



**BALDWIN COUNTY  
WORK SESSION**  
October 1, 2024  
1601 N Columbia St, Suite 220  
4:00 PM

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MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

John Westmoreland, Chair  
Kendrick Butts  
Henry Craig  
Emily Davis  
Sammy Hall

OTHERS PRESENT

Carlos Tobar  
Brandon Palmer  
Dawn Hudson  
Cindy Cunningham  
Bo Danuser

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman John Westmoreland called the October 1, 2024 work session to order at 4:00 PM.

INVOCATION

County Manger Carlos Tobar delivered the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Tobar led the Pledge of Allegiance.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS FROM ELECTED OFFICIALS

Clerk of Superior Court Wanda Paul gave a budget request presentation on behalf of the Clerk of Courts. She reviewed the revenue generated by the courts; the Superior Court general account generated \$771,537 of which \$143,723 was paid to the county. State Court generated \$945,533 of which \$603,837 was paid to the county.

Ms. Paul requested funds for a new jury check in system which would consist of a bar code on the jury summons to be scanned at check in, and debit cards with the juror's per diem. This system would streamline the jury check in process.

Ms. Paul requested an increase in pay for the members of the Board of Equalization from \$75 to \$100 per session; 12 to 17 sessions were scheduled per year. The board members had not received an increase in at least 10 years.

Ms. Paul requested \$231,763 to digitize records from 1980 to 1996; 1996 to current were already digitized. The fee could be broken down per court over four years. She stated that at some time these records would have to be moved off site and the digitized records could be easily accessed. The records had a 70-year records retention schedule with death penalty cases and all real estate records kept for life.

Ms. Paul requested \$15,000 for a folding machine. She discussed the amount of notices generated for each court date and the thousands of notices they mailed each year.

There was a discussion about the software, scanners, and debit cards. Ms. Paul added that the software was included in what they already had, the scanners would be given to

them at no cost and that the only cost would be for the debit cards; checks cost \$1.36 per check and the debit cards were 70 cents each.

There was a discussion about the total collections for Superior Court and State Court, splitting the cost of the records scanning over a 4 year period; how members of the Board of Equalization were selected and the number of members and their training - there were 6 members on 2 boards with three members at a time sitting.

State Court Solicitor General Skye Gess gave a budget request presentation on behalf of the State Court. She stated that grant funding for victim services fluctuated year to year. The CJCC cut their funding by 42% last year; they didn't anticipate a cut the upcoming fiscal year but their funding award had not been announced. She wanted the County to be aware in case they had to make an adjustment in the budget.

Ms. Gess asked for an increase in supplies and across the board raises for the employs.

Ms. Gess stated that they were a growing court and faced the challenge of space, they used courtroom 1 which was the smallest courtroom and that the second, larger, courtroom was often locked and unoccupied. The lack of space was also a safety and security issue; she asked the County to look at the space issue.

Ms. Gess discussed their two youth mentoring programs, providing school supplies for the Special Education Department at Baldwin High School, the Minor Traffic Day, domestic violence awareness month and the annual awareness walk, and the Purple Out Day.

There was a discussion about scheduling the courtrooms, who controlled the space in the courthouse, returning the courtroom scheduling back to the Clerk of Superior Court and covering costs for the Solicitor General's department in the event the victims grant funding fell short.

District Attorney Wright Barksdale gave his presentation for the District Attorney's Office. He stated that his goal was to tackle the crime issue in Baldwin County and discussed the work his office had done in prosecuting crime.

DA Barksdale requested a \$10,000 increase in the supplement for each of the four Assistant District Attorneys.

There was a discussion about the employees in the District Attorney's office and which agencies paid portions of salaries and supplements.

DA Barksdale requested a county vehicle that could hold 6 people be issued for the investigator to replace the 2011 Crown Vic; the investigator worked for Baldwin County only.

Probate Judge Todd Blackwell presented a budget presentation for the Probate Court and that his request was a carry-over from previous years.

Judge Blackwell discussed the legislature's requirement to e-file documents in Probate Court and requested \$7,500 for the upfront cost for scanners - they already had the software available and it would be an easy transition.

Judge Blackwell discussed the elections budget and the elections cycle for 2025. The only increase would be for the funding of an Election Supervisor going forward. He discussed their readiness for the upcoming election with early voting beginning October 15<sup>th</sup> and the election day on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

County Attorney Brandon Palmer stated the Commissioners had control of the courthouse and there was a discussion about scheduling the courtrooms, including the fact that the Clerk of Superior Court had scheduled the use of the courtrooms in the past.

Sherriff Bill Masee stated that he didn't have a budget presentation; that he had been working on his budget with Dawn Hudson for months. He stated that he was there to lobby for the Real Time Crime Center. There was an unbelievable investment in the 911 center and that the FLOCK cameras and computer systems were game changers. A Real Time Crime Center would allow all cameras to be linked to the 911 Center and would allow a collaboration between law enforcement, county government, colleges and schools, the business community, and every homeowner that lives in Baldwin County; from a public safety standpoint, it would be one of the most proactive things they had done in a long time.

State Court Judge Paul Hitchcock was recognized for his budget presentation for State Court. Judge Hitchcock stated that State Court handled misdemeanor criminal cases and most types of civil cases involving money. Judge Hitchcock stated that State Court had substantial growth and discussed the number of criminal and civil cases brought before the State Court and the revenue that was generated by State Court.

Judge Hitchcock stated that their biggest challenge was space in the courthouse. They were assigned to courtroom 1 which was a small courtroom and that the jury assembly room in the basement had bad acoustics and made it hard during the jury selection process. Judge Hitchcock requested the use of the larger courtroom.

There was a discussion about the scheduling of the courtrooms so that it was the most useful for the citizens of Baldwin County. There was also discussion about the courtroom capacities.

Judge Hitchcock requested a \$17,000 increase in his budget for public defender conflict attorneys, a \$30,000 increase in the technical line item and a 3% cost of living increase in his salary.

There was a discussion about the revenues generated from the courts and that some of the revenues being reported were overlapping figures.

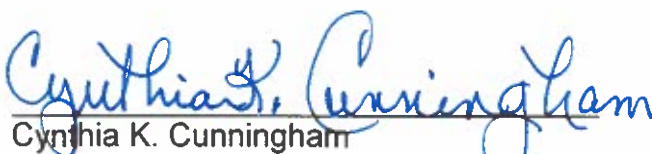
Magistrate Court Judge Shane Geeter was recognized for his budget request for the Magistrate Court. Judge Geeter requested 4 laptop computers to connect with the jail virtually. He stated that the judge's salaries were set by statute.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Henry Craig made a motion to adjourn the work session at 5:32 PM. Commissioner Emily Davis seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

  
John H. Westmoreland  
Chairman

  
Cynthia K. Cunningham  
County Clerk