

EUREKA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Budget Meeting - February 4, 2021

STATE OF NEVADA)
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COUNTY OF EUREKA)

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Eureka County Commissioners met pursuant to law on February 4, 2021. The meeting was conducted telephonically pursuant to Governor Sisolak’s Declaration of Emergency Directive 006, which was extended by subsequent Directives through duration of the current State of Emergency. Present were Chairman J.J. Goicoechea; Commissioner Rich McKay; and Administrative Assistant Jackie Berg. Vice Chair Michael Sharkozy was unable to attend and District Attorney Ted Beutel had a court conflict. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner McKay motioned to approve the agenda as posted; Chairman Goicoechea seconded the motion; motion carried 2-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Goicoechea opened the floor for public comments, noting that Commissioner Sharkozy was attending to matters at home and was sorry that he could not attend. There were no further public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 19, 2021: Commissioner McKay motioned to approve minutes of the January 19, 2021, budget meeting; Chairman Goicoechea seconded the motion; motion carried 2-0.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – PERSONNEL

Elected Official Salaries: Comptroller Kim Todd researched, at the request of Sheriff Watts, whether any counties in Nevada were paying elected officials a higher salary than outlined in NRS 245.043. None were; in fact, three counties received legal opinions that it was unlawful to do so.

COLAs & Merits: At an earlier meeting, the Board motioned to allow merit increases and a cost of living allowance of \$0.62. Ms. Todd calculated that, if all merits are given, this will cost up to \$204,577.47.

Requested New Positions: If the Board approves all requested new positions (eight full-time and one casual), it will increase the annual payroll by \$912,328.95. Ms. Todd provided a breakdown of costs by position for a casual election worker, five new deputized positions for the Sheriff’s Office, an administrative position for Public Works, an EMT for Crescent Valley, and a position for Natural Resources (that will primarily work as a weed technician paid with grant funds).

Chairman Goicoechea referenced the Board’s efforts several years earlier when the workforce was reduced through attrition as a means to avoid layoffs during financially challenging times. He said he doesn’t want to put a future Board in that position, so each request must be scrutinized. Costs for the casual are minimal and most of the Natural Resources position will be reimbursed by grants. As he stated before, the Chairman would like to see the Sheriff’s Office fully staffed with positions currently budgeted before considering adding more people.

FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET – DEPARTMENTS

Note: All budgets are subject to revision before adoption of the Final Budget, which is due to the Department of Taxation by June 1, 2021.

Television District: The Television District submitted a proposed budget with a reduction of \$14,550.00 in operating costs and a reduction of \$47,900.00 in capital outlay for a proposed budget amount of \$244,150.00.

Fair Board (Ag District #15): The Fair Board submitted a flat budget of \$128,450.00 with no proposed changes for the upcoming fiscal year.

Justice Court: Justice of the Peace Dorothy Rowley joined the meeting by telephone to discuss the budgets in her department. The only increase in the Court's operating budget was \$420.00 for telephone/fax. \$14,000.00 was requested in capital outlay for furniture replacement and as contingency in the event the copy machine fails, as it is nearing end-of-life.

Justice Court AA Fund and Facility Fund: Changes proposed in these funds were increases in capital outlay (\$20,000.00/AA and \$10,000.00/Facility). Along with a remodel of the courtroom to accommodate jury trials, the digital recording system (JAVS) needs to be replaced. Components of the current system are either beyond warranty or will be by the end of the current year.

Monies had been budgeted in the current fiscal year towards the courtroom remodel, and the Board encouraged Judge Rowley to complete what she could in the current year, particularly the design work.

Recreation Fund: The Recreation Board submitted an operating budget with a reduction of \$150.00. Commissioner McKay, a Rec Board member, said they are meeting in March and may decide to move some funds within the budget, taking from services and supplies and moving into capital outlay. Events have been stifled by the pandemic, and this would allow monies to be used to bolster local attractions thus encouraging tourism.

Tourism Fund: The proposed budget for the Tourism Fund, also managed by the Recreation Board, was reduced commensurate with lower revenues, also due to the pandemic. Overall reduction was \$5,050.00.

Crescent Valley Town Board: The proposed budget for the Town Board was basically flat, with a \$150.00 increase to cover insurance costs.

Sheriff: Undersheriff Tyler Thomas presented the budget for the Sheriff, with a net increase in operations of \$9,500.00. Amounts were adjusted in several categories, with the biggest change being addition of a line item for a K9 Unit to support two police dogs.

The proposed \$45,000.00 increase in capital outlay will fund a new camera system and increased security at the Crescent Valley Substation. Other requested capital expenses include \$275,000.00 for vehicle replacement (in the Capital Projects Fund), and \$100,000.00 for an assessment of the Detention Center (in the Building Maintenance Reserve Fund).

In response to an inquiry from Commissioner McKay, the Undersheriff prioritized the requested five new positions, as follows: a patrol deputy in Crescent Valley, a patrol deputy in Eureka, a traffic safety deputy (roaming), and then the two remaining patrol deputies (one for Crescent Valley and one for Eureka).

Public Works: Public Works Director Jeb Rowley presented the budgets for his department with assistance from Assistant Director Joyce Jeppesen. The proposed increase in the Public Works operating budget was \$17,200.00. The largest increase was in the communications support category. This covers annual maintenance and will allow replacement of the power supply at one of the radio repeater sites (part of a plan to upgrade one site per year). Minimal increases in other categories will support the additional administrative person, if approved.

Buildings & Grounds: The proposed operating budget for Buildings & Grounds reflected a net increase of \$98,900.00. Mr. Rowley explained a large portion of this is for the predicted rise in fuel costs. This budget finances repairs and maintenance in all County buildings and facilities – those planned, as well as contingency for the inevitable surprises.

Road Fund: Several adjustments were made in this budget, including addition of some categories to better track specific costs. The Road Fund operating budget had a proposed net increase of \$493,050.00, but it was noted that this budget includes \$430,000.00 in pass-through monies for the road maintenance agreements.

RTC Fund: No changes were proposed in the operating budget for the Regional Transportation Commission Fund, and capital outlay was reduced by over \$3 million.

Swimming Pool: The only proposed change to the Swimming Pool budget was an increase of \$200.00 for telephone/fax.

Public Parks: A \$4,000.00 increase was proposed in the operating budget for Public Parks, primarily for park repairs,

Emergency Management / Eureka County Fire District: The proposed net increase in operating expenses for Emergency Management was \$25,000.00 spread over several categories, including fire suppression, fuel, and repairs/maintenance. Ms. Todd clarified that part of this isn't an increase, but rather a transfer from the Crescent Valley Town budget.

Opera House: The only change in the budget requests for the Opera House was an additional \$500.00 for telephone/fax.

Museum: The proposed budget for the Museum had a net reduction of \$200.00.

Landfill Fund: A net decrease of \$2,500.00 was proposed in operating expenses for the Landfill. Ms. Todd commented that it costs around \$600,000.00 a year (including salaries and wages) to run the Landfill. Commissioner McKay responded that, before he became a Commissioner, he didn't realize how much it costs to run a county.

Planning Commission: No changes were proposed in the Planning Commission budget.

Eureka County Cemeteries: No changes were proposed in this budget.

Airport: There were no requested changes to the Airport operating budget. Chairman Goicoechea asked about status of the FBO (Fixed Base Operator) contract. Ms. Jeppesen replied that the contract is due for a two-year renewal in March.

The Chairman explained that, at some point in the future, MedX AirOne may be interested in stationing a helicopter at the Airport and would need hangar space. Chairman Goicoechea and Commissioner McKay have both spoken with MedX AirOne about the possibility of having a more permanent presence in Eureka. They felt this should be considered when it's time to renegotiate the FBO contract.

Mr. Rowley agreed that things have changed through the years that warrant adjustments to the contract. Requirements surrounding fuel testing are stringent and more changes will come once the upgraded jet fuel refueling skid system is installed and operating.

There was a brief discussion about a building to house the snow plow (a requirement of the FAA grant that was used to purchase the plow). Mr. Rowley explained that he is budgeting for a cultural survey at the Airport, which must be done before proceeding with the building because of the federal grant monies involved.

LEPC Grant: Ms. Jeppesen explained that the Local Emergency Planning Commission is funded by a SERC grant (State Emergency Response Commission) and is budgeted accordingly. For the upcoming fiscal year, \$30,000.00 was budgeted for capital outlay and \$4,000.00 for operating expenses.

Eureka Town Fund: The Town of Eureka Fund includes the fire department, streets and grounds, and street lighting. The proposed budget had a decrease of \$3,500.00 in operating funds and a decrease of \$55,000.00 for capital outlay.

Crescent Valley Town: The Crescent Valley Town Fund includes the fire department, street maintenance, and the park. The proposed budget included a decrease of \$7,500.00 in operating expenses and a decrease of \$73,000.00 in capital outlay.

Ms. Todd met earlier with Mr. Rowley and Ms. Jeppesen to discuss the Crescent Valley Town Fund, which typically expends about \$87,000.00 a year but only generates \$40,000.00 in tax revenue. They agreed to transfer certain monies to other General Fund accounts to get a little closer to balancing the town budget. For instance, a portion of the monies that support the fire departments in Crescent Valley, Beowawe, and Dunphy were moved to the Eureka County Fire District, and monies for the park were moved into the Public Parks budget. The town is not losing this funding, but certain items will be paid from these other accounts.

Eureka Water & Sewer Fund: Amounts were adjusted in several categories in this fund, with a substantial increase for repairs (contingency for a potential well failure) and a substantial decrease in contract services, resulting in a net increase to the water department operating budget of \$46,400.00, and a net decrease to the sewer department operating budget of \$237,000.00.

Crescent Valley Water Fund: The proposed operating budget for the Crescent Valley Water Fund was a net decrease of \$42,950.00, primarily due to a decrease in contract services.

There was a brief discussion about water tank cleaning and relining planned in the current year's budget. Mr. Rowley noted that the pandemic has made it difficult to get the divers to inspect the tank. The Chairman suggested it might be prudent to include those funds in the upcoming fiscal year in case the inspection and subsequent work is not completed by June. Mr. Rowley will visit with his utility staff about this.

Devil's Gate Water District: Several adjustments were proposed in this budget, simply to address rising energy costs, for a net increase to the operating budget of \$2,200.00.

All Utilities: Ms. Todd noted that the auditor again brought up the disparity between costs to operate the utilities versus the revenue generated from utility rates (which haven't been raised for years). As an example, the auditor cited relining of the sewer pond at a cost of \$700,000.00. The sewer department doesn't have that kind of revenue, so the project was financed with General Fund monies, which come from the County tax rate paid by all property owners (including those who don't use sewer service).

The Board agreed to place this on a future agenda, initially just as a discussion item.

Overall Budget: In relation to personnel, the group considered the positions added in Fiscal Year 2021, and now eight additional full-time positions are requested for Fiscal Year 2022, with a million-dollar price tag. Chairman Goicoechea voiced his concerns, commenting, "*If we continue to hire employees and we continue to neglect infrastructure, we're going to get so far upside down it isn't going to be funny!*"

Lastly, the Board asked Ms. Todd to create a summary of the proposed operating budgets, showing the percentage of all increases and decreases, along with a summary of capital outlay requests. These can be reviewed at the first meeting in March when preliminary revenue estimates will be available from the State.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Goicoechea called for public comments; there were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McKay motioned to adjourn the meeting; Chairman Goicoechea seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Approved by vote of the Board this 5th day of March, 2021.

/s/ J.J. Goicoechea, DVM
J.J. Goicoechea, Chairman

I, Jackie Berg, Commissioner Administrative Assistant, attest that these are a true, correct, and duly approved minutes of the February 4, 2021, meeting of the Board of Eureka County Commissioners.

/s/ Jackie Berg
Jackie Berg, Commissioner Administrative Asst.

I, Lisa Hoehne, Clerk Recorder of Eureka County, acknowledge and accept the attached minutes as approved by the Board of Eureka County Commissioners and attested to by the Commissioner Administrative Assistant.

/s/ Lisa Hoehne
Lisa Hoehne, Clerk