated the process of developing a budget is not

68

done by the Board of Commissioners alone. The proposed budget is built with the input of the department heads. The Commissioners then hand the proposed budget over to the Budget Advisory Committee. The BAC reviews the requests of each department and must then determine

September 10, 2020

the priorities of the county and decide what services will be funded. Once the BAC completes the hard work of what services will be funded, the budget is submitted to the Commissioners for approval. The Commissioners may reject the proposed budget by the BAC. Commissioner Gardner stated it is not up to the Commissioners to set the budget; setting the budget is up to the BAC but the Commissioners work with the BAC.

The Budget Advisory Committee is made up of representatives that serve the municipalities in an official capacity. The BAC is comprised of nine members and one legislative delegate. There are three members that represent each Commissioners' district. Commissioner Cassidy represents District 1; Commissioner Gardner represents District 2; and Commissioner Crowley represents District 3. All three BAC member slots for each district have been filled. The Legislative Delegate is still to be determined. (See attached BAC Member List)

Commissioner Gardner stated the work of the BAC is difficult; balancing the necessities with minimum funding. Commissioner Gardner noted the County has been working with a "nuts and bolts" budget for years. The ability to recruit those to serve in law enforcement has become increasingly more difficult, and the coverage territory has increased with more municipalities having fewer officers in their departments. Commissioner Gardner made the point that there is a public safety employment shortage and the County must pay more to entice recruitment. Commissioner Gardner stated the increase in the Sheriff's budget could potentially cause cuts in other areas.

Commissioner Gardner stated the approved budget for 2021 was \$6,250,530.82. The proposed budget for 2022 is \$6,804,190.15. The increase from last year to this year is 8.8578%. (See attached budget proposal summary draft) Commissioner Gardner stated this is the steepest out-of-the-gate budget in a long time. Commissioner Gardner noted the Board of Commissioners do not turn this proposed budget over to the BAC lightly. Commissioner Gardner stated this budget is driven by real things; noted inflation is beyond anyone's control and public safety is a must.

69

Commissioner Gardner pointed out the proposed budget submitted last year was a flat-line budget; essentially pushing the needs that should have been addressed down the road. The Budget Advisory Committee will have to set the priorities.

Following the presentations, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald and the

September 10, 2020

members of the BAC adjourned to select a chairman and consider the BAC meeting dates. Betsy stated Lewis Pinkham was re-elected as chairman. The following dates have been set for the Budget Advisory Committee meetings:

- Thursday, September 23rd
- Thursday, October 7th
- Thursday, October 14th
- Thursday, October 28th

All meetings will be held at the 28 Center Street Conference Room at 9 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

4:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.