

MINUTES
LANCASTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
COUNTY CITY BUILDING, ROOM 112

Advanced public notice of the meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board, the Lancaster County, Nebraska, website and emailed to the media and published in the Lincoln Journal Star print and digital editions on June 23, 2023.

Commissioners present: Christa Yoakum, Chair; Sean Flowerday, Vice Chair; Roma Amundson, Matt Schulte and Rick Vest

Others Present: David Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer; Kristy Bauer, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer; John Ward, Deputy County Attorney; Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Officer; and Courtney Lyons, Deputy County Clerk

Yoakum called the meeting to order at 11:09 a.m. and announced the location of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

AGENDA ITEM

1) APPROVAL OF BUDGET MEETING MINUTES FOR JUNE 20, 2023

MOTION: Amundson moved and Flowerday seconded approval of the minutes. Vest, Amundson, Flowerday and Yoakum voted yes. Schulte abstained. Motion carried 4-0 with one abstention.

2) ELECTION COMMISSIONER – Todd Wiltgen, Election Commissioner

Becki Gaston-Wise, Deputy Election Commissioner, was also available for the discussion.

Dennis Meyer, Budget and Fiscal Officer, displayed the budget for the Election Commissioner on the Transparency Portal online (see agenda packet). He said he made recent adjustments due to changing the Deputy Election Commissioner to a full-time schedule.

Wiltgen provided information on the reason for the previous salary of the Deputy Election Commissioner.

Wiltgen stated the Department's budget varies depending on the number of elections held in the County. He noted the Firth Rural Fire Protection District wants to override their growth lid and will require an election administered by the County. The County will bill Firth for all expenses incurred.

Schulte pointed out that Firth is on a county line. Wiltgen explained that Lancaster County has more assessed land and more voters, meaning Lancaster County will administer the election in partnership with Gage County.

Wiltgen discussed Department revenue, much of which results from billing other government entities for election expenses. He noted expenses will not be billed until after the next fiscal year because the next election takes place in November. Only government entities under the County are billed for expenses. Therefore, more revenue comes from City elections rather than statewide and federal elections.

Meyer and Wiltgen discussed the Firth election.

Wiltgen provided an overview of proposed expenses in the next budget, starting with staff salaries and benefits. Wiltgen stated the Department has 7.5 staff and no vacancies. He described the current staff positions. The temporary staff leading up to and during elections, ballot initiatives and referendums fluctuates up to twenty people. Temporary election workers are in addition to the other temporary staff and can fluctuate depending on the need. Schulte asked how the determination of the number of poll workers at each precinct is made, and Wiltgen answered it is set by state law.

Schulte asked Wiltgen to address recent public comments made at Board meetings on election processes. Wiltgen stated their comments are oversimplified. County elections must comply with state and federal laws. Guidance is provided by the Nebraska Secretary of State. Schulte asked if Lancaster County could decide to conduct a hand count and Wiltgen answered no, that is up to the Secretary of State. Wiltgen explained how the Secretary of State conducts the audit process.

Yoakum asked if new voter identification requirements would affect staffing needs. Wiltgen described the needs of the upcoming election, including the number of different ballots that will be required. There will be four legislative races and an unknown number of ballot initiatives. His office will need to verify signatures for referendums. He anticipates an increase in temporary salaries due to these higher needs and high voter turnout.

Wiltgen stated there is money in the budget for an audit, which will be paid for by the County.

Wiltgen noted many temporary salaries are set depending on the minimum wage. Voter identification will also require additional training, which will be an added cost. Wiltgen explained the provisional ballot process that will be in place for those who do not provide identification.

Wiltgen discussed expenses related to ballot printing, envelopes and additional ballot boxes. There is a shortage of ballot boxes. Wiltgen stated there will not be an increase in meals, lodging, fares and related costs. He plans to enroll in a leadership training program.

Schulte asked the cost of generating a cast vote record. Wiltgen answered the state would need to conduct it, and it would cost several hundred thousand dollars. Wiltgen stated a cast vote record is not needed because the County has access to the ballots. He said per state statute, he is only allowed to provide election results, an early voting report and the voting registers to the public.

Wiltgen stated his desire to hire an additional staff position to manage workload of hiring poll workers and managing polling places. Recruitment of poll workers is more difficult than previously and takes more time. Managing polling places also takes more time because schools are more reluctant due to security concerns.

Meyer reviewed the schedule for the remaining budget hearings. An important upcoming hearing will

be on July 6th when Youth Services Center staff discuss staffing needs and billing rates. Meyer said Board members will need to make decisions soon on Department requests for additional staff. A proposed budget will need to be completed by the end of July.

3) ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Vest moved and Amundson seconded to adjourn at 11:54 a.m. Flowerday, Vest, Amundson, Schulte and Yoakum voted yes. Motion carried 5-0.



Matt Hansen
Lancaster County Clerk

