

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION KNOX COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE

Joint Commission & Budget Committee Review Meeting

Knox County Commission and Budget Committee

Tuesday – November 16, 2021 – 5:00 P.M.

A Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting was held on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 5:00 P.M., Knox County Courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. The Administrative Assistant was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present: Commissioner Dorothy G. Meriwether, District #1, Commissioner Richard L. Parent, District #2 and Commissioner Sharyn L. Pohlman, District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Corrections Administrator Robert Wood, and Sheriff Tim Carroll.

Budget Committee members present: Chair Shawn Levasseur, Gayle Gallant, Roger Peabody, Barry Norris, Nick Lapham and Charles Grover.

Absent: Bob Duke and Randy Stearns.

Other: Sarah Mattox Restorative Justice Project Maine Programs Coordinator, Ed Modell supporter of RJPM, Anne “Pinny” Beebe–Center supporter of RJPM and Brian Dancause Acting Executive Director of MCEDD.

Joint Commission & Budget Committee Review Meeting Tuesday – November 16, 2021 – 5:00 P.M.

Please click on link below to view the meeting.

https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=50&id=41145

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| I. | 5:00 | Meeting Called To Order (Chair Shawn Levasseur for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent Jr. for the Knox County Commission) |
| II. | 5:01 | Public Comment |
| III. | 5:05 | Approve Minutes (Chair Shawn Levasseur for the Knox County Budget Committee, Commission Chair Richard Parent, Jr. for the Knox County Commission)
1. Minutes of the Joint Budget Meeting of November 9, 2021 |
| IV. | 5:10 | Budget Review
1. MCEDD (Pg. 27)
2. Restorative Justice (Pg. 27)
3. Sheriff’s Department - Corrections (Pgs. 21-22)
4. Sheriff’s Department - Patrol (Pgs. 25-26) |
| V. | | Adjourn |

I. Meeting Called to Order

The November 16, 2021 Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting was called to order by Budget Committee Chair Shawn Levasseur and Commissioner Chair Richard Parent at 5:04 P.M.

- *Chair Levasseur made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M.*
- *Commissioner Parent made a motion to call the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M.*

II. Public Comment

- None

III. Approve Minutes

1. Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of November 9, 2021.
 - *Charles Grover made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of November 9, 2021. Gayle Gallant seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor. (Nick Lapham and Shawn Levasseur abstained.)*
 - *Commissioner Meriwether made a motion to approve the amended Minutes of the Joint Commission and Budget Committee Review Meeting of November 9, 2021. Commissioner Parent seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor. (Commissioner Pohlman abstained.)*
- ***Please note: All votes taken at each Joint Commission & Budget Committee Budget Review Meetings on Departmental Budgets are “straw votes”, with the exception of the December 16, 2021 Final Vote on the 2022 Knox County Budget.***

- **Administrator Hart spoke:**

- At the start of tonight’s meeting a letter was received from Anne “Pinny” Beebe–Center in support of Restorative Justice Project Maine. This is the fifth (5th) letter/email received in support of RJPM. Copies were made and handed to the Budget Committee and Commissioners.
- Prior to tonight’s meeting a chart was provided to the Budget Committee and Commissioners that shows income from Registry of Deeds which is the Revenue for each month from 2016 to the present. This also shows a graph which shows how much actually is received in each quarter, and is broken out in 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarter. I 2020 & 2021 the revenue is up each quarter.
- Finance Director Robinson and Administrator Hart have spoken to the Register of Probate, Elaine Hallett and Register of Deeds, Madelene Cole and at this point we are not asking to change the Revenue amount that we have in each Budget. At this point we are not changing this.
- Administrator Hart provided an updated spreadsheet with the Commissioners paid Health Insurance analysis as requested from the November 4th meeting.
- Administrator Hart addressed the question of what are the other Counties providing for Health Insurance benefits for Commissioners. Some research was completed. The chart shows what each County pays their Chair, each Commissioner, and what they provide for Health Insurance Benefits.
- Budget Committee member stated that we will be talking about the Corrections Budget tonight, so what happens if we go over Budget?
- Administrator Hart stated that under the tax cap statute, the County Budget can go up to the Growth Factor, the Correctional Budget can only go to the tax cap that is associated with Correctional statute, which is wither 4% or the Growth Factor, whichever is less. The Growth Factor this year is 6.05%. Right now, we are over that so there will be a discussion about will we remove some Capital items or what will we do to get this down because we cannot exceed the cap. With the County portion of the Budget and the Growth Factor you are allowed to increase or go over the tax cap, Municipalities and Counties and do that. The State does not have a tax cap. A County can it requires is the Commissioner and Budget Committee to authorize to increase the cap or exceed the cap. The only time the County did that was in 2005 or 2006. This is the first time since that we are over. Last year we were \$34,000 under the cap. As the meeting progresses this evening there will be more discussion with the Sheriff and Jail Administrator.

1. MCEDD

- Brian Dancause, Acting Executive Director talked about MCEDD and answered questions.
- MCEDD is requesting a grant for \$48,468 to support planning and development services for Knox County communities.
- They are a municipally led economic and community development organization. They are based in Damariscotta but they serve members in Sagadahoc, Lincoln and Knox Counties, Towns of Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County and the Town of Lincolnville in Waldo County.
- MCEDD provides planning and development services for Knox County communities. They also help update land use ordinances, community development, grant writing and administering Federal grants. Some of our specialties are U.S. Economic Development (EDA) which is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, this designates regional partners through which funding for economic development initiatives are available.
- We develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that incorporates the economic, community and workforce development, education transportation and environmental efforts and initiatives of the Midcoast region.
- Membership dues for all of Knox County Municipalities are paid through the Knox County. Membership fees in general account for 24% or just less than one quarter of MCEDD revenue. This revenue is valued because it is considered unrestricted funds that can be used. These can be used as matching funds when we apply for Federal grants. Federal grants account for just over half of their revenue.
- Some highlights since July of last year include: Reviewed applications that were Federal CARES Act funds that were awarded through the State. They viewed applications in Knox County alone and made grant awards totaling just under \$10,500,000. There were a total of 277 awards.
- What's been going on with Municipal's such as Vinalhaven - An EDA application was submitted and the Town was notified that they have been awarded the funds, MCEDD offered to assist the Town of Isle au Haut with a wharf rebuilding project, MCEDD is working with Owls Head & Knox County to conduct a coastal resilience checklist and a workshop this fall. This project is designed to identify potential seal level rise hazards, and a Brownfield Project is underway for Camden and Rockland. Those are just some examples of how MCEDD assists the Municipalities.
- In process of applying for (EDA) ARPA funds on behalf of Camden and Rockport.

Questions:

- Budget Committee member asked if there is any benefit for the County to pay for each Town to join to be a member, or should we let them decide on their own.
- Brian Dancause stated that Knox County communities have been the most interested. Right now, we are helping the Midcoast Internet in Rockport.
- Commissioner Meriwether elaborated on a previous question: We that were under the assumption or told that if the County joins MCEDD, (basically forcing all Communities to join) it would benefit specifically Knox County government. It's been two (2) years and on numerous occasions our phone calls were not answered. So far, this has been no direct benefit to Knox County government.
- Commissioner Meriwether asked why you are the Acting Director.
- Brian Dancause replied by saying that Bill Najpauer retired in July, and the Board has put together a Hiring Committee, decided to hire a candidate in the interim and felt he was the best candidate.
- Commissioner Meriwether asked if Brian could explain what housing trust Municipalities MCEDD is working with directly?

- Brian Dancause stated are not working with any municipalities directly. There is a group that is considering forming a housing trust. An individual that has been a part of that has attended some or all of our workshops and asked a representative from MCEDD if they could participate in the process of forming a housing trust.
- Budget Committee member asked can you build a case for Knox County to fund this vs. the Towns doing things on their own.
- Brian Dancause replied by saying it's easier for MCEDD to receive dues from one County rather than to chase down and collect dues from multiple Communities.
- Budget Charles – what about areas that received no value or perhaps don't want to receive anything? As a county responsibility we need to hear a compelling case as to why we should spend \$48,468.
- Commissioner Parent stated that when we agreed to participate, that any Town within the County was eligible to apply and receive assistance from MCEDD. Have any Towns besides Rockland applied for assistance and received it?
- Brian Dancause stated he thought yes that is true. They are working with Appleton right now and have helped Vinalhaven receive a (EDA) grant for \$2,000,000.
- Administrator Hart stated that we applied for a Radio grant for a radio upgrade. We did send some emails to MCEDD and didn't get very timely responses. There has been a change in the structure of MCEDD. Administrator Hart was part of hiring committee for a new Director for MCEDD. This was an extensive process and two (2) candidates were chosen to interview. Brian has done the best he can being the Interim and he inherited previous situations.
- Budget Committee member stated that it would be helpful if had open summary in writing. Would like to have it in advance to include as many specifics and what metrics are used to evaluate levels of success.
- Budget Committee member asked does each municipality have the ability to appoint two (2) members to the Board.
- Brian Dancause replied yes.
- Commissioner Pohlman read the governance of MCEDD – MCEDD is governed by its Members, Communities and Counties. Each member has two (2) seats on the general assembly. The general assembly adopts the annual budget and strategic planning goals.
- Administrator Hart stated that on MCEDD there is a Board of Directors, Executive Committee and General Membership. How MCEDD is set up they have to have a General Assembly (State required). Still a work in progress in changing the amount of people allowed on the Board.
- A Budget Committee member asked if communication is getting any better.
- Brian Dancause stated yes, he believes so.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator's Budget recommendation of \$48,468:

In favor: 3 (Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody and Barry Norris)

Against: 2 (Charles Grover and Gayle Gallant)

Abstained: 1 (Nick Lapham)

A consensus vote was taken by the County Commission on whether to approve the Administrator's Budget recommendation of \$48,468:

In favor: 2 (Commissioner Parent and Commissioner Pohlman)

Against: 1 (Commissioner Meriwether)

Abstained: 0

2. Restorative Justice

- **Overall goal:** Expand Knox County’s capacity to provide Community Restorative Justice Services for its citizens and residents.
- Increase county-wide capacity to accept referrals from law enforcement for adults and young adults who have caused harm through RJP’s successful Community Resolution Program.
- Sarah Mattox stated we have submitted our grant application for \$25,000 to ask for your continued support of the salary of our local Harm Repair Coordinator. We are confident that continued funding for Restorative Justice Program will support our mutual goals of a safer, more connected and healthier Knox County. We seek modest amounts of funding from a diversity of funding sources. Our capacity to accept court-based referrals of adults, as well as to pilot the Open Table model, is only possible thank to the Knox County Commissioner funding. This funding goes entirely to supporting the work of our Knox County based staff. Our two (2) staff, which are partially supported by this funding, support a network of fifty (50) volunteers who contribute 110 hours each month. According to the Independent Sector in April of 2021, the value of each volunteer hour was \$28.54. This equates to an in-kind investment of \$37,672.80 annually tin Knox County. Restorative communities focus on bringing people together and saying you matter.
- Sarah gave a statistic of success: 94% of Agreements made are successfully completed and 95% of people harmed indicated that the process met their needs.

Supporters/Questions:

- Ed Modell – Resident from So. Thomaston wrote a letter in support of Restorative Justice Project Maine. He had also sent this in an email to Wendy, and asked that it be printed out and forwarded on the Budget Committee and Commissioners.
- Budget Committee member really appreciates Restorative Justice Program. Asked if they could put some numbers together to help explain more about what you do.
- Sarah Mattox said that 94% of the Agreements that are set are successfully completed. We estimate for a simple case it will take around 12-15 hours to facilitate, and looking at \$500-\$800 in staff time, insurance time and recruiting time. There is significant cost saving to the community. Those are some quantifiables she can offer.
- Budget Committee member asked about Open Table. Is the Open Table geared towards people coming out of the County Jail or Maine State Prison or both?
- Sarah Mattox stated that Open Table is eligible for anyone returning to the community post incarceration. This is a National model and there is great evidence of success. The Open Table effort in Knox County is in trial but we anticipate it will be successful.
- Ed Modell invites all to come to a circle meeting at the St. Peters Episcopal Church. It’s a place to talk about the harm that happened and the offender can speak as well. These folks need our help and support. He feels the offenders have been harmed at some point in their lives.
- Commissioner Pohlman said she received an email with a schedule of the circle table listening sessions at the Church. Next on is on Friday, November 19th from 8:30-10:30 via Zoom, Monday, November 29th, and December 8th.
- Anne “Pinny” Beebe-Center brought a letter to the meeting in support of Restorative Justice Program.

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s Budget recommendation of \$25,000:

In favor: 6 (Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, Gayle Gallant, Barry Norris, Nick Lapham, and Charles Grover)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s Budget recommendation of \$25,000:

In favor: 3 (Commissioner Parent, Commissioner Meriwether and Commissioner Pohlman)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

3. Sheriff - Corrections

- Sheriff stated the overall Budget, which has been the toughest one this year, has increased by \$782,000. A majority of that is what we anticipated but did not expect the number we received. The medical is coming in at \$683,000 which is 195% increase from what we currently have. We went through the bid process and had four (4) bids. We received one bid for Mental Health only, one is our current vendor and two others vendors. So far, the one that we are in negotiations with right now is the most expensive vendor. This is the best opportunity we’re looking at right now. Our current vendor that we have now our contract is \$351,000 and the one we’re looking at right now is \$969,000. That’s just for the medical side of things.
- Mental health is a struggle. Every County in the State is dealing with the same thing. Mental Health process is a broken process right now due to lack of beds in Mental Health facilities. We have had a number of Correction Officers assaulted this year. This is a dangerous environment.
- With the other increases throughout our Budget have been trying to keep it as tight as he could. Unfortunately, it cost money to do what we are doing. A lot of things we are doing are to help people to get out of Jail and stay out of Jail. We work every day to get people out of Jail because that’s not the correct facility they need to be in; they need to be in a Mental Health facility getting the proper help. We do the best we can with limited training but we are not a Mental Health facility, yet we have become that.
- We have started the HVAC system in phases and this should be done by the end of the month. That HVAC system was thirty (30) years old, essentially is came with the building. That is a major expense and that’s why we broke it out into Phases. Phase 4 scheduled next year and talked to contractor to see if could hold off.
- Paving project is \$200,000. We are constantly fixing pot holes and the sidewalk is not compliant with current standards. At this time where we have the cap we feel this is the only place can make a cut, is the Capital.
- Medical contract is what it is, currently we are in negotiations, but will continue to trim as best as we can.
- Our community partners: Restorative Justice, Knox County Recovery Collaborative, Knox County Homeless Coalition and Knox County Community Health Coalition we are partnered with all of them to try to do the best we can with getting Inmates out of Jail. We are making a dent in things. As of today, with the partnership with Waldo County, this is still going strong. They have nine (9) of our Knox county inmates at their reentry center. With those nine (9) and the others at Two Bridges we would be up to 82 Inmates. We are a seventy (70) bed facility. Right now we are short staffed; we are done by five (5) positions. By State standard we have to have six (6) Corrections Officers on the floor at all times. Now we have to mandate these officers. It’s normally a twelve (12) hour shift, and now they are mandated to work a sixteen (16) hour shift. Also they are being mandated on their days off. Coming in to the Winter season our population will start going up.
- Corrections Officers are in negotiations for pay, and we are trying to do what we can to retain them. Our starting pay is at \$17.17/ hr.; whereas, Walmart is starting around \$18-\$19 /hr. Doing the best we can with what we have for the Budget.

Questions:

- Budget Committee member asked how much of the \$221,000 will be for the sidewalks to be repaved?
- Administrator Hart spoke up and said that when we bid this project out is for the Jail entry road, two parking lots in front of the building, sidewalk areas and placing surface coat on the road that goes to the back of the Safety Building. The culverts need to be replaced. and there are storage trailers in back of the Public Safety Building where there is a gravel pad for the trailers. That has been taken out. We had a request to have the walk way around the facility paved. There is a requirement by the DOC that Correction Officers have to walk that area to check the fence and check on Inmate to make sure everything is secure. That can be taken out potentially. The main focus is the entry road, two (2) parking lots and sidewalk. The sidewalk is not ADA compliant right now.
- Budget Committee member stated that those are safety issues.
- Administrator Hart had a Zoom meeting yesterday and mentioned that we are over our cap for the Jail Budget. After the Zoom meeting, Kennebec County Administrator Scott Ferguson emailed and said that there is \$1.7 million in supplemental finding that is available. He sent information and Administrator Hart looked it over. We will see if we can get the brick and mortar project which is \$190,000, paving which is \$242,034 to do everything, replace toilet valves at \$39,000 and dishwasher replacement at \$11,730 which makes a grand total of \$464,404. The HVAC portion of Phase 4 our consultant told us that project would be eligible for that. If this is the case, the Capital line could potentially be \$0. We are hoping to receive an answer for this by Thursday night's meeting.
- Budget Committee member said some of these projects may qualify for ARPA.
- A few Budget Committee members talked about tabling the Corrections Budget until Thursday, November 18th.
- One Budget Committee member asked if there was any way we could wrap them up into the loans we already have.
- Budget Committee member suggested coming up with a supplemental Budget in January. We should leave this Budget alone as it is already bare bones.
- Commissioner Meriwether if you remove all Capital would that bring it to 4%
- Sheriff stated that it would but we would have to find \$28,000 somewhere else.
- Budget Committee member asked that when looking at Capital Budget, in particular with the HVAC we are looking at \$3 million over the next five (5) or six (6) years. Is there any way we could wrap them up into a loan. This is so we don't get big spikes every other year.
- Administrator Hart stated that we have a lease purchase on the Courthouse that will be paid off in 2025, we have the bond for the Public Safety Building that will be paid off in 2027, and the lease purchase for the HVAC at the Courthouse, which will be paid off in 2032. We already have a lot out there, and we do have to think about in 2029 we have to take out the oil tank to replace with LP gas tanks. We have to start and put money away until then or we'll have to Bond it.
- Commissioner Pohlman asked if any of the 195% increase could be in part due to the COVID pandemic and the escalating cost of Mental Health. Could any of these be put towards ARPA funds? Addressing this with our consultant would be a good idea.
- Budget Committee member asked if COLA is going up 5.8% how managing to keep wage line flat?
- Administrator Hart state that with vacancies we have will have more people coming in at a lower beginner's salary.
- *A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee to table the Administrator's Budget recommendation until Thursday November 18th of **\$3,857,185:***

In favor: 6 (Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, Gayle Gallant, Barry Norris, Nick Lapham, and Charles Grover)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

- ***A consensus vote was taken by the Commissioners to table the Administrator’s Budget recommendation until November 18th of \$3,857,185:***

In favor: 3 (Commissioner Parent, Commissioner Meriwether and Commissioner Pohlman)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

4. Sheriff - Patrol

- Sheriff stated the overall increase is 4%. Total expense is \$ 121,000 and of that \$75,000 is Personnel, Gas prices have increased.
- New Vehicles - market driving number currently. The availability is just not there right now. A dealership (not locally) is placing a market adjustment cost on top of the MSRP, thus increasing the cost of a new vehicle further.
- One concern is FOP; this seems to be a struggle everywhere. For example Rockland’s pay is 18% higher, Waldo County just went up to 17% on their contract, and some are offering a \$10,000-\$16,000 sign on bonus for new hires. If we do not do something to help with that we will lose potential employees. We do have the wage adjustment in there and COLA but other areas are offering \$3-\$4 more an hour.
- We are full staffed on the main land. We have one Vinalhaven position we are unable to fill.

Questions:

- A Budget committee member asked what 1.2% would do to get you to 9%. If the funds could be found that may help to retain people.
- Budget Committee member asked a question about Revenue. why the Civil Process and Civil Process County fees so high compared to where they’ve always been.
- Sheriff stated that the fee adjustment for Civil Process basically the State was allowed to charge us \$8.00 for service of paperwork. We had to get the paper, making at least three (3) attempts to try to find the person to be served, paying the person \$16.00/hr. to do the job and a vehicle and gas expense. Working with Representative Matlack we were able to get through past the Senate, past the Legislature unanimously, and then it died when it got to appropriations because they did not have the money. This will be addressed in January for the financial piece. Once that happens they will allow us to charge \$16.00.
- Budget Committee member asked Administrator Hart a question: every year we set a percentage for insurance and sometimes it comes in lower. Is there any likelihood of that happening this year?
- Administrator Hart stated that our Health Insurance we budgeted 10% and it came in at 5%.
- Risk Pool insurance will have final number until final vote in December.

- ***A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s Budget recommendation of \$2,422,627:***

In favor: 6 (Shawn Levasseur, Roger Peabody, Gayle Gallant, Barry Norris, Nick Lapham, and Charles Grover)

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

- *A consensus vote was taken by the Budget Committee on whether to approve the Administrator’s Budget recommendation of \$2,422,627:*

*In favor: 3 (Commissioner Parent, Commissioner Meriwether and Commissioner Pohlman)
Against: 0
Abstained: 0*

- Administrator Hart asked the Budget Committee and Commissioners if there were any Departments they would like to come back to the next meeting.
- No one needed a Department to come back.
- Meeting on Thursday November 18th at 5:00 P.M. we will finalize the Corrections Budget.

5. Adjourn

- *Charles Grover made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nick Lapham seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*
- *Commissioner Meriwether made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Pohlman seconded the motion. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

The next Joint Quarterly Budget Committee & Commission Meeting will be held on **November 18th @ 5:00 P.M.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Budget Committee and Knox County Commission approved these minutes at the Joint Meeting held on November 18, 2021.