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COUNTY & PROBATE COURT CLERK

QUORUM COURT MINUTES

NOVEMBER 20, 2023

237-244

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Judge Day called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Invocation was led by Clint Burns, Restore Church, Brookland.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Justice Barnes.

Roll was called and twelve Justices were present, Justice Weinstock was absent.

No OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Judge Day opened the floor for discussion on the 2024 Budget and asked where the Court wanted to start. Judge Day began the discussion with the list of changes in the 2024 budget.

Judge Day stated this particular budget is reasonably conservative. They are projecting revenue to be up 7% from last year. The biggest part of that is property tax. Jail fees are up \$500,000 from this past year. One example to show how conservative was the interest income. This current year we have budgeted \$100,000 in interest income, and it's been high enough that we increased it \$500,000. That is still relatively low. Judge confirms with the County Treasurer Terry McNatt that they've been taking in about \$200,000 a month. They've been careful not to project revenues to be so high that it would come back and bite us.

Some high notes are property insurance. The property insurance costs have gone up 16% for us and we are in a high-risk management pool with all the other counties. Most counties had a 30% increase, but our claim history has been good, and the county was able to get the cost paired down compared to the other counties.

Salaries are up after the Johanson Study. We focused on our two problem areas right now which are hiring law enforcement and CDL truck drivers. The study looked at every position in the county and analyzed the job description with what a fair market value is and compared that to other businesses in Jonesboro, in Arkansas, other Class 6 counties, and then a few cities.

The County is changing networks from United Healthcare to Cigna. The county looked into some of the recommendations after the issues we'd had and felt like it was a better fit and we'd have better service for our people by changing. We are going to stay with ABA for this next year with an asterisk, noting that we had some customer service problems earlier in the year but felt they had gotten better in the last three months and would stay with them another year. We are changing to Delta Dental. We went down the list of providers and they had the best deal for county employees. The cost will be up a little bit but so will the product and the benefits are really good. We are also going with VSP/Vision Service Plan provider for vision insurance. Then lastly, we're adding to our insurance program at no cost to our employees, an assistance program that St Bernards offers for employees and family, up to 6 visits per year, for mental health services, drug dependency issues, and a wide range of things where you can have those visits confidentially to get help for those things in life that don't necessarily fall under the medical benefit. We will be having further meetings and getting more information about that.

Moving on, going down the list of differences in this budget.

We know the County Clerk and the Election Commission have the Primary and the Presidential Elections next year, bigger elections and lots more people involved, greater expense. So, you will note that fluctuation year to year.

The Collector's budget, the Fund 3000 balance was down, and to cover that we moved expenses from Fund 3000 to Fund 1000. This is not an actual increase in budget, just the right thing to do.

County Assessor is up on legal \$75,000. The County has several ongoing lawsuits, and the Assessor's expenses have gone up because of the lawsuits and we want to accurately reflect that moving forward.

The Maintenance department increase is for the accent piece around the front above the walkway, or mancered wall, and for the Lake City roof as well.

Department 125, Interfund transfers, previously Legislative Audit never asked us to do this, but audit has asked us to add 8 million to the budget going forward, but it's not a real expense, just allows us to show the movement of money, from one pocket to another.

District Court, the increase of City of Jonesboro lease expense.

The Juvenile Department asked for a vehicle, and we thought it was justified.

The Detention Center, note food cost is up 21% and medical is up 5%. We have a lot going on in our Juvenile Detention Center and they needed to add bed space and needed to add 3 Detention Center employees.

Employee Insurance fund, Healthcare costs did not go up for the employees.

We have a lot of grants. One to replace a generator, then our capital funds to cover the building expansion expenses.

The Road Fund is down a little bit, and we won't be taking on as many projects next year. Backing off cutting expenses this year, no real big reconstruction projects.

ARPA money that has to be designated by end of next year and spent by the end of 2026. We have three HVAC projects going, with the first one bidding out first of next year. That's money for the HVAC projects.

We have a grouping of brand-new STAR court grants going out and new to us this year.

The Crisis Stabilization Unit has a state grant that gets us to June, so this will get us through past that.

The Law Library is next. Scott Emerson has taken care of the Law Library for 35 years and he has officially retired. Initially when the law library was set up, they weren't required to go through the claims process. We have made that change and put it in our budget and will have accountability there to see where their expenses are and where the money is being spent.

Justice Allison asked if all the new Cigna health insurance benefits are going to be similar to what they were, and with the same deductible. Judge Day answers yes. Deductible and pharmacy are the same. Dental benefit maximum per year is the same. Justice Allison confirms that St Bernards will charge a small fee to the county, but the benefit is free to the employee. Judge Day responds that is correct.

Justice Allison asked for the cost and Judge Day thinks it was \$25.00 per employee per year. He would need to check for sure. Judge Day could be off per year or per month and will follow back up with that.

Justice Allison asked regarding the Presidential Election expenses for the County Clerk and the Election Commission. Judge Day responds this is just the expense side, to remember that some of this is reimbursed. To compare it with non-presidential election years, she could refer back to last year's budget.

Justice Allison asked about the Lake City roof. Will the County put out a bid package. Judge Day answers yes, anything over \$50,000 has to be bid out per State law.

Justice Allison asked about the new budgeted 4 patrol vehicles and then asked about the vehicles recently purchased. Sheriff Boyd said yes, the Dodge Durangos have already been received and are being used. This is for an additional 4 vehicles needed for 2024.

Justice Allison asked about the Juvenile vehicle request. Judge Day answers yes, we are going to split that expense and it will be paid from two different funds.

Justice Allison asked next about Dept 418, the Detention Center. We have the 3 Detention Center employees and supervisor we approved. Judge Day answers yes, that the increase shows the whole department and all their expenses, with the pay raises, but rolled into that is the three new employees and moving the supervisor. It's any increase there.

Justice Allison asked about the average 11% salary increases, if that is cost of living and raises together, or do we have any idea what the cost-of-living percentage would be. Judge Day responds he did not ask them to split them out. The request was just to bring them up to current market value.

Justice Allison asks with current food costs for the jail up 21%, do we ever bid that out. Judge Day responded we bid that contract out two years ago, and in that contract, it has a provision that if we choose there is a cost-of-living adjustment based upon cpi, but found it was better to follow the producers price index. We have chosen to sign with them for another year using the price index. Justice Allison then asked about last year's bid and Judge Day answered it was just an automatic renewal.

Justice Barnes asked about the ARPA funds since they have to be obligated, wanting to know if we had a list of how we want to obligate those funds. Judge Day states that we are just following their guidance. Judge Day has a meeting scheduled with the Chamber and CWL about possible improvements to the water and sewer lines. With the HVAC and possible water and sewer lines we will have just about spent all that money.

Justice Allison asked about the library and how their current funding stands, and if there is still money in reserves. Judge Day says he has not seen a financial statement from them. Justice Allison asked about a petition circulating in Monette to keep their library branch open. Judge Day states the County does not budget the library, they work through their own budget, and he has heard they are considering cutting services at Monette and Caraway. Justice Allison asked if it was because of lack of use, and Judge Day answered that was a great question for the library director.

Justice Cook asked why Sheriff Boyd's budget is less this year than last and Sheriff Boyd answers vehicles.

Justice Longmire asked regarding the Craighead County Saferoom Project if the amount had increased. Judge Day responded that they were not able to spend the entire amount for completion this year and they broke apart what they estimated would be spent next year.

With no other comments or questions, Judge Day asked the deputy clerk to read the Appropriation Ordinance for 2024 Budget. The clerk read the Appropriation Ordinance.

Justice Rogers made a motion to approve the budget and Justice Cook seconded.

Judge Day asked for the roll to be called, and it passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Justice Forrest states he is cooking turkeys for Jonesboro High School if anyone is interested in a Thanksgiving turkey.

Motion to adjourn was made by Justice Williams and seconded by Justice Couch.

Judge Day called for a vote, and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

Road Committee minutes
11/13/2023

Chairman Cline called the road committee together at 5:44 PM. Those present were Justice Couch, Justice Tennison, Justice Barnes, and Road Superintendent John James. John gave an update on road work being done.

The committee reviewed plats for Norman Leonard - CR 304; Cameron Campbell - Hwy 351; Eric Lehman – CR 304; Jimmy Cox - CR 352 and Jane Gaskill – Hwy 141. Justice Barnes made a motion to approve, 2nd by Justice Tennison. All were in favor.

With no other business, Justice Couch made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Justice Tennison. All were in favor and the committee adjourned at 5:54 PM.

Public Service Committee
11/13/2023 Minutes

Those in attendance for the meeting:

Committee Members: Justice Linda Allison, Justice Brad Noel, Chairman Justice Richard Rogers, and Justice Kevin Williams. Also attending: Harold Carter.

The Public Service committee meeting was called to order at 5:44 p.m. by Justice Rogers.

Justice Rogers read a resolution to appoint Mark Mayfield to the Law Library Board for a five-year term. Justice Allison made a motion to approve, and Justice Williams seconded the motion. The motion passes 4-0 to move to the full court.

Next, Justice Rogers read a resolution to appoint Bryant Marshall to the Law Library for a four-year term. Justice Allison made a motion to approve, and Justice Noel seconded the motion. The motion passes 4-0 .

And last, Justice Rogers read a resolution to appoint Andrew Nadzam to the Law Library for a three-year term. Justice Noel made a motion to approve, and Justice Williams seconded the motion. The motion passes 4-0.

With no other business, a motion to adjourn was made by Justice Williams, and seconded by Justice Noel. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Justice Allison.

Finance Committee Minutes
November 13, 2023

Chairman Longmire called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:44 pm. Present were committee members Justice Pasmore, Justice Weinstock, Justice Cook, and Justice Forrest. Also present were County Judge Marvin Day, Circuit Clerk David Vaughn, Treasurer McNatt, Collector Eddington, and County Clerk Mary Dawn Marshall.

Collector Eddington presented the tax collection report for October. Total taxes collected in 2023 equal \$101,321,346. Current tax in 2023 is up 9.4%, and 2023 delinquent real estate taxes are down 16.6%. Delinquent personal taxes for 2023 are up 4.8%. Justice Weinstock told Collector Eddington that he was doing a good job.

Treasurer McNatt said that he has lost his voice and asked the Finance Committee had any questions about the reports. There were none.

Chairman Longmire read the Appropriation Ordinance to establish 2024 rates of taxation. Justice Forrest made a motion to approve, seconded by Justice Pasmore. There was no discussion, the motion passed, and it will be heard by the full court on November 27, 2023.

With no other business, Justice Forrest made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Justice Cook. All were in favor and the Finance Committee adjourned at 5:51 pm.