

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

September 1, 2009

A Finance Committee meeting was held Tuesday, September 1, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. in the County Administration Building, Quorum Court meeting Room, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Committee Members Present: Moore, Wozniak, Brown, Allen, Douglas, Stephenson

Others Present: JP Frank Winscott, JP Michelle Blaty, Comptroller Richard McComas, Accounting Manager Michele Anderson

Media: Ryan McGeeney – Morning News; Tabatha Hunter – Benton County Daily Record

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

Assessor's Lease

County Judge David Bisbee reported that the Assessor is moving to the former medical clinic at NE Blake and NE "B" Street, which will result in a cost savings of \$39,000 per year.

Grants Administrator Report

There were no questions regarding the Grants Administration Report.

Internet Crimes Against Children Grant Ordinance Request

Dennis Schumacher of the Sheriff's Department stated that they have received \$60,000 in Justice Assistance Grant Recovery Funds, which will be used to purchase software and equipment, and to pay overtime for investigators working on internet child predator cases. Comptroller Richard McComas stated that there is no county match required, and the grant will run through 2010 so there will be additional appropriations next year.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward the appropriation ordinance request to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Wozniak.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JAG Juvenile Probation PAL Grant Ordinance Request

Richard McComas stated that this grant is for \$14,682 from the Justice Assistance Grant program for Juvenile Probation Preventative and Education Programs, and requires no county match.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward the appropriation ordinance request to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Wozniak.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants - Recovery Act Grant Ordinance Request

Richard McComas stated that this is part of the Federal government's stimulus package, and the appropriation ordinance is for \$15,000 for Engineering and Architectural Services to perform an energy survey on county buildings. He said it is hoped that they will be able to replace the boiler in the courthouse. He added that the total grant amount is for \$594,000, and it will be appropriated as it is spent.

JP Wozniak made motion to forward the appropriation ordinance request to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Stephenson.

JP Allen noted that while he is supportive of Benton County receiving the money since it is available, he would prefer to be able to spend it on things that they know they need, rather than things that the Federal government thinks they need. He added that he intends to contact his congressional representatives to let them know that the Federal government is giving away too much money, when there are other needs that could be met.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Hazardous Materials Services Ordinance Request

Richard McComas explained that they reduced the amount paid to Hazardous Materials Services by \$4224 in the 2009 Budget, because they thought that the incorporation of Bella Vista would reduce the county's cost. He said they have now discovered that Bella Vista was already paying their portion, so the county's share did not decrease, and they need an appropriation to replace that money.

JP Stephenson questioned what the company does to earn the \$16,000 it is paid each year. Richard McComas stated that the cost is based on the population of the county, and this is the company that would clean up a hazardous chemical spill if one should occur within the county.

JP Allen made motion to forward the appropriation ordinance request to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, with the stipulation that some details will be provided explaining exactly what the company does, seconded by JP Stephenson.

Richard McComas stated that he will have information for them at the Committee of Thirteen meeting.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Reimbursement Ordinance Request

Richard McComas stated that the county serves as the pass-through for money paid by municipalities and other entities to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission for GIS mapping, and that no county funds are involved.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward the appropriation ordinance request to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Wozniak.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Washington County HIV Clinic – 2010 Funding Request

Former Justice of the Peace and Washington County HIV Task Force member Beverly Williams addressed the committee regarding a 2010 Budget request for additional funding for the Washington County HIV Clinic. She reported that the clinic has seen 29 new cases this year, 15 of which are from Benton County.

She said that while they are making definite progress, the process has not moved along as quickly as she had hoped. She explained that they have located an attorney who has agreed to process the 501(C) 3 application at no charge instead of the thousands of dollars that others had wanted to charge, and they expect the application to be submitted by the first of November. She said the task force has developed a solid mission statement, and they are in the process of joining up with several national HIV foundations in order to receive money from local companies that donate to those foundations. She added that they are also developing a website that will enable them to collect donations.

Beverly Williams detailed the services provided by the clinic, and said that the \$34,000 which the Quorum Court voted to fund in the 2009 Budget had helped the clinic to be able to emphasize more education programs, which had been cut back due to the lack of funding and manpower. She discussed the lack of availability for testing, and the continued misconception that HIV is not present in Benton County.

JP Stephenson asked if testing is available at the Benton County Health Department. Beverly Williams stated that they have not been able to talk to them yet, because it has just now become evident to them how large a problem this is. JP Stephenson suggested that someone from the task force contact the organization formerly known as the St. Francis House, which is now located in the Jones Center, because they have just received several million dollars from the Federal government. He said it might be helpful for the clinic to affiliate with that group. Beverly Williams stated that she would contact the director.

The committee discussed the number of cases in Benton, Washington, and Madison counties. Beverly Williams reported that between November of 1992 and August of 2009, there were 686 cases in the three counties combined, and 29 of those cases have occurred since January. She noted that statewide, 51% of the new cases are heterosexual, and a growing number of those cases are women.

JP Stephenson made motion to include the \$34,000 funding request for the HIV Clinic in the 2010 Budget, seconded by JP Allen.

JP Winscott said he would like to continue pressure on the task force to obtain their 501(C) 3 status, and he would like to propose providing the funding through June of 2010, and get a status report on the application at that time.

JP Stephenson withdrew his motion with JP Allen's approval.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward the request for \$17,000 to be included in the 2010 Budget for funding the HIV Clinic through June of 2010 to the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Allen.

Motion passed by show of hands vote; 5 in favor, 1 abstained, 1 absent.

Sales Tax Numbers

The committee reviewed the monthly sales tax report, which showed a 10.63% decrease over the same month in 2008.

Jail Collections

Richard McComas stated that payments from the State Department of Corrections continue to alternate between good months and bad months; last month was not a good month, but they are still \$211,000 above 2009 projections.

Fuel Summary

Accounting Manager Michele Anderson stated that the Sheriff's Department is at 43% and County Road is at 47% of the revised budget, and we are 66% of the way through the budget year. She added that fuel costs continue to remain lower than this time last year; unleaded fuel is down 45%, and diesel is down 55% from 2008's average cost.

JP Winscott asked Richard McComas how he plans to budget for fuel in 2010. Richard McComas stated that they have decided to budget \$3.20 per gallon.

Monthly Expenditure Report

Michele Anderson stated that budgets should be at 66.66%, and County General is at 60.74%. She noted that Volunteer Ambulance Service, Department 61, Fund 260 is at 82.61%, but they have received more donations than were anticipated this year, so they have spent more money than was budgeted. Richard McComas explained that the county reimburses the Ambulance Service for exactly what they receive in dues, and no county funds are involved.

Budget Process Calendar Update

Michele Anderson stated that Capital Requests have been submitted and are being reviewed, and they have begun to receive completed worksheets from some of the Elected Officials and Department Heads. Richard McComas noted that the worksheets can now be done on the computer system and sent to the Accounting Department electronically, saving time and paper. The committee discussed the meeting schedule for October. It was decided that the committee will meet every Tuesday in October at 5:30, unless it is determined that more or fewer meetings are necessary.

JP Stephenson noted that Social Security will not see a COLA increase this year, and that President Obama has cut federal employee pay increases from 2.4% to 2%, and many municipalities are not giving any raises this year. Richard McComas stated that he is not under the impression that employees are expecting anything this year, and noted that they received notice from the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System that the employer contribution will increase from 11% to 12.54% in 2010.

JP Allen asked what "adherence to guidelines" means in the budget calendar. Richard McComas stated that they have to make sure that items are budgeted in the correct line items and categories.

JP Moore announced that the next Finance Committee meeting will be Tuesday, October 6, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

JP Stephenson stated that he will be unable to attend the September 8, 2009 Committee of Thirteen meeting, and suggested that JP Marge Wolf be selected to chair.

JP Douglas requested that Assessor Bill Moutray be invited to report to the Committee of Thirteen regarding the reappraisal that was performed several months ago.

Adjournment

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.