

Minutes of Meeting
FY2020 Preliminary Budget Review – Clerk
May 23, 2019
1:00 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios, Commissioner Leslie Duncan and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda item. Also present were Clerk Jim Brannon, Chief Deputy Clerk Jennifer Locke, Finance Director Dena Darrow, Staff Accountant – Budget Michelle Chiaramonte, Court Services Director Marissa Garza, Court Services Manager Kally Young, County Assistance Manager Shelly Amos, Recorder Manager Paige Gissel, Elections Manager Judd Wilson, BOCC Senior Business Analyst Nanci Plouffe and Deputy Clerks Ronnie Davisson and Tina Ginorio. Also present was ES&S Regional Sales Manager Lori Mommaerts.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.
- B. Introductions**
- C. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- D. Business:**

FY2020 Budget Review – Clerk (Discussion)

Clerk Jim Brannon opened the meeting by thanking the Board for the hard work they had been doing, in light of the fact they had many hard decisions to make and turned the meeting over to Finance Director Dena Darrow. She explained that the Commissioners' budget binders had been updated to reflect the changes made thus far.

Ms. Darrow explained that there were five departments that made up the Clerk's Division – Auditor, District Court, Elections, Recorder, and County Assistance. She also pointed out that the biggest requests would come from Elections and District Court. Ms. Darrow then introduced Staff Accountant - Budget Michelle Chiaramonte and turned the meeting over to her.

Ms. Chiaramonte presented growth trends related to District Court and justice services and the impact they had on the courts. She showed a comparison between Kootenai County and other like-sized counties in crime statistics and pointed out there was an upward trend in Kootenai County. Ms. Chiaramonte also explained the difference between the two court divisions in the County; Court Services was under the direction of the County Clerk, their participation began the moment the case was filed and would be the division included in the discussion. Court Services Director Marissa Garza spoke to the statistics shown and said they showed that Court Services was understaffed when compared to case load and staff size. Ms. Chiaramonte spoke to the current collections process, noted that District Court had over \$35 million in uncollected fines, fees and restitutions dating as far back as 1984 and said there was no real effort until recently to collect fines and fees. Further, departments such as Adult Misdemeanor Probation were missing funds because of that fault, and they had approximately \$1 million in uncollected

supervised probation fees. With uncollected fines and fees, she explained they were normally turned over to collection agencies, which reduced the defendant's ability to pay because of penalties on the service fees. She also pointed out that the current agency utilized had \$28.9 million outstanding fines and fees and only \$5.4 million had been collected since conception; however, they did offer a payment plan option, which incurred significant setup fees for the defendant. With the information that had been given, Ms. Chiamonte proposed a request to create a department within Court Services that would oversee collections and compliance. With the current collections agency, there were currently 846 cases in collections and the County only received 80% of the payment rather than 100%; with an in-house collection, the County would receive 100%. Not only would they collect 100%, payment plans could be instituted, penalties would be minimized for the defendants and rapport between Court Services and the defendants would be built.

Ms. Chiamonte concluded District Court's requests by presenting another proposal for payment plans. She said that currently, defendants had to pay a \$15 setup fee and a monthly fee that ranged from \$8.25 to \$11.25 and the payments plans were only instituted for fees \$200 or more. The payment plan proposal included installing kiosks so defendants could enroll in the payment plans as they exit court; a one-time enrollment fee of \$12.50 and possibly sending text reminders of payment due dates.

Ms. Darrow introduced Elections Manager Judd Wilson.

Mr. Wilson said the Elections Office was very focused on the future elections and their goals were to provide accurate, compliant and secure elections, while quickly providing results; he also said that employee morale and retention was very important. Mr. Wilson showed number of voters and voter turnout for the 2016 and 2018 Primary Elections and explained that there was a clear upward trend in not just Kootenai County, but across the state. Mr. Wilson said that in order to mitigate the rising trend, there would need to be an investment made in new ballot machines. He explained one type of ballot machine being requested was an DS850, listed its features, and then explained it was a ballot-counting machine. If approved, the DS850 would be added to the other two counting machines already in possession and would help ensure their election goals and quicker results. Then he described a machine called "ExpressVote", which was a touchscreen voting machine; he requested one for each polling place and several to use for Early Voting. Mr. Wilson then introduced ES&S Regional Sales Manager Lori Mommaerts; she provided a detailed demonstration and explanation of the features and uses, then compared it to the currently used machine, AutoMARK. She explained that the AutoMARK weighed about 80 pounds, was too slow, too bulky and not very user friendly. It also needed two people to set up and take down because of its size and weight. On the other hand, the ExpressVote was about 20 pounds, had a softshell carry case, was easier to move and set up, and had a thermal printer. Ms. Mommaerts explained that with the thermal printer, there would be no need to pre-print traditional ballots, no stress over replacing an ink cartridge, and had a four-hour battery life. She also said the thermal paper was cheaper to produce (approximately \$0.10 per piece), where the traditional ballots varied from \$0.32 or more.

Clerk Brannon pointed out that they were anticipating receiving approximately \$350,000 in reimbursements from the state for the 2020 Election, as it would be a Presidential Election. Chief Deputy Clerk Jennifer Locke said that those reimbursements could be used to help offset the costs related to purchasing the new machines.

Clerk Brannon said there were substantial asks within the District Court and Elections budgets and that it had come time to address the voting concerns and the court issues. He explained that when the Prosecutor and Public Defender departments added new attorneys, the work for District Court also increased, which was one reason why there was a need for more District Court clerks. Clerk Brannon then asked Ms. Darrow to speak to the Auditor's Office budget requests.

Before discussing the Auditor's Office budget requests, Ms. Darrow wished to point out that County Assistance had reduced a position to part-time; Recorder had retired a position and had cut their budget by approximately \$100,000 while running the department very efficiently. She also said that the some of the salary salvage from the Recorder position retirement was used for the departmental reorganizations. Ms. Darrow also pointed out that County Assistance had covered their own costs out of their Fund Balance to the tune of \$700,000 the prior year. She concluded the explanation by stating that though County Assistance and Recorder were not requesting anything, she wanted to show the BOCC that the Clerk's Division was doing their part to be as efficient as possible.

Ms. Darrow then presented the Auditor's Office request for the Internal Audit function, approximately \$100,000. She explained that she had requested the function the past budget cycle and acknowledged that it was not as high a priority as other budget asks and as high of a priority as others in the Clerk's Division requests, but wanted to keep it on the radar.

Ms. Darrow presented a document that showed the growing reliance on the Fund Balance and said that they were not running out of money quite yet, but if the trend were to continue, there would not be any reserves left. Chairman Chris Fillios asked Ms. Darrow why she believed that to be the case; Ms. Darrow responded that the Fund Balance was not being built up as quickly as it once was.

Clerk Brannon and Deputy Clerk Ronnie Davisson exited the meeting at 1:59 p.m.
Deputy Clerk Davisson entered the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

After a lengthy discussion and questions, the Board made no decisions.

- E. Public Comment (Discussion):** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There were no public comments.
- F. Adjourn:** Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Ronnie Davisson, Deputy Clerk
