

Union County Budget Committee Meeting
Budget Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 21, 2024
Joseph Building Annex Conference Room

Present: R. Matthew Scarfo, Union County Commissioner
Donna Beverage, Union County Commissioner
Paul Anderes, Union County Commissioner
Matthew Goodwin, Budget Committee Member
Audrey Cant, Budget Committee Member
Mathew Miles, Budget Committee Member
Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer/Budget Officer
Allison Moore, Senior Department Specialist/Recording Secretary

Call to Order

The Chair Mathew Miles called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and the Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Special Funds Presentations

MERA (Mt. Emily Recreation Area)

Josh Ford, Parks Coordinator, introduced himself and provided background on MERA for their information.

Revenues this year included a \$213,475 grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department ATV Operations and Maintenance Grant Program.

Personnel Services will increase due to merit increases, COLA and the cost for insurance is rising. Union County Parks employs one full time Coordinator and a quarter time employee.

Several capital requests include a Caterpillar 301.7 CR Mini Excavator (\$50,000), Parking Plan Development (\$40,000) and MERA Trail Equipment.

Commissioner Anderes asked why the Fire Patrol Assessment was not as high as he was expecting. Mr. Ford indicated it will be enough to cover the assessment.

Commissioner Beverage asked if the abandoned vehicles are being left at the park when people camp. Mr. Ford clarified that is correct, and up Fox Hill. It is hard to budget for, because you don't know if you are going to get one or ten vehicles. Last year eight vehicles were disposed of.

Commissioner Anderes indicated it is not only happening on MERA, but all of the county parks.

Matthew Goodwin asked what the usage numbers are and what they are trending. Mr. Ford indicated that he does not have actual numbers. However, in the last five years the trails have really worn down, indicating a lot of use.

Matthew Goodwin asked if there is any sort of registration to track who comes in and out of the parks. Mr. Ford indicated that there is not at this time. However, the parking pass system under development will help track that information.

Mat Miles asked if it would be fee-based parking. Mr. Ford indicated that it would be fee-based, and is currently being reviewed by the advisory committee. The plan is to have a \$30.00 monthly pass, or \$5.00 for a day pass. This is something we have seen other counties and areas do.

Commissioner Scarfo asked about liability issues when the county starts charging for parking. Mr. Ford indicated that if you are charging for access to recreate it would be a liability, not for parking alone.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that is why the county doesn't charge a user's fee because we would jeopardize that. It has been established that parking fees are different than a user fee, and are allowable. There is an inspection of the parking lot to be sure there aren't any hazards.

The MERA budget is balanced as presented.

Parks Fund

Josh Ford, Parks Coordinator, provided a brief staff report to the budget committee for their information. Union County Parks developed and maintains four (4) parks; Thief Valley Reservoir, Wolf Creek Reservoir, Pilcher Creek Reservoir and Perry Swimming Hole.

The major objectives are to apply dust abatement, improve campgrounds, maintain boat docks, and maintain a high standard of restroom cleanliness. There are no major projects planned for FY 2024-25.

The staffing is a part-time Parks Coordinator and a quarter-time employee who removes garbage, cleans restrooms, maintains the grounds, and at times may act as a camp host.

The revenue from RV receipts is anticipated to be \$50,000 while the Marine Board portion of the revenue is anticipated to be \$9,537.

The Parks Fund budget is balanced as presented.

Public Works

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, provided a brief staff report to the budget committee for their information.

Director Wright indicated that the beginning fund balance is down due to the absence of SRS funding this year. SRS forest receipts through Secure Rural Schools Act, is not a dependable revenue source. The funding is distributed yearly depending on federal approval.

SRS is a vital funding source for the Public Works Department and his hope is that Congress will pass the bill again.

The STP (Surface Transportation Program) amount is \$348,000 and will stay flat because of a ruling made by ODOT and Legislators. These funds allow him to exchange federal dollars for state dollars, which allows his crew to be able to do work as far as chip seal, paving, patching and bridge work.

The Public Work Department consists of eighteen (18) employees and one temporary position.

Materials and Services is in the amount of \$3,678,383 with Road Maintenance approximately \$2,000,000 of that amount.

Director Wright discussed projects under Capital Outlay which totals \$1,523,291.

Road Rehabilitation consists of widening shoulders on Summerville Road from Sanderson Road to Tollgate Highway. Chip seal will be done on the following roads; Summerville Road, Sanderson to Tollgate, River Road, Ellis Lane to Tucker Flat, Old Oregon Trail and Booth Lane.

Audrey Cant thanked Director Wright for the thorough explanation of the projects and asked the longevity of a paved road after cold recycling. Director Wright indicated that the best road in the county is Pierce Road, which is 5 miles long. It was reconstructed in 2012, and we've kept up on chip seal to maintain the longevity.

Commissioner Scarfo asked how many years 11,000 hours of use for a road grader is. Director Wright indicated that it is about 10 years of life per lease.

Commissioner Anderes asked Director Wright to explain how the ODOT surplus worked for the county. Director Wright indicated that the county was able to purchase several 2001 dump trucks for about \$9,000 per truck. The issue with that is surplus goes to Salem first, giving the counties on the west side first pick.

Mat Miles is happy to see that Public Works is utilizing surplus and cold recycle.

The Public Works budget is balanced as presented.

Airport Operations

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, provided a brief staff report to the budget committee for their information.

Revenue includes fuel sales, hangar rent, forest service rent, and other miscellaneous sales in the amount of \$2,547,646. The airport supports one full-time employee, one-half employee and one part-time employee.

Materials and Services is in the amount of \$2,247,003 for fuel purchase and other expenditures needed to operate the airport.

Commissioner Beverage asked if Director Wright considered having Brian Clapp from the Weed Department spray the property. Director Wright indicated that he splits spraying between the Weed Department and contracts out as well.

The Airport Operations budget is balanced as presented.

Airport Capital Improvement Fund

Doug Wright, Public Works Director, presented the proposed budget to the budget committee for their information.

There is a Connect Oregon grant project that is underway to construct a maintenance shop, and aircraft hangar, and install electric generators to power fuel farm and the Fixed Base Operator's office during power outages. This grant will also fund additional tanks for fuel capacity.

The next project is the design work for shoulder rehab on Runway 12-30. This will bring the shoulders up to standard, replacing lights and adjusting them accordingly, and to be able to also revamp the storm sewer system. This will be the last big project for the airport until 2030-2032. Funding for this will come from the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Airport Capital Improvement Fund budget is balanced as presented.

Weed Control Fund

Brian Clapp, Weed Supervisor, presented the proposed budget to the committee for their information.

There are no significant changes to the budget this year.

Operating revenues from the tax levy are estimated to increase 6.1 percent, totaling \$260,000 due to land values increasing. Grant revenue is expected to be roughly \$77,718 through Oregon State Weed Board (OWSB), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), and potentially Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund (OCRF) or Oregon Water Enhancement Board (OWEB).

Miscellaneous income from agreements with Union Pacific and OSU, along with shop space rental is expected to be \$26,700.

Materials and Services line items are projected to go down from last year with a total of \$215,207.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that the Weed fund is financed by the weed levy at \$.12 per \$1,000 and does expire in 2025. She is positive that the Weed board will reapply next year.

The Weed Control budget is balanced as presented.

Other Special Funds

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, went over each individual Special Fund that wasn't previously discussed as requested by Chair Miles. Below is the summary of discussions on those funds on which there were questions.

Economic Development Fund

Administrative Officer Burgess reported on the Economic Development fund that has two departments, Transient Room Tax and Lottery Funds. Matthew Goodwin asked what the plans are for the contingency. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that she doesn't currently have any projects earmarked for those funds.

Audrey Cant asked what the Land Sale was for under Lottery Monies. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated that it was the property at the Baum Industrial Park that has a First Right of Refusal. If they exercise that right to purchase, the sale will generate a little more money.

RAC Fund

Administrative Officer Burgess reported on the RAC Maintenance Fund. Matthew Goodwin asked if the gym is still functional. Administrative Officer Burgess reported that the gym is functional, and is scheduled through Community Connection.

Union County Fair Fund

Administrative Officer Burgess reported on the Union County Fair Fund. The budget is a little confusing because the county has received some of the grant funding for the water/sewer project with hopes that the project will move forward.

Mat Miles asked how close the county is to securing the funding to finalize the project. Commissioner Scarfo indicated that consideration is not on the agenda for the E-Board in the fall, which pushes it to the next short session.

Buffalo Peak Golf Course Fund

Administrative Officer Burgess reported on the Buffalo Peak Golf Course. Matthew Goodwin asked how the golf course has been succeeding each year. She indicated the audit report that is done at the end of the fiscal year provides a thorough explanation, and briefly discussed how the numbers over the years are improving. The fund still has a deficit from losses in previous years.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

Review & Approval for Publication of Solid Waste Budget

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, presented the proposed budget for the Solid Waste District to the budget committee for their information.

The Union County Solid Waste District proposed budget is presented in three funds; Enterprise Fund, Capital Reserve Fund, and Household Hazardous Waste Fund. The total proposed budget is in the amount of \$958,560. The district operates on revenues generated by franchise fees and includes no local taxes.

Administrative Officer Burgess went over each of the three funds under the Solid Waste District.

Break

The chair called a 5-minute break. The chair called the meeting back to order at 6:16 pm.

Budget Committee Discussion & Deliberation

All three Commissioners thanked Administrative Officer Burgess for all of her hard work on the budget each year.

Mat Miles indicated that it is a complicated budget with a lot of categories and areas. He appreciates her knowledge, and being able to address different questions by the committee.

Matthew Goodwin touched on the Predator Control aspect in Union County. He knows that the impact of predators is very tough on ranchers in our community. He asked if there would be a way to increase the amount of \$51,000 for Predator Control. Administrative Officer Burgess clarified that the county is mandated to provide certain things, however, Predator Control, EOU, etc. are not mandated. There was a time that the county had to cut auxiliary programs. When we added back Predator Control, we did half with Baker County because we couldn't afford a full-time position. If the county does in fact fund a full-time position, can it be sustained and how would that impact Baker County.

Matthew Goodwin mentioned the possibility of reaching out to a community member who is a cattleman to consider a match to fund a full-time predator control person for La Grande. Administrative Officer Burgess indicated once you start thinking about funds to match, you'll also need to consider how that would work with Wildlife Services.

Commissioner Scarfo stated he also spoke with Administrative Officer Burgess about the two vehicles for the Sheriff's Office. She indicated that two of the leased vehicles will be paid off in this budget, in addition to outright purchase of two more patrol vehicles. The Vehicle Reserve fund can be used to accumulate available funds for future purchases.

Administrative Officer Burgess indicated there is \$8,000 that has not been budgeted in CAFFA funds for the computer department and \$50,000 in grant funds revenue that should've been included in the Emergency Services budget. The committee could add the \$58,000 back in the budget rather than contingency to allow for additional expenditures. Commissioner Scarfo would like to leave it in contingency.

Commissioner Anderes asked if we choose to do that, we would move to adopt the budget as presented and amended. Administrative Officer Burgess proposed providing new totals for the general fund and the new grand total with the addition of \$58,000.

The new general fund total would be \$17,704,819 and the new grand total is \$64,325,726.

Approval of Union County Budget for Publication

Commissioner Anderes made a motion to approve the Union County Budget for publication in the amount of \$64,325,726 as amended. Commissioner Beverage seconded.

Commissioner Scarfo thanked the budget committee for their time in participating. Lots of good questions this year.

Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Solid Waste District for Publication

Commissioner Scarfo made a motion to approve the Solid Waste District Budget for Publication as presented. Matthew Goodwin seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Anderes asked those who haven't voted, please do so. Election closes at 8 pm.

Adjournment

The chair adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison Moore



Senior Department Specialist