

September 30, 2008

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Personnel Committee met Tuesday September 30, 2008 at 3:00 p.m., in the QC Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville

Committee Members Present: Hill, Hobbs, Hubbard, Stephenson, Williams, Winscott, Wolf

Others Present: Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe, Sheriff Keith Ferguson, Deputy County Clerk Tena O'Brien, Richard McComas, Barbara Ludwig

Media: Scarlett Simms—Morning News; Tracy Neal—Daily Record

1. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Reorganizations

Human Resources Manager Barbara Ludwig listed the reorganization requests.

1. Circuit Clerk

a. Add one (1) Jury Administrator (Grade 11)

b. Delete one (1) Clerk of Courts (Grade 7)

Barbara Ludwig stated that this person will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the jury, including contact, payroll. She noted that when Elected Officials want to request a new position, she typically asks if they can do a reorganization instead, which is not necessarily adding bodies, but making the best use of the bodies that they have, and that is more cost effective for the county. She added that the net effect on the Circuit Clerk's budget will be an increase of \$5,106.

JP Hubbard made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Winscott. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. Collector's Office Reorganization

a. Add one (1) Financial Administrator (Professional)

b. Delete two (2) Assistant Bookkeeper I positions

Barbara Ludwig stated that this request is being made by the incoming Collector, with the approval of the current Collector, and the net effect on the Collector's budget will be a reduction of one position, and a reduction in total personnel costs of \$2,532. JP Wolf asked if the two Bookkeeper positions are currently filled. Barbara Ludwig stated that it will be a case of people being either promoted or leaving. JP Wolf made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Hubbard. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Assessor's Office Reorganization

a. Add one (1) Deputy Assessor I (Grade 5)

b. Add one (1) Deputy Assessor III (Grade 7)

c. Add one part-time janitor (Grade 3)

d. Delete two (2) Appraiser Assistants (Grade 4)

Barbara Ludwig stated that they are adding one entry-level position of Deputy Assessor I, one Deputy Assessor III, which people are promoted into, and a part-time custodial position, because they have one custodian who services the main office and all of the satellite offices. She reminded the committee that the Assessor eliminated eight positions last year, and the net effect will be \$19,413, and the county is responsible for 7% of that total cost.

JP Stephenson asked if it is customary for various Elected Officials to provide their own custodial services. Barbara Ludwig stated that it has been done in the past.

JP Winscott asked if this is a result of cutting too many positions last year. Barbara Ludwig stated that it is not, because they are only adding one-half of a position, and are merely moving people around where the Assessor feels there is a greater need.

JP Winscott stated that there is more than one department in the Rogers office building, so it does not seem very efficient for one person to be travelling to various cities. Barbara Ludwig stated that it has been difficult to provide maintenance for the Rogers building, because no additional staff has been added since that building was occupied. She added that they were funding some additional maintenance for the Rogers offices from the part-time pool, but the Personnel committee objected at the last meeting, so they have since stopped. She said there are currently six people covering every county building.

Deputy Clerk Tena O'Brien stated that the Rogers office is heavily used and is in need of more janitorial support, because currently there are six employees covering 10 different county buildings. JP Winscott said it seems as if the various departments could get together and have one person clean one building instead of having one person cleaning parts of several different buildings. Barbara Ludwig stated that the problem has been that they have added buildings and staff, but every request for custodial positions for the past three years has been rejected. She said that since the Assessor's office is a commissioned account with a more flexible budget, they have been able to hire their own custodial staff. JP Wolf made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Williams. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

4. Information Systems

a. Add one (1) Software Applications Specialist (Professional)

b. Delete one (1) PC Support Specialist (Professional)

Barbara Ludwig stated that there are several software specialists who concentrate on specific software applications throughout the county, such as GEMS, and Sidney Reynolds is requesting a software specialist to focus on the GIS system. He is exchanging a PC Support Specialist position, and the budget impact will be \$11,816.00, which includes all benefits. JP Hubbard made motion for approval, seconded by JP Wolf. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

JP Stephenson stated that he did not want to be guilty of shifting people and rewriting job positions, and wanted to be sure these positions are justified.

B. Wage Adjustments

1. Election Coordinator

Barbara Ludwig stated that Election Commission Chairman John Brown is requesting a wage adjustment for the Election Coordinator position. She said it is still a part-time

position, but he is requesting a raise of \$5,895.14 based on equity with other counties in the state, and added that the total budget impact will be \$7,024.03.

JP Winscott made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Hill. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. Director of CenCom

Barbara Ludwig stated that the CenCom Director manages a 24/7 operation, with approximately 16 to 18 people on staff, and they are requesting an increase from a base salary of \$35,714.38 to \$39,921.20, for a total budget impact of \$11,278.66 with benefits. JP Williams asked how long the current director has been in the position. Barbara Ludwig stated he has been there 4 years. JP Williams made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Hill. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

JP Stephenson noted that every county employee costs \$5,000 in medical and life insurance, and another \$3,000 to \$4,000 in retirement benefits.

C. Additional Staffing Requests

1. Sheriff's Office

a. Add one (1) Deputy Sheriff – Courthouse Security (Grade 11) New Court

Barbara Ludwig stated that the first position is being requested for the new courtroom, but she placed it in the Sheriff's Department since it reports directly to that department. She said that the other two positions needed to staff the new courtroom are listed under Judge Schrantz. JP Winscott asked if these three positions would be all that are necessary to staff the new courtroom. Barbara Ludwig stated that is correct—that any other employees involved will be funded by the state.

JP Williams made motion to accept these three new positions, seconded by JP Winscott. Motion passed by voice vote.

b. Add one (1) Sergeant- Courthouse Security/Field (Grade 14)

c. Add one (1) Lieutenant – Jail

d. Add one (1) Secretary – Administration (Grade 5)

Sheriff Keith Ferguson stated that this position give them six positions for Courthouse Security, including the position for Judge Schrantz's courtroom. He said he has one Field Sergeant that supervises Courthouse Security in addition to his responsibilities in the Field Division, and the additional sergeant would also be available to fill the absences due to vacations and illness.

JP Stephenson asked Sheriff Ferguson which position between the sergeant and the Jail Lieutenant position is more needed. Sheriff Ferguson stated that they are equally important. He said they currently have one Captain and one Lieutenant in the Jail, and they deal with 30 to 40 grievances per day, including any medical issues that might come up. He said he needs a staff person on hand to make decisions without calling the Captain or other Lieutenant at home after they have put in a long day.

JP Hubbard asked Sheriff Ferguson to rank the three positions (Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Secretary) in number order of importance. Sheriff Ferguson stated that if he had to, the Lieutenant would be number one, the Sergeant two, and the Secretary three.

JP Williams stated that she is surprised after speaking with the Sheriff in the last few months about his need for clerical help, and was about to speak up in favor of the Secretary, but he has ranked that position last, so it would not do any good.

JP Winscott stated that in the 2 years he has been on the Court, the Sheriff has repeatedly requested additional staffing, but the jail has been full for the last several years. JP Winscott asked at what point there would be adequate staffing and he would not need to keep asking for more positions. He said if they ran the jail two years ago at capacity with the staff they had at that time, then why can't they run it next year with the staff they have now. Sheriff Ferguson stated for the same reason that you cannot buy gas for the same price this year as you did two years ago. He said that the jail population is continuing to grow, because the population is growing, and that requires more staffing.

JP Winscott stated that his understanding is that the Jail is not full with county inmates; it is full of Federal inmates, so it was full two years ago regardless of where they came from, if there is a person in the jail cell, he does not see why it takes anymore staff to run the jail now than it did two years ago. He said they have to put a lid on the number of staff that they add to the county, which is the problem with the Federal government. He said they keep adding personnel and wanting us to pay for it.

Sheriff Ferguson stated that we will have to put a lid on growth, and that is not even a fair question. He said the county has grown, and he has to be able to provide security and protection for the people in the county. He said the jail is over its capacity of 485, they have occasionally been at 530, and they would still be over capacity without the Federal inmates. He said the subject of Federal inmates has been beaten to death. He said he has chosen to house Federal inmates because of the income they bring, and he is not penalizing the county in doing so. He said he could pay for the extra deputies with the money he turns back to County General every year from the money that comes from housing Federal inmates.

JP Stephenson stated that it is apparent that JP Winscott has a problem with the Jail and the manner in which it is staffed, and it does not seem there is any way he will be satisfied with the number of people who are there. He said that as chair of the committee he is ending the discussion, and reminded the committee that under the state constitution, funding of law enforcement and the courts is a "shall" directive, not a "may". He said that does not mean that the Quorum Court has to automatically grant the Sheriff any request for funding that he makes, but if the Sheriff makes a reasonable request in order to provide public safety, that is something that has to be seriously considered and addressed.

JP Hobbs asked if there were some guidelines regarding staffing per prisoner population presented to them some time ago. Sheriff Ferguson stated that Captain Petray had made that presentation. JP Hobbs stated that at the time they were lagging behind in the recommendations, and asked if they had made any progress. Sheriff Ferguson stated that they have not, and there are times when one Jailer may be supervising 30 inmates.

JP Hubbard made motion to approve the requests for the three positions and forward them to the Finance Committee, seconded by JP Wolf. Barbara Ludwig asked if they are going to vote on them individually, to consider whether or not they are going to be ranked, or if they are voting to forward them to the Finance Committee without ranking them. JP Stephenson stated that the motion has been made and seconded. Motion passed, 5 votes in favor, 1 against (Williams).

There was discussion regarding the procedure the committee wished to follow. The committee reached a consensus to rank the requests for additional staffing, and forward the positions as ranked to the Finance Committee.

2. Circuit Court – Judge Duncan

a. One (1) Court Orders Clerk (Grade 7)

Barbara Ludwig stated that the only county employee that Judge Duncan has in her court at this time is a Bailiff, and she is requesting a full time court orders clerk. She said she is using the part-time pool very heavily, with one employee working 30 hours per week. She added that if this position is approved, they could reduce the part-time pool budget by \$16,000 since they would no longer need that position for Judge Duncan on a regular basis, and the net impact would be \$23,879.

JP Stephenson asked how many people are currently in the part-time pool. Barbara Ludwig stated that there are three that float among various departments, especially the Health Department and Judge Duncan's office. She said that the County Clerk's office has also used them during elections, the Sheriff's office, and in GIS. JP Stephenson stated that he wonders if they need to diminish the pool, and noted that the caseload has apparently continued to increase. JP Wolf stated that if they make the clerk in Judge Duncan's office a full time position, they may not need as many people in the pool since that will take 30 hours off the table. JP Winscott made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Wolf. JP Hobbs asked for clarification of the process, noting that in the past the Personnel committee has ranked the positions before forwarding them to the Finance Committee. JP Stephenson stated that these are additional staffing requests for 2009, and sometime next year they will meet to consider. JP Wolf stated that they are recommending that they become part of the 2009 budget.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

3. Building Maintenance and Janitorial

a. Add 1.5 Janitor Positions (Grade 3)

Mike McGinnis stated they are requesting 1.5 positions, because they are understaffed, and noted that they added the Rogers office without adding any additional maintenance staff. He said they had several women from the County Judge's community service program, but that has not worked out. He added that he checked into contracting for cleaning services, and had not idea that it was such a lucrative business at \$30 per hour, times the number of people used in a building, times 8 hours for every building they work in. He said the total cost would be \$56,000 per month. He noted that the total budget for the six people on the county's staff, plus the supervisor, is \$216,000; the cost for adding 1.5 positions would increase it to \$254,000. He added that they are adding another building with the new courtroom, and it will be used by the public so it will have to be maintained. He pointed out that they have only added one employee in 6 years, and explained that for the employee picnic last week, he had three people on staff, who did their regular work, set up for the picnic, cleaned up after the picnic, and hauled off all of the trash and recycling.

JP Williams asked about the half person. Mike McGinnis stated that he wants to hire one person to work 20 hours per week, and if the Assessor gets the one-half position he has requested, they can drop that request.

JP Winscott made motion to approve the request, seconded by JP Hobbs. JP Wolf asked if they are voting on 1 position or 1.5 positions. JP Stephenson stated that the motion should stipulate that they are approving 1.5 positions unless the half-position is given to the Assessor. JP Winscott amended the motion to approve one position, seconded by JP Hobbs.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Comptroller Richard McComas was recognized and explained that the procedure they are following is different from the budget procedure they have followed for the last 3 or 4 years, because they are sending everything to Finance with no priority on it. He reminded the committee that in the past, they have reached a figure during the budget process, and funded as many positions down the priority list as that number would cover.

JP Stephenson stated that he had no objection to that procedure. JP Hubbard stated that apparently they are decisive enough about these requests to forward them on to Finance, so they could probably go ahead with the rankings today if the sheets are available. Richard McComas stated that last year, the committee requested some time to consider the positions, so they had planned to schedule another meeting next week to turn in the rankings. The consensus on the committee was to follow that procedure.

JP Wolf stated that she would like to clarify that all motions made previously were meant to approve the requests to be included in the ranking process, which will take place at the next scheduled meeting. JP Williams made motion of same, seconded by JP Hubbard.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

4. Road Department

a. Add three (3) Heavy Equipment Operators (2 Requested in "08 Budget)

b. One (1) Data Coordinator (Grade 4)

Road Department Superintendent Steve Douglas stated that they are requesting the Heavy Equipment Operators and a Data Coordinator because they have been short on operators for quite some time, and although they have been trying to get by, it is not working very well. He said they need a 7-person crew to efficiently run a dirt pit or build a road, and he has a 5-member crew. He said he pulls some of his grader operators to help on the road crew, and as more people move in to the county, they are falling behind on maintenance and getting more complaints. He said that they also spend three hours a day filling out work orders and turning them in, which takes time away from performing the maintenance.

JP Wolf asked when the last time was that equipment operators were added to the Road Department staff. Randy Randolph stated it has been 9 years, and their job has not gotten any smaller. JP Williams asked if crews are pulled from maintenance and construction to handle storm damage. Steve Douglas stated that all of the crews were pulled into the area affected by the ice storm last winter, because they have to get the roads cleared, but they all still have roads assigned to them to be built.

JP Wolf stated that she is aware that they have requested positions for 9 years, and any time she has requested assistance on behalf of a constituent, it has been handled quickly. She said she is also aware that there are a lot of heavy trucks out there tearing up the roads and she agrees that they need more help.

County Judge Gary Black was recognized and said that he feels the Road Department needs the Data Coordinator, because of the amount of paperwork now required for accounting purposes. He said that over the past 8 years, after they fund the Sheriff's requests, which are "shalls", there is usually nothing left, and they can give the Sheriff all the deputies he requests, but if they cannot get to the victims and citizens because the roads are bad and the bridges are out, then they cannot do their jobs to protect the people. Judge Black asked the committee to let him leave office knowing that the Quorum Court approved one request for the Road Department after 8 years. JP Winscott made motion to put the Road Department requests on the list to be ranked, seconded by JP Williams. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

5. Information Systems

a. Add one GIS Analyst II (Professional) in "08 Budget)

Elizabeth Bowen, GIS Coordinator, stated that they are requesting a GIS Analyst II, to assist the Sheriff's Department in geo-profiling, or hot spot analysis, which can help prevent crimes from happening. She explained how the technology aids the Sheriff's Department in tracking sex offenders and gang activity, and how it helps the SWAT team gather information on a location before they arrive there. She said the position is full time for the Sheriff's office, but she will administer and direct the work of the person.

Sheriff Ferguson stated it will enhance public safety, and serve crime prevention, accident prevention, and will also help when they have storms. He said the GIS program is an asset to every department in the county, and Benton County is probably the second or third fastest growing county in technology in the state. He said they can pull up locations and see the number of cars at suspected meth lab sites, and see exactly where they are going if a SWAT team needs to be sent in.

County Judge Gary Black stated that he agreed with Sheriff Ferguson, and stated that Benton County is not only known in the United States for its GIS program, but is also recognized in other countries, and listed the various departments that have been impacted by the GIS Department. He said that there are many other projects that need to be done, and agreed with the Sheriff that having this technology has put the deputies in a much safer position.

JP Hubbard made motion to include the request in positions to be ranked, seconded by JP Winscott. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

6. Circuit Court – Judge Schrantz

a. Add one (1) Bailiff (Grade 10)

b. Add one (1) Court Orders Clerk (Grade 7)

(This item was discussed and approved along with Item 1-a.)

7. Circuit Court – Judge Finch

a. Part-time Interpreter (Grade 8)

b. One (1) Drug Court Counselor – (Professional)

c. One (1) Drug Court Staff Assistant (Grade 5)

Barbara Ludwig requested that items "b" and "c" go directly to the Finance Committee, as they will be funded with grant money, and they need to start advertising for the position as soon as possible.

JP Hill made motion to forward to Finance, seconded by JP Williams.
Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Barbara Ludwig stated that Judge Finch is requesting a part-time interpreter, because sometimes there is a delay in getting one from the state, and they need to use this person in meetings with family members of juveniles in the court system.

JP Winscott asked what they do now. Barbara Ludwig stated that they request one from the state for court proceedings, but for meetings with family members, they just hope that one of the family members present can interpret. Richard McComas stated that they pay for interpreters through contractual services.

JP Winscott made motion to include the request in the positions to be ranked, seconded by JP Hill.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Elected Officials' Salaries

Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe presented a proposal to address salary increases for county elected officials. She explained that the state legislature sets the minimum and maximum range for county elected officials during each legislative session, and this proposal will create an organized method for addressing salary increases for elected officials. She said that she has created a spreadsheet showing the four Class 6 counties that are closest in population (Benton, Saline, Washington, and Sebastian) and the percentage of the state maximum for each elected official. She said that the elected officials would like for the Quorum Court to set a percentage of the state maximum as the guideline, so that elected officials salaries will automatically be adjusted every 2 years when the legislature changes the range.

JP Stephenson stated that in the past it has never been clear when salaries for elected officials should be reviewed.

JP Hubbard stated that the previous discussions had mentioned higher increases, so this request is less than what they had discussed. He added that when he looks at the workload of the elected officials, he does not think 100% is enough, so as far as he is concerned, the 95% is a no-brainer. Deanna Ratcliffe stated that in discussions with the other elected officials, they all agreed that they would like to have guidelines in place so that this does not have to come up again and again. She noted that they have received cost of living percentage increases along with the other county employees, but the elected officials salaries have not been looked at separately since 2003.

JP Stephenson stated that this will create some order, and not leave the elected officials' salaries subjected to the whims of one Quorum Court or another.

JP Winscott made motion to forward approval of the request to set the elected officials' salaries at 95% of the maximum range set by the state legislature, seconded by JP Wolf.

JP Williams stated that she is not against establishing a system in which this does not have to go to the Quorum Court year after year, but they should remember that each time they are voted into office, the voters are telling them they have done a good job, so that is a merit. She said it does bother her to be compared to Washington County when they have so much surplus money, and we have so many problems up here. She said she is not sure the county can afford 95%, but they need to make the decision based on what the county can afford. JP Wolf stated that this is only a recommendation, and the Finance committee can determine how much money is available to fund the increase.

JP Hobbs asked where the JP salaries are on the range. Deanna Ratcliffe stated that she had intended to let Barbara Ludwig address that because she did not have that information, but for information purposes, she had called Washington County, and they pay their JPs at 100% of the range, with a maximum of \$9,176 per year.

Barbara Ludwig stated that it would be hard to calculate where our JPs are, because there is such a variable with the number of meetings they attend, that some may reach the maximum and some may not.

Circuit Clerk Brenda DeShields was recognized and she thanked both JP Hubbard and JP Williams for their comments, and said that she understood where both were coming from. She said whenever this is brought up, different ways to handle it come up, and the elected officials felt the correct way to address it is to put a procedure in place to address salaries, so that it will be done in an organized manner no matter who holds the office.

County Judge Gary Black was recognized, and stated that he felt this was a good idea, because it would take the pressure off of the Quorum Court and the Elected Officials, and avoid having to discuss this over and over again. He thanked Deanna Ratcliffe for doing all of the homework and getting all of the elected officials together to come up with a proposal.

Gloria Peterson was recognized and thanked Deanna Ratcliffe for presenting the proposal, and thanked the committee for considering it. Sheriff Keith Ferguson agreed.

Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

JP Stephenson announced that the next Personnel Committee meeting will be held Tuesday, October 7, 2008 at 1:30 p.m., for the purpose of ranking the positions requested today.

Meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.