

MONTCALM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Budget Work Session

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

1:00 PM

The regular meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Petersen at 1:01 p.m.

Members present at roll call: Commissioners Baker, Petersen, Mahar, Carr and Kohn. Members absent: Painter and Johnston.

Others present: Kristen Millard, Brenda Taeter, Andrea Krause, Ryan Villet, Mike Williams and Elisabeth Waldon.

Public comments were offered. None were given.

The purpose of the meeting was the FY2024 Budget Discussions. Vice-Chairman Petersen stated that the 3 biggest requests for discussion are:

- The Prosecutor & Indigent Defense Office's wage requests
- The Sheriff's Department wage requests
- The Jail Administrators requests for 2 additional corrections officers

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, stated that decisions also need to be made on the following:

- Treasurer's Office Staffing
- County IT Contract and Hours
- Jail Nursing Contract

Ms. Taeter stated that the Treasurer's Office staffing needs to be decided whether there will be 4 or 5 employees, and how it will be funded since the Treasurer has stated that she will not be contributing the \$130,000 from the Delinquent Tax Fund that she previously used to fund two of her employees. Ms. Taeter stated that the Treasurer has previously stated that she does not intend to refill Vicki Dyer's position when she retires at the end of the summer, but a retirement announcement has not been received yet.

Discussion took place on the Treasurer declaring a surplus so that money can be transferred out the Delinquent Tax Funds. Ms. Taeter stated that she did reach out to John Ax but since informing him of the situation, but she hasn't heard back from him. Chairman Carr stated that the information Ms. Taeter has obtained from other county administrators was that some county boards declare their own surplus without the Treasurer's input, which was the point of asking John Ax to meet with a few commissioners and the Controller.

Ms. Taeter also discussed the \$90,000 that was set aside for IT. She did meet with another company and the fees were nearly double what we pay now and the onsite hours were much less that we currently have. Therefore if the board needs to, they could take from that \$90,000 to help cover other requests.

Discussion started with the Prosecutor's Office raise requests.

Commissioner Petersen stated that he cannot get behind the large raises requested, or the step increases suggested.

Commissioner Mahar stated that he could get behind option 2, without the increase to Indigent Defense, and without the step increases. He feels that the Prosecutor and an administrator in Indigent Defense are two very different positions and he feels the Prosecutor needs to be paid more. In that option wages would look like:

\$121,000 to Prosecuting Attorney
\$95,000 for Chief Assistant Prosecutor
\$75,000 for 2 APA's
\$70,000 for 1 APA

This would be an increase of \$43,000 in total costs.

Discussion took place on the request from Indigent Defense and Mr. Neve's argument of parity. Discussion also took place on the different responsibilities between the Prosecuting Attorney and acting as the Administrator of Indigent Defense. It was decided that Mr. Neve would move to \$108,000.

\$108,000 to Matt Neve, Indigent Defense Administrator

Discussion moved on to the Jail Administrator's request for 2 additional corrections officers. Commissioner Petersen stated that he met with Andy Powell, Jail Administrator, and understands that there is a need for additional officers for officer safety, medical transfers and to reduce officer burnout.

Commissioner Petersen asked Sheriff Williams if the Board were to pay for one of the Corrections Officers out of the General Fund, would he would be willing to take one of the Corrections Officers out of the Law Enforcement Millage. Sheriff Williams indicated that he would not. The consensus of the Board was to tentatively agree to grant one additional Corrections Officer and to fund it with the money that was originally set aside for additional IT hours.

Discussion moved on to the 14% increase request for COAM and POAM employees. Commissioner Petersen stated that he has been contacted by many members of the public whom are not in support of this request.

Sheriff Williams stated that he is willing to pay for the 14% increase to the COAM and POAM employees out of the millage.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, stated that the Board needs to remember that union negotiations are coming up.

Commissioner Mahar stated that the Board has been after the Sheriff to come off some of the millage money and now the Sheriff has agreed to do so and he feels that is progress.

Chairman Carr stated that it is the Board's millage and the Board does not need the Sheriff's permission to spend the millage money. He stated the Board can direct the Controller to use those funds as there has not been consistency on how the funds have been spent. Commissioner Mahar stated that he thought this would be more to Chairman Carr's liking as he has been wanting the Sheriff to loosen up on the use of those funds.

The Sheriff has suggested lowering the amount levied to possibly .85 mill as he has not been able to hire and retain the 14 officers needed for 24-hour road patrol and money has been going into Fund Balance. Chairman Carr stated that levying less than a full mill is an admitted failure. The voters don't want that.

Sheriff Williams stated that in order to fill those 14 deputy positions he has to be competitive, which is what the wage increase request is about.

Commissioner Kohn stated that he paid his taxes and that law enforcement millage is sitting in a bank account doing nothing for him. He would rather have those funds used for something tangible.

Commissioner Mahar stated that he feels the Sheriff's Department is doing everything they can to recruit officers. He stated that no one could have predicted the current climate in the policing community.

Chairman Carr stated that he feels the millage money needs to be used on tangible things. All of the millage money should be spent first for the Sheriff Dept and Jail. Use all millage money first and then the General Fund makes up the difference. Even the Prosecutor's Office could be paid for out of the Law Enforcement Millage. If there is relief on the General Fund, then other requests could be granted for other county departments. It should be handled similar to how the ambulance fund works.

Commissioner took a straw poll to indicate how they feel the millage funds should be used and all stated they felt the millage funds need to be used first and the General Fund would be used to make up the difference.

Sheriff Williams stated that he worries that the county needs to be prudent in how the money is spent so that the millage is renewed so that 24-hour road patrol is restored. He stated that he thinks they could get on the same page if they could set down and discuss this one on one.

The next meeting is Monday, July 31, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. Discussion will need to take place on the increase to Dr. Gaffney's contract and how that will be paid for.

Public comments were offered. None were given.

Moved by Commissioner Kohn, supported by Commissioner Baker to adjourn at 3:10 p.m. Motion carried.

Kristen Millard, County Clerk

Adam Petersen, Vice-Chairman