

November 4, 2008

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

A Finance Committee meeting was held Tuesday, November 4, 2008 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, Williams, Wolf, Wozniak

Others Present: JP Hill, Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe, Sheriff Keith Ferguson, Chief Don Townsend, Richard McComas, Michele Anderson

Media: Robin Mero – Morning News; Tabatha Hunter – Benton County Daily Record

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

1. Sheriff Boating and Safety Ordinance

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that they need to transfer some funds between categories in Fund 160, in order to take care of some repairs on the existing fleet instead of purchasing an additional boat. JP Stephenson made motion to forward to the November 10, 2008 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Williams.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

2. County Clerk Automation Fund Ordinance

Richard McComas stated that this adjustment was inadvertently left off of the last budget adjustment that was done in the County Clerk's Automation Fund, and is for the T-1 line that was installed for the Rogers satellite office. JP Hobbs made motion to forward to the November 10, 2008 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

3. Community Project Grant Fund Ordinance

JP Summers stated that this is an appropriation of grant funds, and will require no additional county money. JP Wozniak made motion to forward to the November 10, 2008 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Williams. JP Summers said that this is for a building for the Piney Point Fire Department.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

4. Ad Litem Fees

Judge John Scott was recognized, and explained that he is asking for additional money to pay for Ad Litem fees, which are used to pay for attorneys who have additional training and certificates appointed to represent the interests of minors involved in custody cases. He said they are extremely beneficial in these cases because they provide the parties with an impartial opinion, and provide the judges with an extra tool to evaluate what is in the best interests of the children. He said they budget \$10,000 every year in addition to the state funds, and only use the county funds after the state funds are gone. He said that they have used all of the state and county funds this year, and are in need of an additional \$7,500, which will take care of the need for the final two months of 2008.

Judge Scott added that he has taken note of the need to increase the amount of county funds in his 2009 budget, since Judge Schrantz will also be assigned some of these cases.

JP Wolf asked why the state money ran out. Judge Scott said that the state allocates \$250,000 per year, and their fiscal year starts July 1, while the county's fiscal year starts January 1. He said that they begin using the state money in July, and use the county funds only after the state funds are expended. He said that in April, the state sometimes reallocates unused money, although this year that amount was not as much as it has been in years past, probably due to the fact that judges and attorneys are becoming more acclimated to using Ad Litem attorneys.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward to the November 10, 2008 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Wolf.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

5. Sales Tax Numbers

Richard McComas stated that August sales tax receipts were down, which was the first decrease in 8 months, and September's receipts should be interesting since that is when the economic troubles started. JP Hobbs asked if this includes the rebates that companies are eligible to ask for. Richard McComas stated that those amounts vary from month to month, and have been anywhere from \$2,000 to \$31,000. He said he is expecting to find out in the next couple of months if they will be hit with a backlog of rebates, and explained that it has to do with the new single transaction law, which requires payment of the sales tax on the full amount, then a rebate on the amount paid over the first \$2,500.

6. Jail Collections

Richard McComas stated that since the time the report was prepared, they have received an additional \$31,000, bringing the total for the month up to \$100,000.

7. Fuel Summary

Michele Anderson stated that the decrease in fuel costs will not show up until next month's report, but by then it should be pretty evident. JP Hobbs asked if there is anyway to factor out the cost of the fuel used by people driving county vehicles home. Richard McComas stated that it would be very hard to do since they do not just drive them home. JP Stephenson stated that it would require some sort of code system for each person who fills up a car, and then they would have to subtract the number of miles to that individual's home. JP Hobbs stated that it would be interesting to find out.

8. Monthly Expenditure Report

Michele Anderson stated that departments should be at 83.33% of their budgets at this time. Richard McComas stated that there are several that he wanted to bring to the committee's attention. He said that the Equalization Board will need an adjustment, because they did not budget enough for the number of meetings that were needed or the amount of mileage that was paid. JP Summers noted that this will not come out of County General.

The County Clerk's office will need an adjustment in Temporary Services due to the number of temps that were needed for the early voting period, and the poll worker salaries have not been taken out of the Election Commission budget yet. He said that several departments, including the Road Department, have received some reimbursement funds from FEMA that will need to be appropriated. He said that the Road Department has been spending money that was budgeted for roadwork on storm repairs, so they will now want some of the FEMA money to replace those funds, but they will not appropriate more than the reimbursements.

9. 2009 Budget: Comptroller Richard McComas

Richard McComas stated that the changes approved by the committee at the October 21st meeting have been included in the proposed budget, including 3 new courtroom positions, 3 new positions in other departments, raises for employees, elected officials, and JPs, a \$300,000 transfer from the Circuit Clerk, and the one-time funding of \$34,000 for the Washington County HIV Clinic. He said the changes bring the ending 2009 balance to \$7.3 million instead of the previous \$7.6 million. He noted that a rollback is possible, which can be estimated at approximately \$400,000 per each 1/10 of a mill that the rate is reduced.

JP Stephenson made motion to forward the 2009 Budget as submitted to the November 10, 2008 Committee of Thirteen agenda, seconded by JP Wolf.

JP Hobbs asked if anyone knows why Information Systems has three vehicles, because perhaps one of those could be transferred to the Veteran's Services office to replace the van instead of purchasing a new car. JP Stephenson stated that with the extensive travel that is necessary to serve all of the county's offices, he can see that there is a need for several vehicles. Michele Anderson stated that they are vehicles that were turned in by the Sheriff's Department and are considered pool vehicles which can be used by other departments. JP Hobbs stated that she is just asking because it seems that the county owns a lot of vehicles. Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe stated that there is actually only one vehicle that is in good enough condition to take on an out of town trip, and that is one of the ones "assigned" to IS, but it is available if someone signs up to take it.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

10. Other Business

JP Hobbs stated that everyone received information from Data Space, in reference to monitoring the Jail population, and she thinks it might be something they should look at if it could save the county some money. She suggested hearing a presentation from the representative at a Finance or Committee of Thirteen meeting.

JP Summers stated that since it involves future business that he will not be involved in, it should perhaps be a Committee of Thirteen meeting that involves all of the new JPs. He said there are some other things that need to be discussed involving the new court members in conjunction with funding alternatives for a new JDC.

JP Stephenson stated that with so many new JPs coming onto the court, they should wait until all of the new officials take office before tackling something like this; otherwise they will just end up duplicating their efforts. JP Summers and JP Wolf agreed, and suggested that it would be better to let the new court look into it in January. JP Hobbs stated that she would like for someone to be responsible for taking it forward, because although she is a lame duck, she is not a dead duck, and does not feel like it does not matter just because she will not be here. JP Summers suggested contacting the new Committee of Thirteen Chair after the first of the year.

JP Summers announced that the next Finance Committee meeting will be Tuesday, December 2, 2008 at 2:30 p.m., and the next Committee of Thirteen will be Monday, November 10, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

JP Wolf stated that she wanted to congratulate the County Clerk's office on the excellent job they did on the early voting, and that she thought it was very well-organized.

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.