



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MINUTES

Monday, October 16, 2023, 1:00 P.M.

Willowbank Office Building
420 Holmes Street, Room 144
Bellefonte, PA 16823

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I. CALL TO ORDER

The public work session of the Centre County Board of Commissioners was convened at 1:01 PM by Chair of the Board Mark Higgins.

In attendance were Commissioner Mark Higgins, Commissioner Amber Concepcion, Commissioner Steven Dershem, Administrator John Franek Jr. and Executive Office Supervisor Erin Good.

County personnel present included Richard Killian, Human Services Administrator Julia Sprinkle, Leah Raker, Deputy Administrator Natalie Corman and Sandy Spicer.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments received from the public.

III. ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

IV. 2024 COUNTY BUDGET

A. CYS

Richard Killian stated there are five caseworker positions vacant within the CYS Department and they are not included in the budget. Leah confirmed there are other staff vacancies within her department including a fiscal staff and administrative staff positions. Leah Raker confirmed the placement unit is often traveling across the State. Richard stated the overtime budget is less than if the department would fill the five vacancies but Leah would like to get more staff on board so they can train them and have them carry their own caseload to help lessen her current staff's caseload.

Leah stated retaining staff is another big problem in her department. Some of the obstacles are being on-call in late hours of the night, holiday and weekend hours and the job itself. Leah has been communicating with other Counties to see what they have done on retaining employees. Leah would like to propose a retention bonus for her current staff due to the high number of vacancies in her office for the Boards' approval. Leah is requesting to use some of the unused salary and benefits funds that was budgeted in 2023 to fund the proposed bonuses to her current staff. Leah stated the bonus would be given to the staff as soon as possible if approved by the Board and would be based on the number of years of their service, and the employees would be expected to stay for at least six months after receiving the bonuses. With the retention bonuses, if the employees would leave before that timeframe, they

would need to pay back the bonus to the County. Other Counties have had success with offering retention bonuses to their staff. Commissioner Higgins asked if any mental health counselors were available for the CYS staff if needed. Leah stated she is currently looking at some options, but they have not finalized on a counselor yet.

Commissioner Concepcion asked if there were any other support systems to offer the staff to help them with the burn out of the job. Leah stated a therapy dog would greatly benefit her staff, she is also giving the option to work from home to employees if possible, as well as encouraging employees to take more breaks as needed throughout their shifts.

Commissioner Dershem was excused from the meeting.

Julia stated there will be more room once the department moves into the renovated Centre Crest Building for both the employees and children. Leah stated they have received their allocation for the 23-24 budget and needs based plan year and recently submitted the budget and needs based plan for 24-25. Administrator John Franek Jr. and Richard Killian will look into the retention bonuses and report back to the Board for their consideration with the final numbers.

Leah Raker and Sandy Spicer were excused from the meeting.

V. RECESS

The Board voted unanimously to recess the meeting at 1:37 PM.

Cathy Arbogast, Bobbi Jo Powell and Janine Sejuitt-Gnall (zoom) joined the meeting.

The public work session of the Centre County Board of Commissioners was reconvened at 1:44 P.M. by Chair of the Board Mark Higgins.

B. MH/ID D&A

Richard Killian stated there are five current vacancies in the Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Department and they are not included in the 2024 budget. Risk Management had a 20 percent increase in the insurance, which effects various departments. Cathy stated this budget includes Mental health and intellectual disabilities but not early intervention. Early intervention is a set amount of funds from the State and the funds cannot be moved around, and if there are funds that are not used by the end of the year they are sent back to the State. Cathy stated that if they overspend in the early intervention department, the State will have to fund the amounts spent.

Commissioner Higgins questioned what the charges of service amounts were for and it is the revenue passed between mental health and drug and alcohol. Cathy stated a lot of individuals received medical assistance during covid and may not be eligible for medical assistance now due to a number of reasons. Cathy stated their department help the individuals through the system, so the individuals can get their medications, various services as well as doctor visits paid for.

Richard stated there are no vacancies currently in the Drug and Alcohol Department. Cathy confirmed the purchased client services column are the various professional services contracts for the department.

Cathy stated she would like to discuss the opioid settlement funds and what the funds should be spent on for the future with the Board. Cathy stated there are various grants that can be applied for in the future as well. Cathy anticipates opioid settlement funds to be received for the next 18 years. Cathy asked if the Board would want to approve all purchases with the Opioid Settlement funds. The Board agreed that they would not need to approve all the purchases, just the purchases that involve a contract and are over a large threshold amount. Cathy spoke about a few purchases or ideas that she would like to spend the funds on such as hand held translators, an App that can be used for confirming attendance for AA meetings, transportation services to meetings, media advertising for services that are offered, a support establishment for a mobile counselor unit and employment training for returning citizens to name a few. Cathy will gather more ideas for the funds to be spent on and bring them to Julia and John's approval as well as the Boards' for the larger purchases or purchases that involve a contract.

Cathy Arbogast, Bobbi Jo Powell and Janine Sejuit-Gnall were excused from the meeting.

VI. RECESS

The Board voted unanimously to recess the meeting at 2:21 PM.

Norm Spackman and Tonia Houck joined the meeting.

The public work session of the Centre County Board of Commissioners was reconvened at 2:30 P.M. by Chair of the Board Mark Higgins.

C. 911 Emergency Communications

Richard stated there are currently six dispatcher vacancies in the 911 department. Commissioner Higgins asked if we could budget some funds for advertising the current vacancies to help get the word out to more interested applicants.

Norm gave a broad overview of his 2024 budget. If there were unspent grant funds in 2023, they were moved to the revenue in the 2024 budget. The 911 tower sites have various issues with lightning strikes, HVAC failures and other issues so costs could be off slightly. There is a tree trimming project slated to happen before the end of the year as well for the tower sites. Norm stated all 2024 PEMA Grants that were submitted have been approved and they also received a few other additional grants that they were not expecting to receive. Norm stated in 2024, they will be focusing on the tower site upgrades.

Norm stated that in 2024 PEMA Grants will be used to upgrade phones and CAD workstation upgrades. Norm will also be asking Mission Critical Partners (MCP) to oversee the 2024 capital plan and has this funding in the proposed budget. Norm would like to build out some conventional repeater sites to supplement areas in the County with weak or no Trunking coverage. They will utilize state tower sites that will require little costs. Norm stated there have been testing performed in Poe Valley and Eastern Miles Township, which have shown good results.

Commissioner Higgins would like more upgrades to be made in the Capital Planning Budget especially since ARPA funds will be eliminated in about 14 months. Norm

stated the numbers that he used for the capital budget can be increased. Commissioner Higgins asked if there were any more resources that can be used for advertising the current vacancies and employee retention. Norm stated he is open to more ideas that can be used for the current vacancies and to get more interest for the dispatcher positions.

Commissioner Higgins asked if there were any funds in the 2024 budget for counseling for staff. Norm confirmed that he has some funds set away for counseling for employees to help with traumatic events that occur while employees are on the job. Commissioner Higgins asked Norm to formulate another Capital Planning Budget that includes more upgrades to various 911 tower sites, upgrades to the office or upgrades geared towards employee retention as well as increasing the advertising budget for a recruitment video to help with the multiple vacancies.

Norm Spackman and Tonia Houck were excused from the meeting.

VII. DISCUSSION ITEMS – UPDATES

VIII. BUDGET MEETING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

Adult Services – 2:30 PM – Willowbank 144

Transportation – 3:30 PM – Willowbank 144

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Court Administration – 2:00 PM – Willowbank 146

IX. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS

X. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Concepcion, seconded by Commissioner Higgins, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 PM.

ATTEST: _____

John Franek Jr.

Administrator