

October 9, 2007

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

A Finance Committee meeting was held Tuesday, October 9, 2007 at 2:30 p.m. in the County Administration Building, Quorum Court meeting Room, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Committee Members Present: Harrison, Hobbs, Stephenson, Summers, Moore, Wolf

Others Present: JP Craig Brown, JP Frank Winscott, County Judge Gary Black, Assessor Bill Moutray, Travis Harp, Richard McComas, Barbara Ludwig, Chief Don Townsend, Major Gene Drake,

Media: Scarlet Simms – Morning News; Jennifer Turner – Benton County Daily Record

JP Tim Summers called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

Comptroller Richard McComas answered three questions that were raised at the last Finance Committee meeting. He said that JP Stephenson had asked where court fees go, and Richard McComas stated that they are distributed the same way that court costs are— to the state, county, and cities. He said he has found out the biggest reason that liquor tax revenue is down is that there are fewer clubs in the unincorporated area of the county due to annexations. He said the third question was regarding millage rate comparisons, and he distributed a report on millage rates comparing counties prepared by Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning. He said that out of the 75 counties in the state, 32 have a higher General Fund Millage than Benton County, while 43 have a higher road millage. He said that 71 counties levy a library millage, 43 counties have a higher property tax millage, 73 counties have a sales tax, 44 of which are higher than Benton County's, while only 5 counties have a lower sales tax. JP Harrison noted that is pretty good for being the third largest county by population, and Richard McComas stated that the 2010 census will move Benton County up to the second largest county in the state.

Richard McComas stated that Washington, Madison, Carroll, and Benton Counties in Arkansas, McDonald County in Missouri, and the Fayetteville, Rogers, and Bentonville Police Departments are cooperating to form the Northwest Arkansas Sex Offender and Violent Crime Task Force through a grant of \$550,000 from the Edward Byrne Memorial Discretionary Grant Program. Chief Don Townsend distributed information on the program and a budget showing how the money will be spent. JP Harrison made motion to forward an

ordinance request to the October 9, 2007 Committee of Thirteen meeting, seconded by JP Wolf. Richard McComas stated that there is no county match, but the county will benefit because the budget includes equipment that the county will keep. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Richard McComas stated that the Sheriff will make a presentation to the Committee of Thirteen asking for a building to provide additional housing for weekend and work release inmates at the county jail. JP Moore questioned the cost estimate, saying it seemed rather optimistic. Chief Townsend stated that they have a built-in cushion of approximately \$207,000. The committee discussed if they will need something in writing to acquire the building that is being donated by George Nunnally. Richard McComas stated that it will be a donation, so they will need to provide the donor some sort of documentation for tax purposes. Richard McComas stated that the cost of the building is already in the 2008 budget requests. Chief Townsend stated that they hope to occupy the building by November or December of 2008. JP Summers stated that the personnel cost will not impact the budget until 2009, and they will probably want to fund the building cost out of the Capital Projects Fund.

1. 2008 Budget

The committee discussed the 2008 Budget Recap which includes a \$350,000 expenditure for the War Eagle Bridge and \$650,000 in returned appropriations included. Richard McComas stated that no salary increases or additional personnel have been added in yet, although they did nearly double the Election Commission personnel budget, because there will be three major elections next year. He noted that financing the Road Department equipment purchases over the next 5 years reduced their budget by approximately \$795,000, and the \$1 million for the jail building proposed by Sheriff Ferguson has been moved from the operating budget into Capital Projects.

The committee went over the 2008 budget requests by department in the General Fund, County Road, Treasurer's Office, and Assessor's Office. Richard McComas answered questions regarding the budget requests.

Richard McComas stated that they will be able to finish discussing budget requests in the other departments at the October 16th meeting, and at that time the committee will need to discuss a recommendation regarding new personnel and salary increases.

Richard McComas thanked the members of the Quorum Court who are not on the Finance Committee for attending the meeting, because the budget process is more efficient if all of the questions are answered early in the process. JP Summers stated that a lot of work has already gone into the budget, and urged anyone who has additional questions to contact Richard McComas to get them answered before the next meeting.

JP Summers announced that the next Finance Committee meeting will be Tuesday, October 16th at 2:30 p.m.

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.