

EUREKA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Budget Meeting - January 19, 2021

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COUNTY OF EUREKA)

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Eureka County Commissioners met pursuant to law on January 19, 2021. Present were Chairman J.J. Goicoechea; Vice Chair Michael Sharkozy (via telephone); Commissioner Rich McKay; District Attorney Ted Beutel (via telephone); and Administrative Assistant Jackie Berg. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The meeting was conducted telephonically pursuant to Governor Sisolak’s Declaration of Emergency Directive 006, which was extended by subsequent Directives through duration of the current State of Emergency. In-person attendance was limited; other County staff and members of the public were able to attend the meeting via a toll-free conference call number.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner McKay motioned to approve the agenda as posted; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Goicoechea opened the floor for public comments; there were none.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – PERSONNEL REQUESTS

Tentative: The Chairman reminded everyone that all budgets are tentative and subject to revision before the final budget is adopted.

Current Vacancies: Comptroller Kim Todd reviewed all positions that are currently vacant but funded in the current year’s budget (FY20-21). Vacancies in the District Attorney’s office are the Chief Deputy District Attorney and a casual position (800 hours). Justice Court has a vacant casual position (239 hours). In recent years, the District Attorney and Justice Court have shared the same casual employee, but it has not been determined if this will continue.

The Sheriff’s Office has four existing vacancies for Records/Technical Support, a Patrol Deputy in Crescent Valley, a Detentions Deputy, and a Casual Bailiff. Public Works has a vacant casual position (750 hours) for the parks, and two vacant Equipment Operator positions (Eureka Landfill and Crescent Valley).

The affected department heads confirmed they wish to continue funding these positions in the upcoming budget. Sheriff Watts is working with Human Resources to review internal candidates for the Records position and has made contingent offers on two sworn positions.

Natural Resources Request: Natural Resources Manager Jake Tibbitts recommended funding a full-time or part-time (with benefits) Weed Control Technician position. He gave a brief history on the position, which was full-time at one point. The position was transferred to Natural Resources ten years ago and, since that time, has been a casual or contracted position. Mr. Tibbitts said it is challenging to fill a casual position because qualified individuals eventually find full-time work, and contractors are expensive and difficult to schedule during treatment seasons due to high demand.

Mr. Tibbitts reminded the Board that landowners in the Diamond Valley Weed Control District pay a special assessment with their property taxes for weed control. Many other lands have been added to the District at request of the property owners, including area mines, who now

pay the additional assessment as well. Mr. Tibbitts felt the weed control program, as currently operated, is not providing the service that these taxpayers expect and are paying for.

The County has ongoing agreements with both BLM Districts (Battle Mountain and Elko) allowing access to significant grant funds to reimburse weed control work that is beneficial to public lands. With the extensive amount of BLM-managed lands in the County, nearly every project proves beneficial to federal lands. Mr Tibbitts recommended that the Weed Control Technician position be budgeted contingent upon continued federal grant funding.

Commissioners McKay and Sharkozy stated they liked the idea and felt an employee would be more reliable than a contractor. Chairman Goicoechea preferred that the position be full-time. This position would be responsible for extensive recordkeeping, completion of grant paperwork, and could seek new funding opportunities, so Mr. Tibbitts felt with a few added duties this position could easily be full-time.

Mr. Tibbitts will work with Heidi Whimple on a job description and an appropriate salary range for this position, so the Board has proper information to determine a budget amount, which will be offset significantly by the BLM grants.

Public Works Request: Public Works Director Jeb Rowley proposed that the pool of shared casual hours in the Public Works budget be expanded to a full-time administrative position. The Emergency Management duties of the office have grown extensively with the current pandemic and this isn't expected to change anytime soon. Mr. Rowley felt an added administrative position would allow staff to consistently plan and address issues and duties in a proactive, and not reactive, manner while providing backup coverage at the Opera House and Sentinel Museum.

Chairman Goicoechea understood the need, but cautioned that each new position request will be scrutinized. If approved, he favored funding this position with General Fund monies and not charging a portion to the enterprise funds (water/sewer utility funds). The Chairman stated he didn't want to further burden the utilities, which don't generate sufficient operating revenue from user fees and suffer substantial depreciation losses each year.

Public Works will work with Human Resources on a draft job description and will provide more information during a future meeting.

Sheriff's Request: Sheriff Jesse Watts requested five new positions – two Deputies assigned to patrol in Eureka/southern County, two Deputies assigned to patrol in Crescent Valley/northern County, and one Deputy assigned to traffic safety County-wide.

The Sheriff explained that Eureka's 24/7 coverage is typically one Deputy per 12-hour shift, without backup coverage, and he would like to improve this. Call volume has grown in Crescent Valley and assigning two more deputies there (for a total of five) would allow for 24/7 coverage. Citing fatal traffic accidents in 2019 and 2020, the Sheriff emphasized the need to focus on traffic safety, and this Deputy would work County-wide on a rotating schedule. He said all requested positions will contribute to improved coverage, flexibility in scheduling, and a decrease in overtime.

Chairman Goicoechea commented on three positions currently vacant in the Sheriff's Office, saying constituents are asking him about the high turnover rate in the department. He asked whether the Sheriff and Undersheriff have a plan to rectify this. The Chairman said he would be more inclined to consider new positions if the Sheriff's Office had been fully staffed for a meaningful period of time to allow for an accurate evaluation of staffing needs.

In response to a question from Commissioner Sharkozy, Sheriff Watts informed that a contingent offer has been made to fill the vacant Deputy position in Crescent Valley, which has been vacant since July.

Commissioner McKay agreed that more staff is likely warranted, but he didn't feel the Board could defend adding five new positions. The Board agreed to continue this discussion at a future meeting once fiscal impacts for all requested positions are calculated.

EMS Request: EMS Director Kenny Sanders asked that a second EMT position be funded for Crescent Valley. Lack of volunteers in Crescent Valley means the same two people (staff EMT and volunteer EMT) respond on practically every ambulance run. Mr. Sanders felt that it was not prudent for the County to place so much reliance on two individuals because that reliance cannot continue indefinitely.

The Commissioners acknowledged the challenge that rural communities face in finding and retaining volunteer EMTs. The Board asked Mr. Sanders to review the current EMT job description with the HR Director.

EMS Volunteer Stipend: Mr. Sanders asked that the stipend, paid to volunteer EMTs for each ambulance run, be increased from \$50.00 to \$75.00. The Commissioners agreed that the stipend is low and felt raising it would have minimal impact on the budget.

Clerk Recorder Request: Clerk Recorder Lisa Hoehne asked to budget a casual pollworker to assist six to eight weeks during elections (casuals work up to 19 hours per week).

Comptroller Kim Todd observed that \$5,000.00 is typically allocated to salaries and wages in the elections budget, and this will accommodate the casual hours requested.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – COLAS & MERITS

Cost of Living Adjustment: Ms. Todd provided cost projections based on COLAs (cost of living adjustment) of \$0.25, \$0.50, or \$0.75. Ms. Todd informed that PERS rates are changing effective July 1st for regular employees and police/fire employees. This increase is shared by employer and employee, and Ms. Todd wanted the Board to be aware that when the rate changed two years earlier, the deduction for some employees was more than the cost of living adjustment.

COLA & Merits (Hourly): The Board discussed COLA options and, following some calculations, agreed on \$0.62. Commissioner Sharkozy motioned to approve a \$0.62 cost of living adjustment and to continue one-step merit increases for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Commissioner McKay seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

COLA (Salary/Appointed): Salaried employees are not eligible for merit increases. The Board asked Ms. Todd to calculate a comparable percentage for appointed employees that aligns with hourly COLAs and merits.

Elected Officials: Salaries for elected officials are frozen. Elected officials only receive salary increases when the State Legislature passes a salary bill, and the most recent bill has expired.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – CAPITAL OUTLAY REQUESTS

Capital Outlay Requests: The Comptroller and department heads reviewed capital outlay requests with the Board.

Ambulance & EMS: EMS requested \$85,000.00 in capital outlay to purchase a truck and to cover potential equipment failures.

Elections: Clerk Recorder Lisa Hoehne asked to budget \$5,000.00 in capital outlay for Elections in the event of equipment failure.

Recorder: Ms. Hoehne asked that the amount currently budgeted for a replacement copy machine be rolled over to the next fiscal year. After a brief discussion, the Board suggested making the purchase in the current fiscal year as planned.

Technology Support: IT Director Misty Rowley requested \$1.18 million for network upgrades to accomplish the work recommended by Quest in the County-wide broadband assessment done in 2020. Ms. Rowley listed a breakdown of estimated costs in the budget worksheet provided to the Board.

Comptroller: Ms. Todd was planning to budget monies for a replacement copy machine, but has sufficient capital outlay to make the purchase this year.

Sheriff: The Sheriff requested \$60,000.00 in capital outlay to purchase a camera system for the Crescent Valley Substation and to install Secure Access Systems in the evidence rooms.

Public Works: Proposed capital outlay for the Eureka Airport was \$830,000.00 for purchases and improvements, including a building for the snowplow (to be reimbursed with an FAA grant). Other capital projects include sewer upgrades at the Eureka Fairgrounds.

District Attorney: The District Attorney requested \$21,000.00 in capital outlay to replace cabinets in the evidence vault and to purchase a shredder.

Justice Court: Justice Court proposed \$14,000.00 in capital outlay for furniture replacement and possible copy machine replacement.

Road Fund: The Road Department would like to budget \$1,055,000.00 for a loader, motor grader, and five pickups, and \$25,000.00 for an oil room expansion.

Chairman Goicoechea said he was initially hesitant on the pickup purchases and spoke to the Public Works Director about it. The Chairman conceded that, due to the age of the fleet, some vehicle purchases are going to be necessary but each request will be scrutinized. He credited the mechanical staff for doing a good job keeping vehicles and equipment running for so long.

Mr. Rowley warned everyone to expect substantial delays when purchasing vehicles and equipment. Chevrolet has suspended fleet orders until September, and heavy equipment deliveries are taking several months.

Agricultural Extension: Cooperative Extension asked that the \$200,000.00 budgeted for capital outlay in the current fiscal year rollover to the next year's budget.

Building Operation & Maintenance Reserve Fund: A substantial amount is budgeted in this fund to cover planned projects, remodels, and major building repairs. The \$700,000.00 requested will fund several projects including roof replacement at the Fairgrounds, a backup generator at the Administrative Facility, and assessment of the Detention Center/Sheriff's Office.

Capital Projects Fund: Budget requests for the Capital Projects Fund total \$1.1 million and include a new water truck for Crescent Valley, a car pool vehicle, five Sheriff vehicles (four patrol/one administration); continued data processing conversion; fire equipment; fiber optic upgrades; spring upgrades/Devil's Gate mainline extension; Crescent Valley Park remodel; and radio repeater upgrades (recommended in the radio assessment completed by Galena Group).

Mikayla Kersey, Chair of the Crescent Valley Town Advisory Board, said the Town Board would like to increase funds budgeted for the park remodel to \$30,000.00 (instead of \$15,000.00) in order to complete the project in the upcoming year and to address potential safety issues.

Jeb Rowley explained that the plan is to complete as much of the park remodel as possible in the current fiscal year. The \$30,000.00 will serve as a safety net if repairs and upgrades exceed the \$50,000.00 budgeted in the current fiscal year (some project estimates are pending).

Ms. Todd said she visited with Mr. Rowley and suggested that, if completion of any current projects might be held up due to production or delivery delays, it would be prudent to budget monies in the subsequent fiscal year sufficient to complete any potentially delayed project.

Recreation Fund: The Recreation Board asked that \$30,000.00 be budgeted for capital outlay, the same amount as the current budget.

Water Mitigation Fund: Budget recommendation for the Water Mitigation Fund is \$300,000.00 in capital outlay for continued testing and potential drilling in Kobeh Valley.

Landfill Fund: Capital outlay recommendation for the Landfill Fund is \$25,000.00 for a recycling shed at the Landfill.

Assessor Tech Fund: Assessor Michael Mears proposed budgeting \$100,000.00 for capital outlay in his Tech Fund, explaining this account often finances replacements for unexpected technology failures.

Recorder Tech Fund: Ms. Hoehne proposed budgeting \$10,000.00 for capital outlay in her Tech Fund to cover replacement of computers, scanners, and other equipment or software.

Juvenile Court AA Fund: Capital outlay request for Juvenile Court was \$11,000.00 to purchase a new copy machine.

Water System Funds: Ms. Todd noted that a minimum of \$75,000.00 is budgeted in each water department for capital outlay in case of a major well failure.

Television District: Capital outlay requests from the Television District have not been received.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – DEPARTMENTAL BUDGETS

Juvenile Probation: Juvenile Probation Officer Steve Zimmerman and Juvenile Probation Assistant Irma Davila presented the proposed budget for Juvenile Probation explaining that most of the programs operate on pass-through grant monies and those items are budgeted based on the estimated grant amounts. The only increase requested was \$1,500.00 in recreation programs. This will be used to support a program that no longer qualifies for grant funding and increased supplies for Red Ribbon Week to accommodate growing student populations.

Ambulance & EMS: EMS Director Kenny Sanders said the only change requested in his budget is \$1,000.00 increase for telephone and fax.

Ms. Todd explained that the IT Director recommends that County departments only use electronic fax services that are HIPAA compliant. There is an extra service cost to add this layer of protection, so departments using E-fax services will be asking for an increase in that line item.

Senior Centers: Program Director Millie Oram reviewed the proposed Senior Centers budget. Telephone/fax was increased for both centers, but travel/training and transportation services were reduced, for a net decrease of \$3,150.00 in the operating budget.

Treasurer; Public Guardian: Treasurer Pernecia Johnson presented status quo budgets for both Treasurer and Public Guardian.

Assessor: Assessor Michael Mears proposed \$15,000.00 for contract services, slight increases in postage and travel/training, and slight decreases in fuel and maintenance, for an operating budget with a net increase of \$16,000.00 over the current fiscal year. He explained that contract services are for professional services to assist with appraisal of the 100-megawatt solar field being built in northern Eureka County near the TS Power Plant.

Assessor Technology Fund: Mr. Mears increased service contracts by \$35,000.00 explaining it is primarily technology support for the AS400 system, which is still accessed by the Assessor and Treasurer. Monies for the AS400 are no longer budgeted in other departments.

Comptroller: In the Comptroller budget, Ms. Todd made adjustments to services and supplies, travel/training, and machine maintenance, and was able to eliminate other expenses for a net decrease of \$450.00 over the current year's budget.

Annual Audit & Budget: No changes were requested to this budget. Ms. Todd explained that sufficient funds are budgeted each year to finance a single audit in the event one is needed. Single audits are required if the County expends \$750,000.00 or more in federal grant funds.

Human Resources: Human Resources Director Heidi Whimple stated she is still assessing the needs of the department, so only made minor adjustments to the HR budget. The primary change was addition of \$3,000.00 for legal advertising. This was offset with reductions in other categories, for a proposed budget with a net increase of \$648.00.

Clerk Recorder: Lisa Hoehne presented her proposed budgets. For Clerk Recorder, she requested a \$5,000.00 increase in services and supplies, a \$9,000.00 increase in data software contracts, a \$1,500.00 increase in office supplies, a \$300.00 increase in postage, a \$1,000.00 increase in telephone/fax, a \$300.00 reduction in machine maintenance, and a \$1,500.00 reduction in travel/training, for a net increase to the operating budget of \$15,000.00.

Ms. Hoehne explained that the primary increases are to replace all phones in her office and to purchase software that will allow people to sign up for notifications when property is being sold (for fraud prevention).

Recorder Tech Fund: The same operating budget as the current fiscal year was requested, \$15,000.00 for services and supplies.

Elections: In the Election budget, Ms. Hoehne proposed an increase of \$16,000.00 in services and supplies, an increase of \$5,000.00 for legal advertising, a \$500.00 increase in postage, a \$6,500.00 increase in travel/training, and a reduction of \$8,000.00 in data software contracts for a net increase of \$20,000.00 in the operating budget.

Chairman Goicoechea commented that a \$20,000.00 jump in a department that had an operating budget of \$71,000.00 the previous fiscal year is a significant percentage.

Ms. Hoehne explained the extra costs are primarily due to the vendor used for printing and mailing ballots (she is looking for an alternate vendor), legal advertising for the Crescent Valley polling site, and travel/training.

District Court: For District Court, Ms. Hoehne proposed a \$15,000.00 increase in services and supplies, a \$10,000.00 increase for court-appointed attorneys, a \$10,000.00 increase for data software contracts, a \$1,100.00 increase for office supplies, a \$500.00 increase in postage, and a \$1,500.00 increase in telephone/fax, for a net increase of \$38,100.00.

Ms. Hoehne explained that costs are driven by the District Court schedule, with 60 court days and two jury trials anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. There are several ongoing cases utilizing court-appointed attorneys.

Chairman Goicoechea observed that the operating budgets for the three departments under the Clerk Recorder (Elections, District Court, and Clerk Recorder) have a proposed combined increase of over \$72,000.00. He asked Ms. Hoehne if there was any crossover between the three budgets that might allow for more conservative budgeting, stating "*I'm just trying to be frugal and accountable to the taxpayer.*"

Ms. Hoehne replied that there is no crossover between department budgets, and she restated several reasons for the higher budget requests.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Goicoechea called for public comments; there were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKay motioned to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned at 3:42 p.m.

Approved by vote of the Board this 5th day of February, 2021.

/s/ J.J. Goicoechea

J.J. Goicoechea, Chairman

I, Jackie Berg, Commissioner Administrative Assistant, attest that these are a true, correct, and duly approved minutes of the January 19, 2021, meeting of the Board of Eureka County Commissioners.

/s/ Jackie Berg

Jackie Berg, Commissioner Administrative Asst.

I, Lisa Hoehne, Clerk Recorder of Eureka County, acknowledge and accept the attached minutes as approved by the Board of Eureka County Commissioners and attested to by the Commissioner Administrative Assistant.

/s/ Lisa Hoehne

Lisa Hoehne, Clerk