

**York County Budget Committee
Minutes
May 20, 2024
6:00 p.m.
Commissioners' Meeting Room**

Present: Rebecca Bowley, James Smith, Jonathan Martell, Susan Wiswell, Lisa Pratt, Jo-Ann Putnam, Marc Lessard, Danica Briggs

ZOOM LINK:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89679714808?pwd=Tk1WdkdvV2lNNDFRMjlLdVJKZzFHdz09>

1. Introductions and Welcome: Jo-Ann Putnam, Chairperson welcomed all.

2. Election of Budget Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary
(Please note: Kathy Dumont, Administrative Assistant to the County Manager has offered to continue as the Committee Secretary.)
Marc Lessard nominated Jo-Ann Putnam as the Chairperson and Rebecca Bowley seconded the motion.
Vote-unanimous.
Marc Lessard was nominated by Jo-Ann Putnam as the Vice-President and Rebecca Bowley seconded the motion.
Vote unanimous.
Jo-Ann Putnam nominated Lisa Pratt as secretary. Becky Bowley seconded the motion. (Kathy Dumont, Assistant to the County Manager will continue to take minutes of meetings).
Vote- unanimous.

3. a. Begin Review of FY'25 proposed budget, Greg Zinser, County Manager (Q&A)
County Manager Zinser explained (summary tab) that this budget reflects a 7.38% increase with a 9.6% tax increase. He continues that the county's revenues are stagnant. The primary drivers (of the budget) are wages and benefits, particularly in the jail as well as our contracted services.
Committee Member Marc Lessard asked where does 9.6% (increase) come from?
County Manager Zinser explained it is the money we needed based on our revenues.
Marc Lessard asked if it is correct that 7.38% is in expenditures but revenues are falling short. County Manager Zinser responded that this is the first year in a long time where we have had that massive shift.
Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell stated that the 9.6% is tied to municipal assessments from the increases in perceived value of home prices. Is that correct?
County Manager Zinser replied that it reflects the money we are seeking from the municipalities to run county operations.

Supplemental Information-Revenue-
County Manager Zinser stated that we are concerned with the revenue with Deeds and it is tied into the housing market. Homes sold are decreasing in price so that affects the transfer

tax. We feel we will see an increase in tax foreclosures next year, commented the County Manager.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked why would we expect that?

County Manager Zinser replied that typically as the number of homes go down, there is more pressure on homeowners resulting in lower than expected tax collections.

Historically, that is what we have seen.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard responded that he would be happy to debate because of what we have seen over 24 months in regard to getting down to the lower interest rates. People are going to try as hard as they can to see those rates. I think we will experience an anomaly.

County Manager Zinser explained that the budget reflects a little ahead on transfer tax vs. what was budgeted. He added that the budget shows usage of \$550,000 in reserves to attempt to reduce some taxes.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked what remains in that account?

County Manager Zinser replied, \$3.1 million.

Marc Lessard asked what is the total size of the budget?

County Manager Zinser responded, \$25 million so we are right around the 20% mark.

Our bond rating is good and we have zero debt at this point.

County Manager Zinser informed all that we must put the opioid settlement fund into the reserves but we didn't take it out of our budget last year as it is all dedicated to the regional recovery center.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked if that must get voted on.

County Manager Zinser stated that it is not income on the budget. He added that the Budget Committee's role is the county general fund.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell replied that he sees it as income.

County Manager Zinser informed all that deeds recording looks like it is going down and we will be lucky if we hit our current target so we are reducing it.

County Manager Zinser added that the county is hoping to see a spring jump. It traditionally happens in April, May and June. Maybe then we will hit \$1.3 million in Deeds revenue.

a. Review department budgets with department leaders

Sheriff's Office budget-

Chief Deputy Jeremy Forbes presented the patrol budget and explained increases in equipment due to body cameras for deputies. We don't have them now and this is factored into the budget over a five-year period.

Chief Deputy Forbes added that the other budget item is reflected in computer software as the department is purchasing new programs such as one to keep track of field training.

County Manager Zinser explained that the Maine Paid FMLA law expense is reflected in each department's budget.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked is it correct that there is a 6.09% raise for the Sheriff?

County Manager Zinser explained that one has to look at the individual calculations. Most are getting 4% COLA and 2% step depending what pay scale they are on. The Sheriff would get both of those this year.

Jonathan Martell questioned the telephone costs in the Sheriff's budget of \$60,000.00.

County Manager Zinser replied that includes a lot of phones and it encompasses cellular phones as well as air cards for computers in cars and wifi to go back to Sanford through IMC.

Budget Committee Member James Smith asked does the budget fund the vacancies?

County Manager Zinser responded it does and we are not proposing eliminating these positions as the plan is to fill those vacancies. Chief Deputy Forbes added that they have people in the hiring process.

Budget Committee Member Becky Bowley asked if the department was expecting any retirees?

Chief deputy Forbes replied, not at this time.

County Manager Zinser explained that a deputy can cost anywhere from \$85,00 to \$130,000 a year as there are lots of variables, including health insurance, days off, number of years they've worked here, etc.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked what vehicle expenses covered.

Chief Deputy Forbes explained that they are on a rolling replacement and slated to purchase six cruises this year.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked when we go to purchase new vehicles do finance or pay cash?

County Manager Zinser replied that we pay cash.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked since there are four vacancies, does that change the number of vehicles needed?

Chief Deputy Forbes replied, no, we stay on the same rotation. The cruisers get old or are in the shop, etc.

Budget Committee Member James Martell asked if the \$280,000 is net of trades?

County Manager Zinser explained that the cost is between \$35,000-\$38,000 a year per vehicle. He added that we have money in vehicle reserves that funds any potential shortfall.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked if that money is in a dedicated line item or part of your \$3.1 million?

County Manager Zinser replied that it is separate.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked if there is a reason it doesn't get rolled in?

County Manager Zinser responded that is the way we do the budget. We don't do net budgeting.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell commented that the electricity line budgeted at \$2,000 is very low.

County Manager Zinser explained that is for the food pantry and that the electricity costs for the county are budgeted through the facilities budget.

Jail Budget-

Sheriff King presented the budget via zoom and explained that it is similar to last year except for the cost-of-living increases and contractual increases.

He explained that they have a new contract for inmate prescriptions and that they were previously paid out of the old contract.

County Manager Zinser explained that prescription costs have gone through the roof.

With the new vendor, we can now look at actual bills. He added that we changed medical contracts.

Sheriff King commented that there is a slight increase in pre-trial services.

Water usage fees are up 12% but beyond our control, explained Sheriff King.

Sheriff King stated that they now have a contractor for shredding and can do mass disposal.

County Manager Zinser explained the jail tax cap.

Sheriff King stated that they do always put in for the supplemental State funding.

County Manager Zinser added that we believe we are going to get an extra \$255,000 next year and that it is reflected here in this budget.

County Manager Zinser explained that only one vendor bid on mowing and their rate was very high, so mowing is being done through Manpower.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell commented that \$1.1 million is shown for overtime jail wages. Is there money being spent on recruitment to minimize that as it's a lot of money.

County Manager Zinser replied, yes and that we are hopeful that the more people we bring on we will reduce overtime.

Budget Committee Member asked if the county was having trouble filling those spots because of wages?

County Manager Zinser explained that they are working to increase the wages. He added that the average starting salary is \$21.67 plus \$3.00 shift differential.

Sheriff King added that this is a national problem. He added that there is lots of competition in York County. Sheriff King explained that they are enterprising with the new Americans.

Budget Committee Member Becky Bowley asked if you leave these 25 vacant positions and you don't find anyone does that go to your carry forward balance.

County Manager Zinser explained that all jail funds stay with the jail and lapse into undesignated funds.

Becky Bowley asked if it is mandatory for people to work overtime?

Chief Deputy Forbes replied, yes, it is part of their contract.

County Manager Zinser stated that they frequently work 16-hour days and that many work 72 hours per week.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked if the overtime budget is based on current levels. Are we fully funding the accounts?

County Manager Zinser explained that there are seventy-six corrections officers in the budget but we are cutting back to 72.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell stated that he is wondering if we can cut some of the funding.

Budget Committee Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam commented that the issue with cutting them is you want to be able to grab them.

The County Manager replied that he is expecting it to level out.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked is the county paying for all medical costs or does the State pay anything?

County Manager Zinser responded that we are required to pay it all.

Budget Committee Member Becky Bowley asked do we ever get any prisoners that we get paid for?

The County Manager replied, very rarely but sometimes we board inmates from other counties and we make money.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked for an explanation as to what pretrial services are.

Sheriff King explained that someone is able to be put out (of jail) on a contract with pre-trial services that they report in and go through their screening process. We pay them to monitor them outside of the jail.

District Attorney-

D.A. Kathy Slattery reviewed her budget before the Committee.

General repairs and maintenance line shows an increase, explained District Attorney Kathy Slattery. This is for a new software program, e Prosecutor. Rent is included in our budget. We moved one year ago.

Budget Committee Member Becky Bowley asked was there no room for the D.A. in Biddeford?

D.A. Kathy Slattery replied that they have a conference room in the court that the County pays for. She explained that they tried over and over again with no success to have space in the new courthouse.

County Manager Zinser stated that the State built a courthouse with zero intention of having the D.A. in there.

The former Courthouses are going to local housing authorities.

We are working on prospects to rent out portions of the upstairs and hope to ultimately own the building.

Budget Committee Member Lisa Pratt asked if the D.A.'s office space is doable for her staff?

District Attorney Kathy Slattery, replied yes. It's been better for us to be in one office.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked how much more square feet would you need?

County Manager Zinser replied that they have 13,000 right now and could use another 2,000 square feet.

D.A. Slattery explained that most administrative staff have cubicles and she has two attorneys sharing offices.

County Manager Greg Zinser stated that long term we are trying to purchase the Graham Street property.

Budget Committee Member James Smith asked if the County has bonding abilities?

County Manager Zinser responded, no, we do not. If we wish to build outside of Alfred we need a referendum. If the money is not in the budget and we want to bond we need another referendum.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked if a building came available, where would the money come from for renovation?

County Manager Zinser replied that there is \$4 million in collective reserves. He added that he does not see that happening as those funds are committed to other projects at this point. We spent \$250,000 to do renovations in the interior of the building, including all new electrical.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked what is the total price for the building?

County Manager Zinser replied, \$900,000.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell questioned the \$140,000 budget line for general repairs and maintenance?

The County Manager explained that this reflects carryovers that you find in budgets. D.A. Central is in this line and is a business entity for all of the D.A.'s in the State of Maine. That amount is our contribution. I have that circled to more accurately capture what it is, commented County Manager Zinser.

Probate-

Register of Probate Carol Lovejoy explained the main increases in her budget including high density storage.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked what does professional services cover and what is advertising for?

Register of Probate Lovejoy explained it covers court appointed attorneys in certain minor situations as well as Guardian ad litem appointments and some of our contracts for recording equipment in the courtroom.

He questioned what the advertising budget line represented. Register of Probate Lovejoy explained that is for publishing estate and other information in newspapers.

Budget Committee Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam asked the Register of Probate how is their backlog?

Register Lovejoy we don't have any.

EMA-

County Manager Zinser explained that some items are getting moved around. The Juvenile Fire prevention is now moved back into the EMA budget. We can turn that into a full-time position.

The Chief Fire Administrator position is being moved to a new department for the Regional Training Center.

EMA Director Art Cleaves presented the EMA budget and explained the 1.1% decrease because of the position being moved.

Postage, gas and oil, computer systems have all gone up and we have no control over these items, he explained.

Director Cleaves informed all that EMA is different as we can use part of our grants to offset some of our budget. For example, we get a \$330,000 Homeland Security as well as \$36,000 grant from Seabrook.

We are working with FEMA to get monies to York County residents for the January and April storms.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell stated that it appears all departments show software upgrades on their budgets. Are you quoting all separately?

Finance Director Lori Lemieux explained that we have a full package, we just separate by the user fees out by department.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked what professional services represents in EMA's budget?

EMA Director Cleaves explained this is for different software, an alert and warning program called RAVE and is free for all towns.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked about the budget line for rental of land and buildings.

County Manager Zinser explained that by EMPG guidelines we are able to charge EMA rent for the use of the space. It shows up as a revenue and is reimbursed by the State.

Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam questioned the big increase in telephones.

County Manager Zinser explained this includes satellite phones as well as multiple phones including cell phones.

Deeds-

Deputy Register of Deeds Wendy Caiazzo presented the Deeds budget and explained that there are no significant increases. She added that they moved some of the records expense over to preservation. Deputy Register Caiazzo continued that their postage expense is lower due to e-recording volume. Like other departments, there is an increase in the computer software line.

Budget Committee member Martell asked if Deeds was converting paper copies into microfilm?

County Manager Greg Zinser explained that we sought clarification on the use of our preservation funds. The State still requires us to microfiche and send a copy to State archives.

Facilities-

Facilities Manager Richard DeRochemont presented the budget and explained that his department has computer increases like other departments.

He explained that the professional services line covers alarm contracts, water tests, elevator testing, generators, and any services that our team cannot do.

Manager DeRochemont continued that the heating repairs line shows a \$25,000 increase from the contract. He stated that one vendor met the requirements (of the RFP) and it was a hefty increase. Also, there is a geo-thermal system at the courthouse.

Facilities Manager deRochemont explained that the contract covers everything except for compressors and the well.

Plowing and sanding reflect a contract increase.

The general repairs line shows an increase to include the D.A.'s Biddeford office.

Travel line shows an increase as we now have to travel to and from Biddeford.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked what the other major equipment line contained.

Facilities Manger DeRochemont explained that included the lawnmower, trailer to haul it, floor care machines. He explained that he tries to replace or rehab a unit that is old every year.

Budget Committee Chair Putnam asked mowing expenses are for which buildings? Facilities Manger DeRochemont replied the courthouse, government building and food pantry.

Budget Committee Member Martell asked about what the \$80,000 for electricity?

County Manager Zinser explained that includes this building, the courthouse and the recovery center and portions of the Food Pantry. He explained that we are locked in at low rates until 2025.

County Manager Zinser explained that we participate in a bid process for the county's electricity and we are carrying credits. For the Jail we are part of the Maine renewable Energy consortium . We sell our carbon offsets.

Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam informed the Committee that they usually have an 8:00 deadline but can continue if the Committee wishes to do so. It is up to you. The Committee wished to continue.

Dispatch-

County Manager Zinser explained that the County gets a contract and we pay it.

Budget Committee Member Lisa Pratt asked does the county have to participate in upgrade?

County Manager replied, yes.

Budget Committee Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam added that we are going out to bid.

County Manager Zinser added that we need to get a large committee together for how and when we are going to put an RFP out. It won't be until November and December before a decision is made. Therefore, you won't see an increase until this time next year.

Budget Committee Chairperson Jo-Ann Putnam explained that they are trying to do it all together to save the taxpayers money.

Treasurer-

County Manager Zinser informed all that the Treasurer recently resigned so we are waiting to see who we get.

Regional Training Center-

This will be subsidized by the county and is a huge benefit to everyone in the county.

We are hoping to break ground this summer. On June 3rd we should get our permit

And there will be about an 18- month build period, explained County Manager Zinser.

Retirement benefits-

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked are the benefits going up due to the increase in wages?

County Manager Zinser replied wages and some MEPERS plans changed. He added that we are now seeing the newer employees are starting to sign up for retirement.

Agencies-

County Manager Zinser explained that we pay for York County Extension to have a local presence.

Medical and Dental is going up, explained the County Manager so we are projecting a larger increase.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell asked if the out of pocket amount going up as well?

County Manager explained that they pay a portion as well. Union contracts are locked into money figures for some of them and some we have 5%.

Commissioners budget-

County Manager Zinser explained that the increase is due to projected wages.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell stated that overall he is seeing wages increase 6%ish in a lot of places.

County Manager Zinser replied that it depends on where they are in longevity and we are requesting 4% COLA. He added that the only one that could be adjusted would be non-union and Commissioners but we are suggesting the same as the Union.

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell are we just advising or do we have any authority?

County Manager Zinser stated that you do have the authority to cut.

Layman Way-

County Manager Zinser explained that the County currently offers a 24 bed recovery center in conjunction with D.A. and will increase to 58 beds with the new building. Shelter programs runs the program, currently.

Administration- IT, Finance, H.R.

County Manager Zinser informed all that two new Finance Generalists were hired last year and this is the first year they are fully funded on the budget.

DISCUSSIONS and Q&A

Budget Committee Member Jonathan Martell stated at the conclusion of the budget presentation that he would like to digest the budget and make suggestions. He added that he would like to go back through and see what he can cut.

Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard asked if we are doing anything to address homelessness?

County Manager Zinser responded that we don't have capabilities to take on more. He explained that we have been working with the homeless hub. They have helped us identify needs such as diversion and prevention.

County Manager Zinser stated that there are only 30 homeless beds in this county. He added that one has to work hard to get all of the towns on board.

Budget Committee Member Becky Bowley asked if the County apply for grants or does the county assist municipalities in getting grants?

County Manager Greg Zinser replied that sometimes we sponsor grants. We received a \$40 million ARPA grant. Close to \$10 million in grants that run through our accounts.

4. Items to be discussed at May 22, 2024 meeting
County Manager Zinser explained at the Wednesday meeting, we will discuss any other items and take any further action and move to a public hearing.
5. Set Public Hearing Date and Time- Wednesday, June 5th at 6:00?
Budget Committee Member Marc Lessard stated that Kathy can send out dates for the Public Hearing tomorrow.
6. Public Comment
None
7. Adjournment- Becky Bowley moved to adjourn. Marc Lessard seconded the motion. Meeting ended at 8:52 p.m.