



BALDWIN COUNTY WORK SESSION

October 05, 2021
1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220
4:00 PM

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT

Henry Craig
John Westmoreland
Kendrick Butts
Emily Davis
Sammy Hall

OTHERS PRESENT

Carlos Tobar
David McRee
Cindy Cunningham
Jill Adams

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Craig called the Work Session to order at 4:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE/FISCAL MATTERS

Elected Officials Budget Presentations for FY 2022

The following elected officials and department heads addressed the Board regarding their 2022 Budget requests.

Solicitor General Skye Gess – Ms. Gess discussed the effect the pandemic has had on her office. She stated State Court is still experiencing a backlog of jury trials that will continue into the 2022. Ms. Gess reported that last year an Assistant Solicitor General (ASG) was hired, and he has been instrumental in helping lessen a large portion of the backlog of jury trials. She stated that currently the ASG salary is offset using money from the victim assistance account since he handles matters related to victim services. The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) funding also pays for the salaries of victim advocates, training and other needs. She reported this funding has been cut by 20%, and she anticipates loss of funding for this program entirely beginning in October 2022. Ms. Gess requested that the County fully fund the salary for the Assistant Solicitor General for the 2022 calendar year. By taking this step now, funds in the victim assistance account can begin to be replenished to help prepare for the loss of CJCC funding. The Solicitor General also requested an increase in the ASG salary to bring it in line with comparable salaries for other prosecutors with similar experience. Ms. Gess commended her staff for going above and beyond during the pandemic in order to resume in-person operations well before many other courts resumed. She discussed community and outreach programs through her office.

Commissioner Craig expressed the Board's appreciation for the benefit provided to the community through the Solicitor's Office.

Judge Todd Blackwell, Probate Court - Judge Blackwell provided detailed explanations for his budget line items explaining any increase or decrease in each item. He stated the Probate Court brings money to the County through fees customers pay for documents.

Judge Blackwell, Elections – Judge Blackwell who also serves as Elections Superintendent, reported there were necessary expenses last year that will not have to be paid this year. However, there are still increases in his budget due to the increased cost of supplies,

additional poll workers salaries, additional training on new voting machines and other general expenses. He reported in order to come up with more realistic expenditures he reviewed the 2018 budget since that was the last election year prior to the new voting regulations. Supplies for the new machines and additional salaries for elections workers, travel for voting machine techs so they can be kept up on training and extended warranty on voting equipment mandate increases this year.

Judge Blackwell discussed elections that will be held next year, i.e. general election with possible runoff; possible special election; and the three regular elections; primary, general and special elections. He presented timelines if the decision is made for a TSPLOST to be on the ballot in the next primary or general election. The Resolution by Board of Commissioners notifying him of the Call for Election must be done in February in order to meet legal requirements.

Commissioners commended Judge Blackwell for his work.

Sheriff Bill Masee, Law Enforcement, Jail and E911 – Sheriff Masee commended the finance staff for working very closely with him to monitor his budget throughout the year. He stated his budget reflects requests for increases for personnel upgrades. He reported it is extremely hard to hire and retain employees because state law enforcement is actively recruiting local mandated deputies which creates a monumental problem of retention for local governments. He stated he was requesting upgrades in all deputy positions, detention, administrative and dispatch positions which will total \$410,000 and will affect 131 individuals employed by the Sheriff's Office. He stated his employees have provided excellent service to the citizens of Baldwin County throughout the pandemic.

Chairman Craig expressed his appreciation to Sheriff Masee and his employees for their service.

Chief Appraiser Wade Williams – Mr. Williams thanked Commissioners for their support to the Board of Assessors office. He outlined budget items constituting the request for a \$78,100 increase to this year's budget. He discussed personnel / position changes and requested consideration for a part-time data entry position which would not be necessary if a full-time IT position is approved to manage the Tyler software system. He stated the IT position would be shared with the Tax Commissioner's office. Mr. Williams stated the Department of Revenue mandates specific training and continued education; therefore, an increase is reflected in the travel line item. A request was submitted for an increase in the meeting compensation from \$100 \$125 per meeting for members of the Board of Assessors.


Fire Chief Victor Young – Chief Young presented a list of projects that need to be addressed for Fire / Rescue. He discussed staffing needs; replacement of vehicles; repair or relocation of Station 2 (CSH); replacement of self-contained breathing apparatus and firefighter protective clothing; replacement of fire hoses; provide a uniform allowance for firefighters; replacement of automatic defibrillator and thermal imaging camera; purchase computer with hotspot for fire engines; purchase a drone to assist not only the Fire / Rescue Department, but all County Departments; purchase boat to service the east side of the County to ensure better response time; and replacement of aging / broken furniture and appliances at the fire stations. Chief Young presented his capital improvements program. Chief also discussed station coverage throughout the County and ISO ratings.

Chairman Craig expressed his appreciation to Fire Chief Young and his staff for their service.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Sammy Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 p.m. Vice Chairman John Westmoreland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Henry R. Craig
Chairman

Cynthia K. Cunningham

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County Clerk