

COMMISSIONERS MEETING

April 3, 2024

YORK,ss

At a regular meeting of the County Commissioners of the County of York, begun and holden at the York County Government Building in Alfred, within and for the County of York, being held on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, A. D. at 2:30 P. M.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Richard R. Dutremble
Richard Clark
Robert Andrews
Justin Chenette
Donna Ring

County Manager Greg Zinser and Deputy Manager Linda Corliss were present at the meeting.

YOU ARE INVITED TO RISE AND SALUTE THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

04-03-2024 **ITEM**

1 **PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON ANY ITEM(S)**

Janet Drew spoke (via Zoom) about a hunger strike at Maine State Prison.

2 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS:**

- a. Commissioners' meeting of March 20, 2024
Commissioner Chenette motioned to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Ring seconded the minutes. Vote 5-0.

3 **TO APPROVE TREASURER'S WARRANTS**

- a. Warrants to be approved on March 20, 2024, in the amount of \$392,289.05
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrants. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.
Vote 5-0.
- b. Warrants to be approved on March 27, 2024 in the amount of \$646,340.06
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrant. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

4 TO HEAR ANY REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Chenette asked about the county courthouse space utilization as he is getting a lot of questions. He asked the County Manager if at a future meeting, there could be a discussion on this as his constituents want to know.

County Manager Zinser responded that he can give an update now. He continued that Probate and Deeds are on all of the first floor. He added that there are three potential tenants right now but they have asked to remain anonymous at this time. If those come to fruition, explained the County Manager, they will come to the Board.

Commissioner Chenette asked if we have a winter storm policy regarding meeting changes that is articulated somewhere or is it on a case-by-case basis? County Manager Zinser replied that it is on a case-by-case basis where he discusses the situation with the Chairperson of the Commissioner Board. The determination is then made by the consensus of the Board. Commissioner Chenette commented that he was curious if other counties have a policy so the public would know what the action would be. He went on to say that it is difficult to get the word out and therefore, challenging for our constituents when we make that sudden shift. But, if the Policy was articulated enough in advance as to what takes place, this would not happen. It is not in the best interest of our constituents to randomly pick a time, commented Commissioner Chenette.

Commissioner Dutremble informed all that it doesn't look like we will get any more funds for jails.

Commissioner Ring inquired as to how much we were looking to get out of the additional funding?

Commissioner Dutremble responded, \$7 million. Commissioner Ring asked, just York County?

County Manager Zinser explained that they haven't determined how they will distribute the \$ 4million.

5 NEW BUSINESS

- a. Brian Beard, Public Affairs Specialist, Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience, Small Business Administration to announce available programs for disaster survivors in York County
County Manager Zinser introduced Mr. Beard.

Brian Beard explained that his agency works work alongside FEMA to offer low interest long term loans for storm damage that is not covered by insurance. He continued that eight counties are included in the current disaster declaration. There are no payments or interest in the first year. Mr. Beard informed all that May 20, 2024 is the deadline for loans.

Mr. Beard stated that the Disaster Recovery Center is currently at the Wells Fire Station on Route 9 seven days a week.

- b. County Manager Greg Zinser to begin review of 'FY25 County budget
County Manager Zinser began by giving a high-level overview of the budget and stated that the overall increase is 7.38% resulting in a 9.6% tax increase even though the budget itself is at 7.38%. All departments have increases

except for EMA with wages and benefits and contracted costs being the drivers.

Supplemental- The County Manager explained that this reflects the proposed tax bill to every town.

LD-1- We are \$300,000 under the LD-1 limitation, explained the County Manager.

Revenues are stagnant and decreasing, explained County Manager Zinser. There is not a lot of revenue sources other than revenue assessments. Deeds recording is down and we are recommending a decrease in deeds recording, County Manager Zinser informed all.

Commissioner Dutremble asked if we rent some of the spaces will that increase revenue for this year?

The County Manager replied that \$50,000 worth of rent will amount in a little bit of revenue. He added that we are talking with some other quasi-governmental organizations.

County Manager Zinser explained that the State gets 90% of the transfer tax from Deeds and the County only gets 10%. There is a concern that the State is going after the 10%. We sent a letter to Maine Revenue.

Commissioner Chenette stated that our budget increase last year was 5.8% and the tax increase was 5%.

County Manager Zinser replied that in reviewing other municipalities (in York County), our increases are not that far off.

Commissioner Dutremble added that looking at the historical view page, sixteen years ago we were under a 1% increase. Inflation is causing these huge numbers.

Commissioner Chenette asked if the budget reflected any of the additional monies that we might have to allocate additional monies for ARPA projects?

County Manager Zinser replied that those projects are not in this budget right now. As you may recall, stated County Manager Zinser in late December, we asked for year-end transfers and the funds went into reserve accounts. All ARPA money is allocated.

Commissioner Chenette asked if we have a cost above and beyond, what has been allocated. Where would that come from? None of that uncertainty is factored into the budget, he asked.

County Manager Zinser replied, no, but we have healthy reserves that we can use. There will be a long period of construction. By the time the construction happens, we will be in another couple of fiscal years. He continued that we are off by \$3 million right now with the building funding. We have \$1.8 million in CDS funding for equipment. Another request was approved for \$1,630,000. The vast majority of the shortfall is really the contingencies that we are asking to contribute for.

- c. Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond to present budget -Nancy Hammond stated that the number of documents recorded in the Deeds office recorded year to date is down 6% from last year at this time. The increase in transfer tax is slightly less than 1%. She continued that we need \$780,000 to meet our projected revenue. Last year we brought in \$563,000. We are looking at a \$225,000 shortfall in revenues.

Register Hammond informed all of the changes in efficiency in the Deeds office with staff members decreased to seven. One employee transferred to

another department so we will be looking to replace her, explained Register Hammond.

Commissioner Ring asked about the records management systems budget line being decreased and moved to preservation. Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond explained that reflects funds for archival work for microfilm. She continued that there were no real guidelines. Therefore, she is trying to shift some of the burden off from the budget and onto the preservation account.

County Manager Zinser informed all that Paige Lilly has assisted with archives review and we are preparing a job description for that (position).

Deputy County Manager/H.R. Director Corliss will bring that (job description) forward the second meeting in May.

Commissioner Ring asked isn't it a new position? County Manager Zinser replied, technically, yes, but we are using existing funds for it.

Commissioner Ring stated that the budget doesn't reflect it as new but it should.

County Manager Zinser replied that he thought it was in last year's budget as well but you (Commissioners) would have to approve the position.

d. District Attorney Kathy Slattery to present budget-

District Attorney Slattery addressed the Board and stated that the District Attorney's office had a year of change and chaos, but they are all in one office now. She expressed her gratitude for the support of the Commissioners. D.A. Slattery provided statistics of cases to include that 7,602 cases were reviewed with 104 fugitives processed, 210 probation cases, 275 deferred disposition cases and \$331,000 in restitutions were paid out to crime victims.

D.A. Slattery explained the substantial increase in her software line as new software being needed.

D.A. Slattery informed all that the Layman Way Recovery Center had 47 referrals in 2023. To date in 2024, there have been 21 referrals. Of those, five have been accepted and six have graduated.

County Manager Zinser added that the cost of rental of the Graham Street Building that houses the District Attorney is \$106,000.

Commissioner Ring asked about the meals and lodging line.

D.A. Slattery explained that reflects the cost of the annual State-wide conference. Her staff attends continuing legal education classes.

D.A. Slattery added that some members of York County's victims' advocates did help out in Lewiston.

Commissioner Ring asked if the county pays for the attorneys (in D.A.'s office) to go?

District Attorney Slattery replied, yes.

Commissioner Ring asked about the Maine pay FMLA line in the budgets.

County Manager Zinser explained that it is a new law that goes into effect in 2025. It is paid family leave and there is a tax of 1% on employers. We are only required to raise and appropriate 1/2 of 1%.

Commissioner Chenette asked if the MEDATS update is the software?

D.A. Slattery replied that is the part of the entity that supports the software. The large increase is the actual software.

e. EMA Deputy Director Megan Arseneault to present budget-

County Manager Zinser explained that this budget contemplates taking the Chief Fire Administrator out of EMA and moving the position to the Regional

Training Facility budget. Additionally, the Juvenile Fire Prevention budget was moved into the EMA budget.

Commissioner Chenette stated that now that we've moved it, there is an increased amount and no previous budget line.

County Manager Zinser replied that there is no change.

Commissioner Chenette stated that there is a differential there we are just not noting it. It doesn't show anywhere in the document.

Commissioner Ring commented that it might be helpful to put an amount for the budget committee.

Commissioner Ring stated that she has concerns with moving the Fire Chief Administrator position into its own account.

There is \$3,000 in this budget for supplies. He has uniforms, vehicles, etc.

Shouldn't that be moved into that account, Commissioner Ring asked?

County Manager Zinser responded that there is a conversation ongoing as to not allowing him to use a vehicle. He continued that he and EMA Director Cleaves agree that this is new and an uncoupling from the EMA department.

Commissioner Ring replied that you could calculate a vehicle.

She commented that she understands a lot of EMA expenditures are reimbursable but are none of the Fire Administrator's (expenditures) reimbursable?

She added that there are a lot of reimbursed expenditures as we don't see that here.

Commissioner Ring continued that one of her "beefs" is EMA's budget grows every year more than anyone's. We have \$260,000 (in reimbursables) but their budget is now \$780,000 so we are spending \$500,000 a year.

County Manager Zinser commented that this is money well spent.

County Manager Zinser introduced Deputy EMA Director Megan Arsenualt to talk about some of EMA's initiatives that they are working on including the dredge.

Deputy Director Arsenualt shared some statistics and accomplishments to include weather exercises with the National Weather Service and active shooter response. Town Managers and School officials took part in the active shooter response with the number of participants near 200.

We have developed alerts and warnings and now have ten more communities utilizing RAVE. EMA has also offered coastal resilience planning as we have responded to several types of storms this year.

Deputy Director Arsenualt informed all that a Federal disaster was just declared.

She added that EMA will be updating their County Emergency Preparedness Plan. Also, EMA is offering a preparedness training series for the public.

Deputy EMA Director Arsenualt explained that their budget increases are due to increased costs. She added that EMA is fortunate that they are able to take advantage of grants to include the EMPG and Homeland grants amounting to \$320,000 as well as a Seabrook grant in the amount of \$36,000.

Commissioner Chenette asked regarding dredge management, do we think there is a need to have a contingency fund for the ongoing maintenance and other expenses?

County Manager Zinser responded that is a great question. He stated that he and EMA Director Cleaves have had a lot of conversations about this. EMA has access to other sorts of funds such as earned money from disasters and the vaccine center. All funds reports you would see. We believe that we do have

enough funding at this time to get the dredge in. As we move forward, I don't know, stated the County Manager.

EMA Director Cleaves stated to the Board that the hope is that once we get the dredge operational those costs would be a fully burdened rate. We are working on Memorandum of Agreements with the towns and they will be paying back for any work done with the dredge. Therefore, it should be self-sustaining in the long term. We are also receiving, explained Director Cleaves, reimbursed funds from FEMA for damage.

Commissioner Chenette asked if we should allocate some resources to align just in case. EMA Director Cleaves stated that FEMA's process to reimburse is a one to two year process so he wants to make sure there is enough flexibility. County Manager Zinser responded that funds are in our contingency and we are required to replenish.

He continued that some of the rent for Graham St had come out of the contingency. This will be the first year it is fully recognized in the budget.

Commissioner Dutremble commented that with grants for us over \$1 million, there is no discussion from him that their budget should be approved.

County Manager Zinser agreed and stated that from his talks with Town Managers throughout the county, 1-800 call EMA is one of the quotes that comes up.

Commissioner Dutremble thanked EMA employees for the job they do.

Commissioner Chenette stated that he has one lingering question regarding the Juvenile Fire program. Do we have an update as to the status of that program, he asked?

County Manager Zinser stated that we are still having a problem with hiring two part-time positions. We were very lucky with the two prior employees. We have advertised multiple times for the positions, he explained. We have still been doing some of that work. We are hoping that when we put it into EMA, we can maybe bring on a full-time position that might work better. Commissioner Ring stated that it looks like we have spent money (in that budget).

Chief Fire Administrator Hooper explained that the program is still active.

Commissioner Ring questioned that only \$446 has been used to pay reserves.

County Manager Zinser explained that this is probably not being properly recognized.

f. Facilities Manager Rick deRochemont to present budget-

Facilities Manager Rick deRochemont explained that his budget reflects a couple of substantial increases that are contractual, so we didn't have a choice. He went onto explain that it has been difficult for RFPS. Vendors aren't putting in for RFPS anymore. He cited the heating RFP as an example and explained that we had a few vendors, but the only vendor that completed the RFP correctly was the one we had to go with. We only had one response to the plowing RFP. It was the contractor we had used before.

Manager DeRochemont explained that his general repairs budget line includes the Biddeford D.A.'s building so he had to increase it.

He went on to state that it has been a busy year in his department with the loss of employees.

Commissioner Ring asked how many buildings do we pay electrical and heating for?

County Manager Zinser replied, this building, food pantry, and the courthouse.

Commissioner Chenette stated that he is curious as to why it is difficult to get RFPS filled and wondered if we should do something differently.

Facilities Manager Rick DeRochemont replied explained that we also reached out to vendors for lawnmowing and only one person (representing a business) showed up and the cost was very high.

County Manager Zinser added that we are not alone with putting out RFPs and getting no replies.

Commissioner Ring asked Facilities Manager DeRochemont if he feels he has enough staffing?

Facilities Manager DeRochemont replied that we are making it work but it will be a challenge.

Commissioners-

Commissioner Ring commented that she didn't realize that the Commissioners got a 2% longevity pay raise.

County Manager Zinser replied that the Commissioners fall under the non-union.

Layman Way-

County Manager Zinser explained that \$125,000 was put into this line last year to deal with homelessness in York County. He continued that he has a meeting with Hub Region 1. Carter Friend, Executive Director of York County Community Action also informed me that they would handle this for us. This makes the most sense for us, explained County Manager Zinser.

Administration-

County Manager Zinser explained that this budget covers all employee increases. This is the first year that we are budgeting at 100% for the two generalist positions within the Finance Department.

Commissioner Ring asked why do the department head wages show an increase of 7.92% as normally it is 2% longevity and and COLA so why is that so much higher?

County Manager Zinser explained that it never matches up as it goes across calendar years.

Commissioner Ring suggested that the County Manager look at those wages calculated, the numbers are a little high.

County Manager Zinser replied that just because it's here doesn't mean that is what they are going to make. On July 1st when we implement a COLA we could be off a bit but we do calculate the wages off from a daily rate.

We can look at them again, but we have looked at them many times.

Finance Director Lori Lemieux added that employees receive their longevity increases at different times of the year.

Communications budget is a contracted amount.

YC Regional Training Center-

County Manager Zinser explained that this had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The Chief Fire Administrator is being taken out of EMA's budget and that we are starting to operationalize the Training Center.

Retirement-

County Manager Zinser explained this budget is a function of the wages.

Medical/Dental-

The County Manager stated that the rates have been good other than the

typical contractual increases.

Public Agencies-

Commissioner Ring asked about the York County Extension wanting a \$10,000 increase?

County Manager Zinser explained that they have a new union contract that caused wages to increase. There is the County Extension law that requires us to contribute.

Commissioner Dutremble asked that if some of these agencies do rent (at the courthouse), will it eliminate some of these costs?

County Manager Zinser replied, yes.

Commissioner Chenette asked County Manager Zinser of the timeline to remind the public.

County Manager Zinser replied that there is one more review next Wednesday The Budget Caucus will be held here next Wednesday, also, he explained.

We will send members (of the Budget Committee) the budget and coordinate with Chair of Budget Committee and ask her when she wants to meet.

Typically, the first of May, the Budget Committee would begin to meet.

6 OLD BUSINESS

- a. To review and seek approval of revised Graham Street lease-

County Manager Zinser explained that the initial term is a fifteen-year period then three successive five-year renewals.

Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the Graham Street lease as presented.

Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

- b. To review information and MOU regarding MEDATS as requested by the Commissioners at the March 20, 2024 meeting

Commissioner Chenette asked about the effective date and term and that the contract is auto renewed for three fiscal years unless party gives written notice. County Manager Zinser replied that the County's attorney put this together.

The Board can change it if they want to.

Commissioner Clark asked who pays the rent on their facilities?

County Manager Zinser replied that MEDATS does.

Commissioner Ring asked who is going to do the invoicing?

County Manager Zinser replied that York County will and it will be a separate fund like contract deputies.

Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the MOU with MEDATS.

Commissioner Andrews seconded the contract. Vote 5-0.

7 TO CONDUCT AN EXECUTIVE SESSION ON PERSONNEL ISSUES PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A), ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY OR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (C), LABOR NEGOTIATIONS PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) AND CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (E), REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (F)

None

8 PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON ANY ITEM(S)

Janet Drew via Zoom commented that the D.A. gave statistics of people that have been diverted. There are also a lot of people that couldn't and that's why I ask for more help on the community side. There needs to be more family victim restitution for healing. But when it's all about money, it puts that burden on other family members, stated Janet Drew. More help is needed for the diversion side, she stated.

County Manager Zinser spoke to Ms. Drew's concerns regarding the diversion concept. He stated that York County spends a tremendous amount of money outside of the county jail and even in the jail to treat and help those who are incarcerated to become productive.

Care of the indigenous is truly a State function, explained the County Manager. County Manager Zinser continued that we just heard from our District Attorney that we have diverted over 1,000 people.

Through Maine Pretrial Services we have avoided 54,000 bed days at the jail. We have spent \$1 million at Layman Way. We pay for those people to go to that program. Otherwise, they would be incarcerated.

County Manager Zinser commented to Janet Drew that he did read her e-mails, and that he would like to point out one item. You are correct that of the \$30 million in ARPA funds and only \$15 million went to the Recovery Center. That is not counting our use of all our opioid funding of \$5 million and \$3 million in county cash reserves. These are important items that need to be noted.

County Manager Zinser informed all that he attended a Homeless Summit in Sanford regarding co-occurring disorders. Statutorily, we have to build in Alfred. Commissioners, you invest a tremendous amount of money to this every year. Pretty much all of our departments help with homelessness, stated the County Manager.

Commissioner Ring stated that through her experiences over the years working at the jail, the county has done an exceptional job. Several programs inside the jail are offered that help individuals. York County is a well-advanced county putting forth these programs that other counties do not.

9 ADJOURN

Commissioner Clark motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.