

**Rock Island County
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes**

October 2nd, 2023 3:00 PM

The Budget Committee of the Rock Island County Board met at the above date and time in the Administration Office of the Rock Island County Administration Office.

Meeting Minutes as follow:

Call to order and roll call

Chairman L. Moreno called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM

Members Present:

Chairman L. Burns, K. Swanson, R. Simmer, D. Adams, J. Woods, E. Dewith, R. Brunk

Others Present:

N. Camlin, J. Grafton, R. Berger, A. Palmer, T. Weikert, Sheriff Hart, Capt. Erickson,
Judge C. Darrow, V. Bluedorn, C. Przybyla

Chairman Moreno stated the order of presentation would follow the agenda. He stated the committee may ask for more information on requests for a subsequent meeting.

Public Comment

Chairman Moreno made three calls for public comment; There were no requests for public comment.

Review of 2024 Budget Requests

Court Administration- Chief Judge Darrow & Victoria Bluedorn

Chief Judge Clarence Darrow presented the requests from Court Administration ;He highlight over the last 10 years, there had been fundamental changes in the court systems in Illinois. E-File, Access to Justice and remote court hearings with huge amount of technology and coordination and expansion and influx of foreign languages.

He stated the Justice Center was currently short two courtrooms and noted Iowa stacks trials but Illinois does not; the amount of administration and support for the courts to run has to be more refined, precise, professional and thorough. He stated interpreters and access for the disabled was very important; and each professional is cross trained as deputy court admin first and handles collateral duties. He stated over the last two years, compensation needed to suit the job title. He stated Peoria County circuit size was most comparable to Rock Island County. He continued the employees were vested, trained and professional with training in a new jury system at a cost of \$410,000. He mentioned one employee was bilingual as well which was a cost savings to the County.

Mr. Dewith is present

Chairman Moreno asked about how the SAFE-T Act would affect the Court Systems; Judge Darrow stated this was relatively unknown and the funding had been shifted away. He stated the jail population was lower, but more time with probation, jail services and clerks as well as public defenders. He stated it looked promising that the legislature funded supplemental monies to the supreme court and allocated to the counties to supplement the public defenders with extra responsibilities due to the SAFE-T Act. He stated many private attorneys are paid by bonds.

Chairman Moreno expressed the concern from some board members at how positions/offices would be funded if revenues were not coming in.

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Finance Director Mr. Berger stated the requests specifically for each position and provided the information for increase history for the positions.

Request of Deputy Court Administrator / Jury Administrator 22% increase from \$20.50 to \$25.00 (\$42,804 to \$52,000) +\$9,396 annually

Request of Deputy Court Administrator / Jury Administrator 20% increase from \$17.48 to \$21.00 (\$36,498 to \$43,848) +\$7,349 annually

Request of Deputy Court Administrator / IT Liaison 18% increase from \$20.40 to \$24.00 (\$42,595 to \$50,112) +\$7,516 annually

Champaign and Peoria Counties were used as comparables and justification for the amount of work and the different work required.

Mr. Swanson is present

Judge Darrow stated he conducted a thorough review of all the positions, highlighting the tremendous amount of responsibilities to execute and accounted for inflation across the board. Chairman Brunk asked if the 22, 20, 18 percentage reflect any cost of living increase. Mr. Berger stated those did not include any cost of living (COLA) increases and gave the figures for the positions with the 4.5% increases.

Dr. Simmer asked why the wages were so far behind; Mr. Berger stated beginning of this year there were increases; At the time the positions were created, they were too low to begin with and last year, there were increases to where they thought the positions should be.

Ms. Bluedorn stated due to zoom/virtual court was a large component with a huge increase in cases and the IT, interpreters were very important.

Dr. Moreno stated part of the concern was a \$22,000 raise in the course of two years and wanted to see something more in line with step increases. Ms. Bluedorn stated she thought there would be a comparison study and see the projects being undertaken and responsibilities of the office.

Dr. Simmer asked if the positions would be money generating or if the positions would cover themselves.

Ms. Bluedorn stated she hoped once they would receive a fair wage for the positions with the COLA raises; She stated staff was absorbing a lot more work making up with COVID, with zoom courts and the SAFE-T Act changes.

Mr. Dewith stated it sounded more intricate workload and if there was more training. Ms. Bluedorn stated she did not populate the training line because she did not have the time to let people train off-site. Chairman Brunk stated the requests for the three positions and where they were in the previous year, he stated \$10.23 and \$6.40 and \$4.82 increases respectively over a two-year period.

Mr. Swanson stated how far the retrograde was in the previous year. He congratulated editorial in the Argus with the effectiveness and efficiency in the Argus Newspaper.

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Dr. Simmer stated he though the but didn't want to lose employees. He wanted to pay employees accordingly.

Dr. Moreno thanked Judge Darrow and Ms. Bluedorn.

There was a consensus from the committee to have staff streamline the information.

Circuit Clerk- Tammy Weikert

Ms. Weikert stated three increases for three employees; she stated the systems man is not gen. funded with revenue generating source. Manages for circuit clerk's and courts. She stated the non union positions were stagnant without step increases for a considerable amount of time. She stated the exec assistant position was a non-general fund position through clerk ops and replaced former admin assistant of 15-20 years.

She stated the exec position was on the lower end and continued dedication; tri-lingual and is doing all the same

Bridget Edgeworth acting in 2020 and filled the duties of financials and managing new staff. She stated 3/4th of new staff was hired in the last few years.

She stated she had been there for 29 years. She asked or 6% 5% and 9% and it would help with compression.

Average years for union employees; She stated the two positions were non-general fund except for benefits.

Mr. Berger provided a historical overview of the increases. Chief Deputy typically had 2-3 GWI. The systems manager received a \$1 increase from 5/2 2021. He stated many were comparable to the 4.5% increase.

Who was comparable study

Ms. Weikert stated each county was different; one thing is complicated due to 43 positions ;

Ms. Weikert stated she had been very responsible for funds she manages and that revenues can handle it. She stated

Mr. Adams asked if the SAFE-T act would affect the two non-gen fund Ms. Weikert was hopeful there would be compensation to take care of the losses.

Chairman Brunk asked if the increases were on top of Cost of Living Increases; She stated it did not include the COLAs, and would be on top. Mr. Berger stated needing additional information, and these numbers were not included with the COLA and the figures were incorrect.

Mr. Adams stated the contract was 3% increases; Mr. Berger stated additional 1.5 average step increase and would take care of compression. She reiterated that two positions were non general funded, management positions and the entire court systems.

Sheriff's Office- Sheriff Darren Hart

Sheriff Hart presented his requests to the committee; he stated this was the second year for the budget; he stated new legislation was part of some considerations. He stated it was almost unchanged from 2023 except for inmate med costs at a cost of \$450,000 and 5% increase in food costs for the incarcerated.

He stated looking at potential cost savings. He was requesting two additional deputy positions Decrease of inmates by 45 two weeks into the safety act. Huge increase in transports and thousands of dollars in travel costs and overtime. He stated he would know more in 12 months where the failures and

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success were in the SAFE-T Act. Two deputy sheriff positions were noted for Phoenix Alternative Center and Eagle Ridge Schools with three resource officers, and SROs at Riverdale, Sherrard and Rock Ridge; with an annual fee of \$55,000.

Under his administration the sheriff stated those fees had been raised and to help offset costs. He stated there were 1000 hrs. of transportation costs, and it was currently at about 3,000 hours. He stated being down about 6 deputy sheriffs. He stated it was very hard to staff public safety positions. He asked for increases in telecommunications. Public safety worked through COVID and some national incidents. He was thankful the county funded law enforcement.

Mr. Berger stated the Sheriff's increases for captains at 6% and chief deputy at 7%. Sheriff Hart stated seeing higher averages across the board for positions. Chief deputy's pay was about 15-17,000 behind the average in like jurisdictions, with Captains at \$112-113,000 and the increases would be comparable. He noted having a great staff currently.

Mr. Berger noted the 6% would be total and Sheriff Hart agreed.

Mr. Swanson asked about the SRO positions and what degree of flexibility those positions had. Sheriff Hart stated using staff from the road operations to fill other positions such as court assignments, medical, and leaving street patrol positions. He stated the partnership helped and every shift was down at least one position, and backfilling position.

Mr. Berger clarified the numbers annually were incorrect and noted changes needing to circle back on the figures.

Sheriff Hart also noted overtime in dispatch and stated could not run a 911 center with one individual. He mentioned former Sheriff Bustos mandated at least two dispatchers at minimum for office safety.

Medical and health expense increases were all general fund. Sheriff Hart noted investing heavily in infrastructure; HVAC systems, painting, lighting etc.

Administration- County Administrator Jim Grafton

County Administrator Grafton stated listening to the conversation and noted how productive working through sensitive issues were. He was impressed that the department head leaders were supporting their staff. He mentioned when he worked at the city, the same compression issues were evident. He noted the average step increase at 1.5% year by year. He stated when RW Baird worked with the County, a report from August 23, 2023 titled "Improved Budgetary Performance with Very Strong Reserves" We have revised our view of the County's budgetary performance to Strong from a Weak position. At the same time, we have revised our view of the budgetary flexibility to Very Strong from Weak and believe the County has addressed the issues of funding public safety and the fund balance has significantly increased through operations surpluses. In addition, with the sale of Hope Creek Care Center, long term contingent general fund liability no longer exists, as the center has loans outstanding from the general fund."

He noted those were positive statements and positive stories were coming out about the County from the Safe-T Act as well. He stated through the agenda requests, he wanted to provide caution and look at the

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position and number, not the person. He wanted to provide continuity for wage increases.

Mr. Grafton claimed responsibility for department heads, directors and office staff. Nonunion would increase 4.5% at a cost of \$23,194.00. Mr. Berger stated County-wide it would be about \$68,000.

Chairman Brunk stated if not aligned with a union, the COLA would be 3 percent. Mr. Adams stated negotiations were in progress for Local 150 for December raises.

Mr. Berger stated needed to know what percentages to run to provide information to the committee. Mr. Swanson mentioned the health care planning committee decided to request a 5 % increase for health care premiums. He also noted wanting to look at comparables with three categories; at range, behind, and critically behind. Mr. Berger noted wanting to establish for Rock Island County a living wage; Dr. Simmer stated the benefits package was to be considered too.

Mr. Swanson noted being extremely competitive in health insurance costs etc.

Mr. Burns asked if the 1.5% increase was for this year; Dr. Moreno stated yes, as no policy was being set.

The Animal Control Shelter was discussed and Chairman Brunk stated Mr. Grafton was working on the animal shelter issues and the staffing for the animal shelter. He noted wanting to see the shelter completely fund itself and bring on smaller communities. He stated animal control was a core function but wanted to look at restructuring, and Ms. DeYoung was going above and beyond.

Mr. Dewith noted wanting to revisit the Animal Control agreement.

Closed Session as per

- 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) 1; The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.

No closed session; no action necessary

Committee member opportunity for brief comment *(no decisions will be made)*

Adjourn

No further business; the committee adjourned at 5:05 PM

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be held on
Friday, October 6th, 2023 at 3:00 PM