

September 22, 2005

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Personnel Committee met Thursday, September 22, 2005 at 3:00 p.m., in the QC Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville

Committee Members Present: Harrison, Hill, Sheridan, Stephenson, Tharp

Others Present: Circuit Clerk Brenda DeShields, Michelle Crain, Kathie Henson, Sidney Reynolds, Collector Greg Hoggatt, Public Defender Jay Saxton

Media: Jennifer Turner – Daily Record, Joe Askins – Morning News

Chair Robert Stephenson called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

1. OLD BUSINESS:

None

2. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion of Roles, Responsibilities, and Information Needs of the Personnel Committee

County Judge Gary Black addressed the Personnel Committee regarding their role in the personnel approval process. He stated he was against disbanding the Personnel Committee because they play an important role, and are not a rubber-stamp committee for what JESAP has forwarded. He said that JESAP's role is strictly to grade the positions, and then pass the positions on to the Personnel Committee. He stated that it was the Personnel Committee's responsibility to listen to the requests, and let each Elected Official or Department Head spell out their needs. He suggested prioritizing the positions requested, and deciding the order in which they should be filled without any concern for how much the positions cost. He said the Finance Committee is responsible for deciding how many can be filled, whether it is the first 10 positions on the list, or the first 20. He also added that the Finance Committee does not need to know who they are, but should make their decision to fund as many as can be afforded.

JP Tharp stated he did not know how to approach putting the positions in order. County Judge Gary Black stated that it would be difficult, but their responsibility was to set the priorities for the entire county. Comptroller Richard McComas stated that income-producing positions should be considered separately from non income-producing jobs within the General Fund, and other funds that receive money from the General Fund. He added that positions that are funded by commissioned accounts should also be weighed separately because they are not competing for General Fund dollars. JP Tharp suggested using a method to assign weight to each position. JP Stephenson stated that it was the job of the Elected Officials and Department Heads to convince the committee of the need for the position. JP Tharp stated that he felt like they were not receiving information that would justify the requests. JP Hill stated that if there was no job description for the Personnel

Committee, they could not determine what the boundaries are. County Judge Gary Black stated that they were all welcome to attend the JESAP Committee meetings, if they felt there was information there that would help them make their decisions. JP Stephenson stated that the job descriptions and grade sheets that come from JESAP are available to anyone who asks for them. County Judge Gary Black stated that it was also the Personnel Committee's responsibility to conduct Personnel Policy review. JP Stephenson pointed out that standing committees are created or disbanded at the discretion of the County Judge. JP Tharp suggested using several criteria to measure each position, such as cost justification, how production will be affected, how the image of the department is affected, and whether it is income-generating or not. JP Stephenson stated that they should also consider how the requested position would affect the ability of county government to perform its job.

B. Requests for Additional Staffing and New Positions

1. County Judge (Fund 010)

a) One (1) Receptionist/File Clerk

Assistant County Administrator Travis Harp said they are requesting a receptionist/file clerk to direct all incoming calls that are currently being answered by several departments, and to assist with filing county court orders and keeping track of county court cases. He said it should be someone with positive people skills, since they would be the first person that citizens would encounter when seeking information. JP Tharp asked if the position was full or part-time. Travis Harp said that it was full-time. JP Tharp asked if the department was having to pay overtime or comp time. Human Resource Manager Barbara Ludwig stated that having one person to answer all of the incoming calls would enhance the ability of the other three departments to perform their jobs. JP Sheridan made motion to place the position on a list of positions to be considered and prioritized based on need, seconded by JP Tharp. Motion passed by voice vote.

Planning Department Manager Michelle Crain spoke regarding 5 previously approved positions—a Chief Building Inspector who will be responsible for overseeing the other Building Inspectors, a Permit Specialist, a Senior Planner, a Storm Water Manager, and a Receptionist. She stated that 4 of the 5 have a direct impact on bringing money into the county, and the amount of fees collected by the Planning Department has doubled the amount collected in 2004. She said that an 1,800 square foot home will require a \$450 permit after the Zoning Ordinance is passed, and since 2,000 homes were built in the county last year, that should result in \$900,000 in fees. Michelle Crain said that enforcement of the Watershed Ordinance will be the responsibility of her office, and they will need someone to handle that along with the Storm Water Mandates. She said that a Senior Planner could handle plat review which her staff cannot keep up with the due to the large volume. JP Stephenson asked if all of the positions were self-supporting. Michelle Crain said that they would all be fee-generating except the receptionist, but this person would also handle calls for the Environmental office and the Fire Marshal's office. JP Sheridan stated that he supported the positions, but they were not on the agenda and he did not think they could consider anything without job descriptions. Human Resources Manager Barbara Ludwig stated that these were positions that had been previously approved, and she had asked the Department Heads to attend the meeting and answer questions in order to help the committee with prioritizing the positions. JP Sheridan stated that if it was going to be brought back for a final vote in order for it to be prioritized, then it should be on the agenda, and they should have the job descriptions again. JP Stephenson said that in the future, anything that is

going to be discussed should be on the agenda, and they should also receive the back-up documentation. JP Tharp asked County Attorney Ed Gartin if they could act on a request that was not on the agenda. Ed Gartin stated that they could be addressed in order to prioritize them after the other new requests have been added. JP Stephenson stated that that was his desire as Chairman, and asked if there were any objections from the committee. There were no objections. JP Sheridan made motion that the positions requested by Department 31 be included in the list of positions to be prioritized, seconded by JP Hill. Motion passed by voice vote.

Assessor (Fund 070)

a) Two (2) Deputy Assessors – Real Estate

b) Four (4) Appraisers Levels I-V

Assessor Shirley Sandlin stated that she is asking for 6 additional people—4 Appraisers and 2 in Real Estate due to the growth in Benton County. She said that the State mandates require reappraisal every three years, and the Assessor's is a commissioned account so the county pays less than 10% their budget. JP Sheridan made motion to include the request in the group to be prioritized and forwarded to the Finance Committee, seconded by JP Hill. Motion passed by voice vote. JP Tharp asked if the positions were technical or clerical. Shirley Sandlin said that the appraisers were more technical because it takes 4 years to reach the senior level, but the Real Estate positions were clerical. JP Tharp suggested revisiting the idea of creating a clerical pool that can be utilized when there are shortages during busy periods in various departments, or to fill in for vacations and illnesses.

3. County Attorney (Fund 010)

a) Assistant County Attorney

County Attorney Ed Gartin stated that as Department Head, he was trying to plan for the future, and felt that the county was moving toward more regulatory ordinances. He said that as they move into a more regulatory phase, they are more vulnerable to litigation. He said he would like to see the position approved, but requested that it remain unfunded at this time. He said that he did not want to come to them in six months or a year and tell them he needed the position immediately. He also said he is considering outsourcing the work to someone with expertise in the specific area if a need arises. He also said there is a possibility that they could receive assistance in funding the position, but he is requesting that it be given last place on the priority list at this time. JP Stephenson made motion to approve the position and include it in the prioritization process, with the understanding that funding will be withheld until further request is made, seconded by JP Tharp. JP Hill asked if Ed Gartin knew what the budget impact would be if the position became funded. County Attorney Ed Gartin stated that at the present time he was leaning toward outsourcing the legal work, to lessen the county's legal exposure. He said that all of the county's civil rights litigation is handled through a firm in Little Rock, and that the county has spent \$115,000 in the last 2 ½ years. He added that the Arkansas Association of Counties provides a cap on civil right's cases, and had paid approximately \$60,000 during that same time period. Motion to place request for Assistant County Attorney in the group to be prioritized passed by voice vote.

Committee recessed.

Committee back in session.

4. Road Department (Fund 200)

a) Part-time Line on Schedule 4

Assistant County Administrator Travis Harp stated that they have not increased staff at the Road Department for several years, but would like to add a part-time line to Schedule 4, so they can hire temporary workers to avoid having equipment sit idle while someone is on vacation. Travis Harp said that the position would have no benefits, and there would be an agreement spelling out how many hours they could work. Comptroller Richard McComas stated that they were not asking for a part-time person, but for dollars that would be available to hire people as needed, with a limit set on how much could be used in one year. JP Stephenson said they would need to know how the budget was impacted before they put a priority on this position. Comptroller Richard McComas pointed out that that should be determined by the Finance Committee, that the Personnel Committee should decide whether or not a part-time line was needed in the Road Department. JP Sheridan made motion to approve a part-time line in Schedule 4 for the Road Department, with no benefits, and the limit place on dollars to be spent to be set by the Finance Committee, seconded by JP Harrison. Motion passed by voice vote.

5. Information Systems (Fund 010)

a) Software Applications Specialist

Information Systems Director Sidney Reynolds stated that they were considering a position to provide FOI data for the Circuit Clerk's office, and planned to charge a convenience fee to help fund it. He said at this time they are not ready to go forward with it because they do not have enough commitment from the private sector, and would like it to be considered later. JP Hill made motion to add the position to the group to be prioritized, with the lowest priority, and forwarded to the Finance Committee, seconded by JP Tharp. Motion passed by voice vote.

JP Stephenson asked if the committee would like to continue and prioritize the list of 31 position requests. JP Sheridan said they should divide them into the three different categories discussed earlier. Comptroller Richard McComas went through the list and gave each position one of three designations—Income Producing, Non-Income Producing, both from the General Fund, and Self-Sustaining. The committee discussed prioritizing within each category, and the different criteria that could be used to accomplish that. JP Stephenson stated that each member should spend some time studying the criteria they would like to utilize, and be prepared to discuss it at the next Personnel Meeting. JP Tharp suggested developing a chart with several factors, and using it to evaluate each position requested. JP Stephenson asked him to email one to each member of the committee

JP Stephenson announced that the Personnel Committee would be meeting October 6, 2005 at 3:30.

JP Tharp announced that the Environmental Committee would be meeting October 6, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.

After motion and second the meeting was adjourned at 4:46 p.m.