

**MINUTES**  
Eau Claire County  
**Committee on Finance & Budget**  
Thursday, October 7, 2021  
**11:00 am**  
Webex Conference Call

**Committee on Finance & Budget Members present:** Supervisors Steve Chilson, Jim Dunning, Robin Leary, Stella Pagonis, Gerald Wilkie

**Staff present:** Norb Kirk, Finance Director; Kathryn Schauf, County Administrator; Brian Trowbridge, Sheriff's Dept; Erika Gullerud, Finance; Jennifer Porzondek, Finance; Jessica Rubin, HR Director; Katelynn Eslinger, Human Resources; Linda O'Mara, Finance; Linda Struck, ADRC Director; Vickie Gardner, DHS; Ron Schmidt, DHS Deputy Director; Katrina Ranallo, Sheriff's Dept; Stephanie Hirsch, DHS; Amy Weiss, Senior Accounting Manager

**Others present:** Ryan Patterson, Leader Telegram; several unidentified call-in users

Chair Pagonis called the Committee on Finance & Budget to order at 11:00 am and confirmed compliance with open meetings law.

The committee clerk took roll call. Members present are indicated above.

No members of the public wished to speak.

The committee reviewed the budget message and various levy reports. There was a lot of confusion over the differences in each levy report, and position funding, especially as it relates to Title 4E dollars. Some committee members feel that they have been lied to, and that there are sleight of hand tactics in the budget. The finance team presented a levy report that provides detail on the changes from the original levy request to the recommended levy. The committee received some education on how the operating levy and other general revenues are allocated to departments.

The 2022 sales tax recommendation was reviewed and compared to prior year collections. The committee reviewed the detailed revenue reports. It was noted that eliminating waiting lists and adding staff to DHS will generate more reimbursable revenue.

The committee reviewed the estimated fund balance and the projected uses of fund balance in 2022.

Break: 1:05-1:20 pm

The committee reviewed the 2022 position requests. Position requests were focused on filling capacity needs related to the 6<sup>th</sup> courtroom, department backlogs, and waiting lists. The committee questioned whether or not there was a need for an additional deputy in the Sheriff's department. After significant conversation about the responsibilities of the Committee on Human Resources and the Committee on Finance & Budget regarding position recommendations, the committee questioned the DHS team on their 2022 position requests. Some members on the committee feel that DHS should first fill all vacant positions, re-evaluate programming and waiting lists, and then approach the board with new and recreated position requests. Other members were sensitive to department expertise and staff burnout and trusted the decisions of the oversight committee. Wilkie believes the board is the boss and should make the decisions; the board should not simply rubber stamp the recommendation.

Wilkie requested total amount of Alia budget for 2022. Vickie Gardner reported that Alia payments would fall under the professional services overhead budget, which is \$84,000 for 2022. This budget is also used for employee development, background checks, interpreters, and software help. Wilkie does not want taxpayer money spent on Alia anymore. He believes that the board should have the privilege of saying that the contract with Alia should be terminated. Wilkie would like an actual dollar amount provided to the board.

Pagonis has asked DHS repeatedly about services in Fall Creek, Augusta, and Fairchild. She has been told that DHS does not go to those locations. Pagonis asked DHS about reaching out to veterans. Pagonis believes that DHS does not reach out to veterans, that DHS is focused on the City of Eau Claire, and that they do not respond or reach out beyond the city.

Leary believes that to prevent crisis, the county should subsidize poverty level wages and work with citizens on affordable housing.

Pagonis would like to add a position to the Veteran's Services department. This new position would be a Certified Veterans Services Officer (CVSO). Pagonis believes that there is a dire need for a benefits specialist to assist with the office visits, phone calls, and emails being fielded by the Veteran's Services team. She estimates the position to be in the \$80-90,000 range, and funding for this position for 2022 should come from the general fund's unassigned fund balance. Pagonis will draft a fact sheet and resolution, independent from other committee resolutions, and she will work with Finance to finalize the fiscal impact.

The committee will vote on positions at next meeting.

Break: 3.:25-3:45 pm

The committee reviewed the recommended 2022 capital plan. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars are being allocated conservatively. The county's bond goal is \$10 million or less, and some projects that are currently identified as being funded by bond could be reallocated to ARPA funding. As part of the ARPA review, Wilkie would like to review the Sheriff's ARPA request, specifically as it relates to remodeling the jail booking area. The committee expressed an interest in removing all ARPA designated projects from the budget process, is in favor of handling them separately. The committee discussed a potential second bond issue to fund the shortfall on the Highway facility. Some members are supportive of additional bonding, others would like to continue to evaluate other potential funding sources.

**Debt Service** – postponed to next meeting

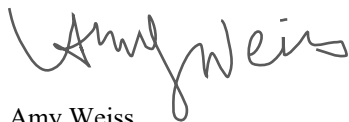
**Review Administrator's Recommendation (Departments and Agencies)** – postponed to next meeting

**Committee's Recommended Amendments on the 2022 Administrator's Recommended Budget to Advance to the County Board** – postponed to next meeting

Future meeting: Thursday, October 14 at 10:00 am

Agenda items: review individual departments; decide on amendments to administrator's recommended budget

The committee adjourned at 4:33 pm.



Amy Weiss  
Committee Clerk