

MONTCALM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Budget Work Session

Monday,

1:00 PM

The regular meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Petersen at 1:00 p.m.

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

Public comments were offered. None were given.

The purpose of the meeting was the FY2024 Budget discussions.

Vice-Chairman Petersen went over the tentative approvals that were agreed upon at the last budget work session and asked if any of the members have any items they are not comfortable with or would like to see changed.

He reiterated that the Board decided to give raises to the Assistant Prosecutors and give both Andrea Krause, Prosecuting Attorney, and Matt Neve, Indigent Defense, the 3% increase that everyone else will be given. Acting Chairman Petersen stated that Mr. Neve is not trying cases, but instead is acting as an Administrator, and has less time than Ryan Villet as an attorney. Chairman Carr stated that he feels that is fair and he is comfortable with the justification as to why Mr. Neve's wage increase was denied.

Commissioner Petersen stated that the 2 corrections officers; the 14% wage increase for the COAM and POAM; and the jail medical contract with Dr. Gaffney need to be decided today.

Commissioner Petersen informed the Board that Dr. Gaffney was dropped by his long time insurance company due to his contract with the jail and now has a new company for malpractice insurance, which is a \$40,000 increase to him. Since he could have kept his malpractice insurance by opting out of the jail medical contract, Dr. Gaffney is hoping the County will foot the bill for the increase in his Medical Malpractice insurance which would increase his contract from \$144,000 to \$184,000.

Jail Administrator, Andy Powell, stated that the 2019 contract said 30 hours per week, but the county is getting more than the contracted hours per week because the nurses come early and stay late. Undersheriff Doezema did give the board options to outsource to a bigger hospital, however the care was not adequate to what is needed.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, believes the overage budgeted for IT can be used for the inmate care medical contract. Vice-Chairman Petersen feels that changing medical contracts will leave the county vulnerable and the costs would be way higher than Dr. Gaffney's contract.

The consensus of the Board was to increase Dr. Gaffney's contract by \$40,000 and use the overage budgeted for IT to cover that cost.

Commissioner Mahar shared that he, Chairman Carr and Brenda Taeter, met with Sheriff Williams and there have been concessions on both sides. There is understanding on both sides and they have agreed upon what will be paid from the Law Enforcement Millage.

Chairman Carr thinks that is a good place to be at. There is understanding on both parts and the Sheriff has pointed out that 24 hour road patrol is his goal. Chairman Carr stated that the Commissioners did not want to stand in the way of 24 hour road patrol. All of the Road Patrol functions and types of things will be funded from the millage money.

Commissioner Mahar stated that the COAM & POAM will be given an 11% increase, plus the 3% everyone is getting, and then possibly get another year added to the contract

Chairman Carr stated that there are significant savings if the county can push the contract out a year, with a 3% built in for next year, and continue to try to recruit enough deputies to reach the 24 hour road patrol. The wage does need to be more inviting to make this happen.

Commissioner Kohn stated that it is bugging him that Mahar, Carr and Taeter, met with the Sheriff and agreed on something without the rest of the Board's input. He feels like he got no input into what was agreed upon. Why 14%? Why not 10% or 12%? He wanted it done at the full board, not a few to meet privately with the Sheriff.

Brenda Taeter stated that 14% is an average and still less than the City of Greenville is being paid. Chairman Carr stated that the full board still needs to vote on the increases. He also stated that there needed to be clarification on both sides and it wasn't getting done at the full board. So Commissioner Mahar asked him to reconsider meeting with the Sheriff, which he did. Nothing was committed to in stone, but the air was cleared.

Commissioner Petersen stated that a common goal is 24 hour road patrol. If the Sheriff believes the 14% will get us there, then the Sheriff has to report back to the voters. It's on the Sheriff, not the Board. He has to sell the millage to the voters and if 14% doesn't recruit new officers, then that is on the Sheriff. He believes the Sheriff knows best. And this will free up more general fund money down the road.

Chairman Carr informed Commissioner Kohn that this was not a backdoor deal. There wasn't a quorum present and nothing changed other than an understanding of both points of view. The Sheriff never offered a guarantee of anything. If "We" want to stay true to our work for 24/7 Road Patrol then we need to be competitive. This isn't the Sheriff's fault, the market changed. The Board doesn't micromanage EMS, Central Dispatch, MSU Extension, so the board shouldn't be micromanaging the Law Enforcement millage either.

Commissioner Petersen stated that all major increases will still be run in front of the Board. The Board does have to be cognizant of this being a millage and if it isn't renewed the General Fund is going to have cover all of the expenses the millage was covering.

Tentative approvals took place on:

Pending union approval the 14% raises are being paid out of millage money.

One Corrections Officer: \$42,000 from IT

Dr. Gaffney Medical Contract \$40,000 from IT

Discussion moved on to the request for 2 Corrections Officers.

Commissioner Petersen stated that there is a need in the jail but not the money to fund both positions right now. But by moving all MCOLES officers out of the General Fund, there are enough funds available to hire the second corrections officers.

Discussion moved on to the Treasurer's Office staffing.

The Controller/Administrator has the Treasurer budgeted at 4 employees, but she currently has 5 employees. Ms. Taeter stated that she feels the Treasurer's Office only needs 4 employees.

Commissioner Petersen stated he stopped on Friday and talked with the Treasurer's staff. He said they said there isn't a need for 5 people but it goes back to the Treasurer. It is not most efficient office as things are slipping thru the cracks. He is concerned that the new hire does not have accounting background or degree and feels the board needs to re-evaluate where they are at with that office. The upcoming retirement of one employee has been spoken about for any years but hasn't happened yet.

Chairman Carr stated that the Treasurer has taken offense that her operations were being discussed without her present. She should be given the courtesy to come before the board if she is available.

Ms. Taeter asked if the Board made the most current Treasurer's office hire conditional upon a retirement. Chairman Carr stated no, but the Board was fully counting on that happening. He stated that the justification given by the Treasurer for 5 staff is because it's too hard to cover vacations with 4 employees, and that is not a valid justification. He stated that she played a big role in helping Board get out of the financial disaster a few years ago, so the board left her alone.

Ms. Taeter stated that the Treasurer has outsourced Joyce Hachman's job and is paying for that service with the Delinquent Tax funds. Commissioner Kohn stated that someone is leaving in October, the board doesn't care who.

Andrea Krause asked for the increase for her 3 APA's increase to start in October. The Board agreed. Ms. Taeter stated that Mr. Neve's will start in October also.

JoAnne Vukin, County Treasurer, entered the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Commissioner Petersen began the discussion and informed Ms. Vukin that there are 4 people in the budget, but 5 people are in the office. What is the planned staffing level?

Ms. Vukin stated that there is no set retirement date for Vicky Dyer yet. She is asking to keeping the office at 5 employees and the search work still being outsourced.

Ms. Taeter stated that the budget was built on her promise that she didn't need 5 employees. She thought the board allowing her to fill Joyce's position was conditional upon Vicki's retirement.

Chairman Carr stated that the contract thing wasn't working out like promised. The board was told that Vicki will be retiring so the board took that into consideration when allowing her to fill Joyce's position.

Ms. Vukin stated that Vicki is covering to help her to get thru 2 new employees that are not fully trained yet. Vicki has been a huge help.

Commissioner Petersen stated that the outsourcing actually makes it 6 people in that office. If the 5th employee would be added to the budget the cost would be \$60,000-70,000.

Commissioner Kohn stated that without outsourcing there could be 5 employees. If Joyce did the searching then what has changed to make it necessary to outsource the searches?

Ms. Vukin stated that it is best for the county to have someone qualified conduct the searches as she doesn't want someone to lose their home because they don't have someone qualified to do the searches. She also stated that the 2 retirements that took place were a big hit on her. She is doing 3 people jobs right now. She can't always be in control of what happens in her office. She is trying to protect her office to have enough people to cover the things that need to be done. Ms. Vukin stated

that she hasn't had to replace people with as much experience as the two that left. She has to have the time to train but she is doing other people's work.

Ms. Vukin stated that she feels like this comes back to the board not getting the \$130,000 out of the Delinquent Tax Fund. Would this be an issue if she would have paid for 2.5 employees, plus still outsourced the title work? Would the board be having this discussion right now?

Chairman Carr stated that it doesn't matter to him at all. His issue is when Ms. Vukin came back to the Board saying she needed to eat crow, and hire the employee she said she wouldn't have to. During the discussion, Ms. Vukin told the Board that Vicki is going to retire also. That is why the board granted that request. However, the Board did not make the approval conditional at that time, therefore, he will vote for 5 because it wasn't conditional.

Commissioner Petersen stated that the Board only called Ms. Vukin up to the meeting to ask if she needed 4 or 5 employees. It is not necessary for it to be contentious. He stated that he feels the same as Chairman Carr.

The Board took a straw poll on allowing 5 employees in the Treasurers' Office:

Baker: Yes

Kohn: 5 needed now due to training. Revisit in a year.

Carr: Yes. Probably not after a retirement

Johnston: Yes

Painter: Yes

Mahar: Yes, but not after a retirement

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, asked if any of the Board members have looked at the other funds. She did balance them all and she did use fund balance to do so. There is \$50,000 ARPA in lieu of PILT money.

Public comments were offered. None were given.

Moved by Commissioner Johnston, supported by Commissioner Mahr to adjourn at 2:43 p.m. Motion carried.

Kristen Millard, County Clerk

Adam Petersen, Vice-Chairman