

**MINUTES  
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET MEETING  
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION MEETING  
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING, ROOM 112  
TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021**

*Advance public notice of the Board of Commissioners budget meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board, the Lancaster County, Nebraska, web site, emailed to the media and published in the Lincoln Journal Star print edition and website on May 14, 2021.*

**Commissioners present:** Rick Vest, Chair; Roma Amundson; Sean Flowerday; and Christa Yoakum

**Commissioner absent:** Deb Schorr, Vice Chair

**Others present:** David Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer; Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Director; Ron Rhode, Budget & Fiscal Accountant; and Monét McCullen, County Clerk's Office

The meeting was called to order at 9:39 a.m. and the location of the Nebraska Open Meetings was announced.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**1) APPROVAL OF BUDGET MEETING MINUTES FOR MAY 11, 2021.**

**MOTION:** Amundson moved and Yoakum seconded approval of the minutes. Flowerday, Amundson, Yoakum and Vest voted yes. Schorr was absent. Motion carried 4-0.

**2) DEPARTMENT BUDGET HEARINGS - Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Director**

See items 3 through 6.

**3) VETERAN SERVICES - Rick Ringlein, County Veterans Services Director**

Meyer said Veteran Services has funds in the General Fund for administration and the Veteran Aid Fund. He noted for the current budget, Veteran Services will need an additional \$6,184. Rick Ringlein said the additional funds for the current year budget are mostly due to salaries. All accreditation trainings were conducted through Zoom, which resulted in a decrease of funds that were not needed for travelling expenses.

(See agenda packet for related budget material.)

Meyer said the next year's budget request is \$439,915, which is a 16.5% increase from the previous year. Ringlein said the increase in the budget is a result of his upcoming retirement and the Office Manager's retirement. Operating budgets have decreased due to the office becoming more digitized. He noted there could be a change to the budget if the Legislature adds any unfunded mandates to provide grave emblems to National Guard veterans.

In regard to Meyer's question, Ringlein said the pandemic forced no changes to the current year's budget.

Meyer said the Veterans Aid Fund is funded by property tax that is transferred from the General Fund. Last year only \$785 was used out of this fund. Ringlein said that is due to Veteran Services receiving around \$150,000 per year from the Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund which is the trust fund that the state operates.

#### **4) COUNTY EXTENSION - Karen Wobig, County Extension Unit Leader**

Karen Wobig said she will finish out the current year budget without needing any additional appropriations.

(See agenda packet for related budget material.)

Meyer said the current budget request for next year is \$1,007,754, which is close to \$8,000 more than last year's request. He noted there is also around \$5,500 in additional revenue and about a \$3,000 decrease in the operating budget. Wobig said the slight increase is for personnel expenses. She said there are a total of 13 full time employees (FTEs). This includes seven employees hired by the County and six UNL (University of Nebraska, Lincoln) employees that are all funded by the County. In addition, UNL funds and contributes 17 additional staff, which includes educator level positions and a full time 4-H assistant. She noted there will be one retirement included in next year's budget.

Meyer noted the County will receive ARPA (America Rescue Plan Act) funding and the grant coordination monitoring those funds might contact the Extension office to see if those funds can be utilized within the department.

In response to Meyer's question, Wobig said during the pandemic, UNL began funding some of the software licensing which resulted in a \$3,000 decrease. Overall, she does not foresee any budget changes due to COVID as the Extension Office plans to conduct business as normal.

In response to Meyer's question, Wobig said the technology request of \$9,500 was due to annual updates of PCs and laptops. The Extension Office will soon have close to 35 employees, which includes two interns and some upcoming new hires. Wobig said with some of the new hires, there could be interest in expanding. Further discussion was held regarding Emergency Management's expansion and the effect that may have on parking for the Extension Office. Wobig noted there could be future requests for renovation projects.

Vest asked if there is a portion of this budget that is set aside for maintenance repairs. Meyer said there is a building fund that is utilized at times. He noted some of the County owned buildings also utilize this fund.

Wobig said there are no unfunded or underfunded mandates that would impact the Extension Office. She thanked the Commissioners for their support, guidance and safety equipment during the pandemic.

#### **5) ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE - David Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer**

(See agenda packet for related budget material.)

Meyer said the current year budget should not need any additional appropriations to end the year. Next year's budget will be slightly over \$448,000, which is a reduction of 22.5%. David Derbin said the reduction in the budget is due to the overlap between him and the previous Chief Administrative Officer's salary, along with a retirement payout.

Meyer noted if the Commissioners plan to attend any conferences in the upcoming year, that would be an additional amount he would need to include in the budget.

Vest asked about an amount listed in the budget for furniture. Derbin said that amount was due to an office remodel. A new grant coordinator position may require future office renovation needs.

## **6) JUVENILE COURT, Theresa Emmert, Court Administrator**

Theresa Emmert said Juvenile Court will not need any additional funds to finish out the current budget. She noted there will be \$200,000 of unused dollars that will be returned due to the pandemic which resulted in a decrease in fillings, attorney fees, court costs, and a full-time position that remained vacant throughout the year.

Meyer noted the new grant coordinator will contact Juvenile Court to discuss if the ARPA funding can be utilized in that department.

(See agenda packet for related budget material.)

Meyer said the current budget request is a little over \$2,100,000, which is a 1.4% increase and there were no additional revenues received. Emmert said the increase to the budget was mostly due to salaries and benefits. The remainder of the budget was only a 0.4% increase. Filing numbers are beginning to rise and \$5,000 was included for sound system repairs. There have been discussions with Information Services about doing the repairs in-house.

Emmert said Juvenile Court currently has eight FTEs which does not include the vacant position that needs to be filled. She noted Human Resources performed an audit of one position that was reclassified to a Clerk Typist III at a higher salary.

Meyer asked if there were any COVID related issues that would increase the budget request for next year. Emmert said during the pandemic, Juvenile Court never closed and was conducting a number of court hearings over Zoom, but that is not an efficient way to conduct hearings as there were a number of connectivity issues. Honorable Reggie Ryder, Juvenile Court Judge, said they are planning to begin to hear some cases in person.

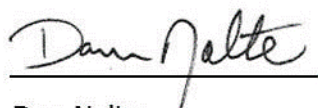
Emmert said the technology fund request is small due to only needing to replace one laptop. Future project requests consist of expanding and updating courtrooms once the County Attorney's office moves out of their current space.

Meyer asked if there were any unfunded and underfunded mandates that currently come out of the Juvenile Court budget. Flowerday asked if the 3A and 3B cases that utilize contracted services could be included as an unfunded mandate as it is required by State Statute. Meyer agreed that could be added as unfunded, but he would have to look further at County versus State expenses.

Flowerday asked if it would be cheaper to continue to hire outside counsel or hire an additional civil attorney to work within the department. Judge Ryder said Juvenile Court contracts with Legal Aid of Nebraska and the Children Justice Clinic through UNL which appears to be cost effective.

## **7) ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Amundson moved Yoakum and seconded to adjourn the Lancaster County budget meeting at 10:53 a.m. Amundson, Yoakum, Flowerday and Vest voted yes. Schorr was absent. Motion carried 4-0.



Dan Nolte  
Lancaster County Clerk

