

COMMISSIONERS MEETING – TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2005 BUDGET REVIEW

Mrs. Geissman called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. with Stephen D. Hambley and Sharon A. Ray present.

John Stricker, County Administrator, and Chris Jakab, Finance Director, were also present.

Chris reviewed responses to the Commissioners letter requesting elected officials and department heads to consider decreasing some of their requests for the 2005 budget. The Auditor responded that he would not cut any of his request and that his staff is underpaid and the Treasurer didn't cut anything, but it was noted that he submitted a proposed budget with little increase. High salary requests were cut to be consistent with an increase of 3 ½%. In most cases where requests were below the 3 ½% they were increased to that level. The majority of line items are at the same level as last year unless there was clarification for the increases. The Prosecutor reduced his equipment request from \$18,000 to \$8,000; Planning Services reduced a couple of items and shifted some to other funding sources such as RPTT. Judge Collier reduced \$7,500 from various line items. He is still planning to implement an additional foreclosure fee of \$100 per transaction. They have been averaging 500 foreclosures a year. There is about a year lag on these because it takes about a year for foreclosures to go through. He is also looking at increasing that fee by \$50 the following year. Judge Kimbler responded that he didn't have any line items for decreasing. Adult Probation had total reductions of \$47,000 to offset increases in their salary account for a new probation officer and raises above the 3 ½% levels, and a statement was made that this would be done in subsequent years. He talked with Juvenile Court and they reduced \$21,000 from their request, \$50,000 from the Detention Center, and \$4,000 from Probate Court. The majority of the Detention Center reductions came from a combination of the requested overtime dollars and their contract line item. Through questioning, Chris stated that the total reductions are approximately \$135,000. The letter that was sent out sent an important message to all departments reminding them that the economy has not fully recovered.

Mrs. Geissman noted that the reductions didn't help the salary accounts or the excessive increases in salaries.

Chris stated that \$372,000 represents the difference between the target balance, which would be 20% of the annual revenue, which based on revenue estimates would be approximately \$7 million. This represents a shortfall from the target balance of \$372,000. It still allows an increased projected year-end balance over the past year of about \$40,000 and would allow a carry over of about 19%. In cases where there were disagreements with numbers, he used the lower numbers, which is only a handful, and they will not make or break the budget. There were also a couple of items that may be additions to the budget that will be discussed today. The total appropriation would go up 2% from last year's appropriation level.

John stated that it is important to note that the entire budget went up 2% and for those departments that had to go up substantially higher something had to be cut in other areas.

Chris stated that capital improvements did take a hit. The request was for over \$1 million and there is some possible exposure and repairs that can't get done.

John stated that we have to complete the moves in the Administration Building and replace the air conditioning at the Human Service Center.

Ms. Ray noted that over the last couple years the position has been that units that were requested for replacement are being repaired as long as they're still operating, unless there is an emergency.

Mr. Hambley noted that there was a 2.1% increase in expenditures and 4.6% increase in revenues in the general fund.

Chris stated that the \$250,000 proposed for capital improvements would supplement a carry over of around \$220,000. The Recorder's contracts for moving were encumbered before

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the year end, except for carpeting that will be funded this year. Also there is \$40,000 still in the old Board of Elections construction that should be transferred to capital improvements. Commissioners agreed to the closing of the old construction fund and transferring the \$40,000 to capital improvements.

There are a few areas where there was disagreement on the amounts. The first is with the Sheriff's budget for overtime, vehicles purchased and training. Mr. Hambley and Mrs. Geissman applied 3 ½% cost of living increases on those line items. Ms. Ray used some other numbers based on prior year expenditures. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to go with the 3 ½% and that if there are tragedies the overtime will be dealt with in another manner. Internally the Sheriff instituted some changes in policy last year that should help decrease the overtime expenses. There was money put into the temporary appropriations to purchase 5 replacement cruisers. The total request was for 10. After a brief discussion it was agreed to allow funding for 3 additional vehicles. Last year training costs were at \$3750 and the request for this year is \$10,000 for emergency medical dispatcher certification. It was agreed to reduce that amount and have them shift some other resources for training.

Relative to the Building Department, there was a request for repairs in their office. It was agreed this is a Maintenance issue and should be under that budget.

For the Soil & Water Conservation District, they have been given 2 allocations the last several years. They were given a base allocation and a supplemental that came from fees. They were basically using our money to leverage some state match amounts and those fees had to do with subdivision inspections, which is no longer being done by the District. The supplemental allocation is no longer part of the funding equation. However, the District has some expenses that are above what would be afforded at the base allocation level. Mrs. Geissman recommended a 3 ½% increase and Mr. Hambley and Ms. Ray split the difference between the base and original requested amount. Since their original request they reduced their request to \$132,500.

Mr. Hambley stated that there are 2 projects that were proposed for RPTT funds; the Auditor's upgrade at \$50,000 and the \$50,000 for the automatic vehicle locator. Some funding from Planning was shifted to RPTT. Planning involves land use and the District does perform a function in regards to land use such as erosion control, educational, and some stormwater work. He suggested shifting some of that expense, \$20,000, to the RPTT. If they don't get some of this support they will lose some of their staff that is needed to work with us on the flood plain regulations and stormwater NPDES Phase 2. They did get rid of one full time employee and cut hours of another employee. Through discussion he agreed that this would need to be revisited next year, especially if the Local Government Funds (LGF) is lost this year. After discussion it was agreed to use \$20,000 from RPTT for the District.

Miscellaneous items that were brought up include the annual report at an estimated cost of \$5,000. This was agreed to, noting that this is done every other year. There was also a discussion about the request for \$10,000 for a Housing Network consultant. Other organizations involved with housing will be involved in expenditures as well. It was agreed to reduce that request to \$5,000 in addition to the \$2,000 that has already been approved.

The following discussion regarding a request from the Red Cross for \$5,000 for a replacement disaster vehicle is verbatim.

Mr. Hambley: the Red Cross vehicle, I know Pat, you're aware of; this is the disaster vehicle they've been going around to all the townships, cities asking for their per capita share, like 50 cents; Kitty came to us when you were on vacation and asked us to include that and I asked Chris to put it on our; they do not qualify for Homeland Security money; we've already chased that one down twice and they just won't include that.

Mrs. Geissman: I'll just tell you my gut feeling right away; absolutely not. This is a charitable organization and if we start donating to charitable organizations every organization in this county is going to be coming for something from us; I used to be the director of a charitable

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organization and believe me all you need is for somebody to get their foot in the door; and I don't think this is something the county should be doing.

Ms. Ray: the tough thing for this is, and I guess that's why I'm really disappointed that it doesn't qualify under Homeland Security, is this is for their vehicle that they take to fire scenes and disaster scenes for EMS and fire personnel to get any kind of drinks, food, any of that kind of stuff; and Homeland Security won't cover it, which seems insane to me with some of the stuff they're paying.

Mrs. Geissman: I know, in putting the planters up at the Sheriff's Office and such under Homeland Security.

Ms. Ray: yeah, it seems like we're able to do all kinds of weird stuff but at the scene of a fire to have some place for the rescue workers to go seems to make an awful lot of sense; so I don't understand

Chris: is it because it was a Red Cross related

Mr. Hambley: no, because they said they don't do canteens, they don't do anything that provides that kind of food or comfort assistance; if it was training

Mrs. Geissman: they should just have a community fundraiser of some sort

Mr. Hambley: they have; they've

Mrs. Geissman: well they should have some more

Mr. Hambley: it is part of the public safety

Mrs. Geissman: or private donations from private foundations and grants and such; I just don't think it should come from government money; besides that we already pay for one that goes to disasters through our Emergency Management

Mr. Hambley: what's that?

Mrs. Geissman: our command vehicle that Buck has

Mr. Hambley: well, when it's needed; I'm not sure it goes to the house fires; it only goes to more community disasters

Ms. Ray: yeah, typically they don't use that for, from what I understand because that was part of my question too; I'm real torn on this

Chris: I'm trying to figure out how we would work that in terms of funding; typically we don't contribute

Mr. Hambley: how were the townships able to do? All the municipalities and townships are chipping in: I think there's only 1 or 2 that are not

John: actually I'm kind of surprised at how many townships did

Mr. Hambley: there is no doubt they need a new vehicle; and they're

Mrs. Geissman: then let the townships do it; I don't want to be part of it. I'm sorry I just feel strongly about it; and I think if you have the public sentiment they would say too county tax dollars just

Mr. Hambley: I don't necessarily agree with that

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Ms. Ray: well, if it was just going into their coffers, I think I would feel exactly the same way you do; I guess the fact that its going to be a vehicle that's going to be here for Medina County is a little different situation

Mrs. Geissman: you know for years and years we've been able to do what they're doing without having a big expensive vehicle

Ms. Ray: they've got; I mean, their vehicle is falling apart; I mean, I could put my foot through the floor; this is what they're trying to replace, the vehicle that they've got; so they have been doing it

Mrs. Geissman: I wonder why, the Sheriff just got a vehicle of some sort, I'm trying to think what he described that as to me; Westfield could have given that to the Red Cross to use because I understand that's a very nice, big vehicle to be used in emergencies and such

Ms. Ray: I think that was a surveillance one that they got

Mr. Hambley: it's not like the Red Cross didn't have any connections at Westfield; John Park, is Board chairman isn't he?

Ms. Ray: yeah

Mr. Hambley: so if anybody has some connections with Westfield he would

Ms. Ray: I know what you're talking about and that, I think, it was a surveillance box van that they were using; why they had surveillance equipment out there is a little confusing to me, but I don't

Mrs. Geissman: I guess so many of our non-profit agencies do so much for the community though that you could find justification if you wanted to, to support every one of them and I just don't think that's our place to do that. Enough said on my part.

Ms. Ray: let's get some additional information on how the townships are doing that?

Chris: it would be my recommendation that you enter into an agreement specifying that it shall go only for this purpose; it involves private non-profit

Mr. Hambley: would we get that information you're talking about, Sharon, from the Prosecutor's Office? Or from

Ms. Ray: probably Bill Thorne is the one whose given them a legal opinion on that

John: if they asked him

Mr. Hambley: I'm pretty sure they have

Ms. Ray: I'd like to talk to Bill Thorne and then maybe, I think I agree with Chris that we need to have something in writing; it's more of a

Chris: at one point there was a specific statute that said you can't contribute to a private non-profit and that goes way, way back

Mrs. Geissman: I don't think you should

Chris: but I think that's been amended

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Mrs. Geissman: I just really feel strongly about that and I would have to say something publicly; and Sharon, I think you're on that board, the Red Cross board, so be very careful it could not look good

Ms. Ray: well you know what, maybe I'll just resign from the board and give the money because I think it's the right thing to do; but let me look into what Bill Thorne has to say

Mr. Hambley: ok

Chris: so what do you want to do in the interim? Will you get back to me by Friday morning?

Ms. Ray: Friday?

Chris: we're trying to get this on Monday

Ms. Ray: I will get it to you by Friday morning

Chris: I need to plug that in if that's the way you want to go.

End of the verbatim.

Chris stated that there is consensus on salaries being at 3 ½%. Some things were shifted to RPTT for Planning Services so certain expenditures would not come out of the general fund. Economic Development withdrew a request for an additional \$10,000. Domestic Relations Court didn't back down on any of their requests and said they wanted to keep the open positions in their budget. The Clerk of Courts has \$100,000 in Title money to pay for their AS400 replacement and overtime. For the Public Defender it was agreed to a half-time Investigator/Intake position. There is still an issue with the Board of Elections equipment because they requested the same amount.

Mr. Hambley noted that Sue Strasser, Director, said they could produce lists on a CD because we didn't give them enough money. When he offered to bring this up she said no and that it really was a matter of communication.

Ms. Ray stated that we have come to the point where John needs to go out and get information from the Board. At this time we aren't able to get anything out of them right now even though they purchased additional equipment, software and staff.

Mr. Hambley stated that he just received a message that they would get this handled by the end of this week.

Ms. Ray noted that they are still using their old system because they can't get into their new system.

After further discussion on this, it was agreed that John will check into this further and also talk with the Elections Board.

Chris noted that the Board of Elections is the only department that has not converted to the Auditor's new accounting and payroll system because they don't have internet access. The Auditor's can't cancel all the modem lines to the system because of them, which is costing hundreds of dollars a month. There are 16 modem lines at \$20 each per month.

John stated that he talked with Armstrong and got a commitment to get it in quickly, but Sue said she doesn't have Board approval to do this.

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Chris stated that she should be told that the modem lines are being cancelled and shut down and if they need access to the system they'll have to come to this building to do their bills and payroll.

Chris proposed an increase from 30 cents to 36 cents for mileage reimbursement. The IRS limit is 37 ½ cents and the majority of counties are at 37 cents. He also presented information for a revised travel policy that is based on State Auditor recommendations. This specifies that no alcohol will be covered under meal reimbursement, better receipts will be needed for meal reimbursements, and that employees cannot benefit from use of their personal credit cards for county business such as frequent flyer miles. There was a brief discussion about out-of-state travel and it was noted that it may have to be considered for elimination if the LGF's are cut. He asked that Commissioners review this policy for later adoption.

Chris asked if the salary issue at the Animal Shelter had been finalized and was told that the salary in question was set at \$35,006 and it is not retroactive.

The following discussion regarding the County Home rates is verbatim.

Mrs. Geissman: we also need to up the rates at the County Home too for residents; we have to get that taken care of.

Chris: Lynn is asking about that on a fairly regular basis these days; as a reminder, there is a split rate structure now; \$1580 for new admissions and \$1100 for residents who were admitted prior to 2002 or 2003; that \$1100 rate has been in affect since 2001

Mrs. Geissman: summer of 2002 was when the additional rate came in

Mr. Hambley: the question is, is anybody that basically that rate would fit that's actually paying that amount?

Mrs. Geissman: I think there's about 10 of them

Chris: you mean if we increase the \$1100

Mr. Hambley: no, those are basically at the \$1100, anyone paying close to that?

Chris: private pays? yes

John: I thought there was just 1 paying it

Chris: I know of at least 1 and

Mrs. Geissman: I was doing some checking and I think its about 10

Chris: there are those who are paying the \$1580 and that would continue until their money ran out; there's Terry's friend, Walt, he's private pay and he's paying the (?); I don't know how much he's got

Mrs. Geissman: and then we have the ones from the ADAMH Board; 5 of those

Chris: the ADAMH Board would probably move upward because the contract says it would; but there's 120 day notification

Mrs. Geissman: then we really need to get that; I thought it was a 30 day

Chris: there is 120 day notification for the ADAMH Board to have that rate change implemented

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Mrs. Geissman: what is the actual cost now, \$1800 and something?

Chris: it's about \$60 a day based on a 30 day month, \$1800 a month

Mrs. Geissman: that's what we need to move it up to so that those that have the money pay it and those that don't it doesn't bother cause we've got a levy coming up and I think we have to show that we've been; I think its bad that we've let it go 3 years already without any increases

Chris: I think Lynn finds it hard to justify the split rate structure

Mrs. Geissman: well it is

Chris: I guess there's some sense to that; and I think we were towards the last few years of increasing about \$100 a year on average as I recall

Mrs. Geissman: but we have a levy in place now and I think we do have to show responsibility

Mr. Hambley: well but as you know when we put the levy on the ballot we said that's what we anticipated was \$100 a year from

Mrs. Geissman: no, we didn't

Mr. Hambley: yes, we did

Mrs. Geissman: no, we did not

Mr. Hambley: I've showed you

Mrs. Geissman: Steve, you have written that and said that

Mr. Hambley: I didn't write that, Chris wrote it and that's what Chris

Mrs. Geissman: that is not what he wrote; what he wrote to us was if we continue as we have in the past, this is what it would be; he was not recommending that; its

Mr. Hambley: that is what we voted on and what we've

Mrs. Geissman: no; no

Mr. Hambley: that was part of the document we used to determine the amount that we were going to put on the ballot

Mrs. Geissman: no

Mr. Hambley: yes it is; it's a matter of public record; I know we're in disagreement; I'm willing to go along with what

Chris: there's consensus I think among everyone in authority that it needs to change; it needs to be updated

Mr. Hambley: agree

Mrs. Geissman: yes, it does; maybe we should have a public hearing and see what the public has to say about it because

Mr. Hambley: we should take it to the Advisory Council as well

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Mrs. Geissman: no; I think that is our job to do, Steve, to establish rates, not the Advisory Committee

Mr. Hambley: they don't establish rates, but they could certainly make a recommendation

Mrs. Geissman: they don't need to do that; we need to do that; that's our job; if we have a public hearing and anyone has a problem with charging them exactly what it costs to live there if they have the money, then they will object to that; but I don't think you'll find anyone objecting to that

Mr. Hambley: I object to it

Mrs. Geissman: why

Mr. Hambley: I object to it based on what we told the voters

Mrs. Geissman: you didn't promise the voters anything

Mr. Hambley: yes, we did; I'm sorry but

Mrs. Geissman: no, you did not; I know you've written that and I'd like, show me one document

Mr. Hambley: I've already shown you the document

Mrs. Geissman: no, you haven't

Mr. Hambley: I've shown you several times; it is that original document

Mrs. Geissman: no, the voters were never promised anything; if you can find a document to show me the voters were promised something I will then apologize; but otherwise, absolutely not; the voters were not promised anything

Mr. Hambley: they were promised what the millage would be and the calculation was based on certain anticipated income/revenues; that sheet that was used to determine that had those numbers on it; had that anticipated \$100 per year each year increase; and I don't see a justification for going beyond that

Mrs. Geissman: well, if people have the money to pay what it costs to live there that is justification

Mr. Hambley: for how long? The people that are there, it's basically how long does it take them before they run out of money?

Mrs. Geissman: well, so what? Now you sound like Joyce Farnsworth; their money will disappear faster

Mr. Hambley: thank you;

Mrs. Geissman: well, that's the idea, if they have some money let them use it and when they run out of money, that's what the levy is for; you don't expect someone that has a very small income staying independent in their home to be paying for someone that could pay their own way; that is wrong

Chris: well, just remember the time frames for the ADAMH Board its 120 day notice, and I think for the residents its 30 or 60 days

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Mrs. Geissman: 30 days because I thought all we had to do was 30

Chris: so, no matter what decision is made or when, you still have to

Mrs. Geissman: well, let's just schedule a public hearing then and address this and get it done and over with; what do we have to do, Pam, give a 30 day notice for a public hearing?

Pam: it has to be advertise twice; 2 consecutive weeks and then the third week you have the hearing

Mrs. Geissman: okay, let's do that

Mr. Hambley: how much is that going to cost us to advertise a public hearing? Cause you're talking about the public hearing notice and everything right?

Pam: yes; I don't work with the bill part of it; I just turn those over to Chris

John: probably not that much

Chris noted that employment ads for the Beacon were \$700 each for 1 Sunday and the PD will probably be more. These ads may be a little wordy and may cost less if they were shorter.

There was a discussion and agreement about reviewing the ads for Workforce and Transit to see if the employment ads can be shorter and less costly.

Mrs. Geissman: well, put a hearing on after one of our meetings, whenever you can get that arranged.

End of the verbatim.

There were no further individual budget issues to be reviewed.

Mrs. Geissman asked if any court orders for salaries in the courts had been filed. Chris stated that the Auditor's payroll received memos or journal entries saying what their salaries were set at. They are not court orders. John stated that the only journal entry was for the Prosecutor's salary.

Relative to Probation, their overall salary account was reduced by the amount of the salary increases and the new position by shifting the total costs, through other line items, to Probation Services. This means no additional cost to the general fund. The revenue was an offset for the Common Pleas Courts salaries, and Judge Collier offered \$7500 worth of other cuts. There were 5 to 7 court salaries discussed relative to 13% to 40% increases and Chris understands those were implemented.

Chris stated that he tried to project in 2006, assuming the 20% LGF, increases in some revenue sources, cost of living, and stabilization of the health care costs. The County is still in decent shape with about 17% carry over, but that will go down in successive years. The County can survive LGF reductions, but it will impact budgets in the future by eroding reserves unless costs are cut.

Mrs. Geissman stated that she would share the LGF Task Force information with Ms. Ray for the upcoming NOLLA meeting. Relative to the upcoming press conference on the 16th at the Statehouse, she is not sure anyone from our group will be picked to speak

There was further discussion on the proposed LGF reductions to local governments, libraries and park districts as well as the affect the State sales tax expiration will have. Also the

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status of the State’s transportation budget was discussed and it was not clear whether that has passed at this time or not.

Mr. Hambley noted that there was no request for RPTT funds for the Transportation Improvement District (TID).

The RPTT is being used for Planning Services and the Soil & Water Conservation District. This budget proposes that 2 of the 3 are in the general fund and the one continues to fund Tax Maps. One of those general fund ones goes into the bond retirement fund. We are no longer using that retirement fund to pay off the Jail and it is being transferred to the general fund.

There was a discussion about the TID not moving forward with some of their projects other than Hartman Road and Route 18. They will also have money coming in for the Technology Park plus a grant. They have enough to get through this year. If the State funds the TID’s as they have in the past it would be a boost to their funding.

If the LGF’s are cut, the Board will need to start reviewing options such as revenue enhancements and expenditure decreases by mid summer. There are also going to be big issues such as the judges wanting another court and the Sheriff’s concerns about Jail capacity.

At 11:32 a.m. Mr. Hambley moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by Ms. Ray. There was no further discussion. Roll Call showed all Commissioners voting AYE.

MEDINA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

Patricia G. Geissman

Stephen D. Hambley

Sharon A. Ray

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela J. Terrill, Clerk