

**Lincoln County Board of Commissioners**  
**Budget Hearing**  
**August 28, 2017**

**Present: Chairman Cresley McConnell, Commissioner Roy Hubert, Commissioner Rebecca Wood, Clerk Brenda Farnworth for minutes.**

6:30pm Chairman McConnell opened the Lincoln County Budget Hearing.

Chairman McConnell requested that Clerk Farnworth review the salary information that is in the packets for the public.

Clerk Farnworth reviewed and explained the documents in the packet.

- IAC Salary Survey – comparing Lincoln County salaries and wages to the 13 small counties in Idaho and then a comparison to Gooding, Jerome and Twin Falls. Of the 16 County positions in the survey, Lincoln County has the lowest salaries in 6 of the categories and next to lowest in 4 more of the categories. 62.5% of all the positions. In regards to the Commissioners salaries, many Counties were only meeting two times a month and receiving higher salaries than Lincoln.
- Lincoln County Salary Progression Changes – explaining the process the Clerk and Commissioners have worked on in the last 3 years to meet the goal to “Improve the wages of the County Employees to be able to retain good employees”.
- Lincoln County Salary Step & Grade – New process for giving raises to be equalized across County Employees, including Elected Officials. Each grade begins with a starting wage and a 3% step increase each year. There are different grades and starting wages for; Elected Officials, Sheriff, Commissioners, regular hourly staff, Certified staff, department heads and Law Enforcement positions.
  - Commissioners change for 2018. Comparison hourly wage with other Elected Officials was used as a starting point for the calculation from the current level to increase to a greater part-time position, increasing the number of meetings and administrative hours. The lowest paid Elected Official at this time is the Auditor, with an equivalent hourly rate of \$24.10 calculated at 37.5 hours a week. Auditor, Clerk Farnworth and Commissioner Wood started terms the same year. The Commissioners then did a white board list of average hours spent in Commissioner Meetings, extra Board meetings, an additional administrative day, phone calls and special projects being worked on. Using these hours they calculated an average of 25 hours spent per week in Commissioner duties. The weekly hours of 25 X \$24.10/hour resulted in an annual salary of \$31,330.

Chairman McConnell then reviewed the Lincoln County Budget Summary that was broken down by each department; salaries, benefits, expenses and capital purchases. The Chairman reviewed each department 2017 budget to 2018 proposed budget and the variances. The ending full budget being \$3,490,013 for fiscal year 2018 compared to \$3,430,936 for fiscal year 2017. An increase of \$59,077, 1.72%.

Chairman McConnell then requested Clerk Farnworth to review the next worksheets in the packet.

- Clerk Farnworth explained and reviewed the worksheet “2018 Estimated Revenues” showing the different estimated revenue categories for the 2018 budget; Estimated other Revenues, Estimated Carry Fwd, Grants, 2018 PILT use and property taxes.
  - There is a significant amount of carry forward use in the budget for the 105-Indigent fund. This fund has been over appropriated and the estimated expenses have not happened, leaving a fund cash balance of \$354,739 estimate for the end of 2017 fiscal year. This is not a good use of tax payer dollars and therefore there will be no tax levied on this fund for 2018, but will use revenues projected and balance forward dollars to reduce the balance.

- The goal is to have 30% of the next year's budget in cash carry forward in each fund. Money received and levied for in one fund cannot be transferred to another fund to use per statute.
- Clerk Farnworth explained the PILT use category, estimating \$892,000 in PILT for 2018, which is what the County received in 2017. Projecting to save \$120,803 of that money to the reserves and using \$771,197 for operations.
- Property tax to levy, \$1,245,518 with a levy rate of .00363749.
- Clerk Farnworth quickly reviewed the "Cash Balance Review", showing the cash balance of the County from 2007 to 2016 and the change in each year.
- Clerk Farnworth then did an instructional review of how to read the pie charts of the tax levy comparisons for patrons living in the County versus the Cities and the levies rates they pay.

Chairman McConnell opened the hearing for comments or questions from the floor.

- Why do the Commissioners have so many meetings when it was stated that others from the salary survey have less?
  - Other Counties have commented that they can only attend 2 meetings a month due to having full time jobs. They also struggle with meeting the demands of being a Commissioner and many wish they could devote more time to it. Some are trying to do the same thing as Lincoln and increase the time for Commissioners to work for the County.
- Opposed to Commissioners raises, they are fulfilling a civic duty and should not be voting themselves such a huge raise. In the past other Commissioners did not have so many meetings and still attended the same Board meetings and were able to get the job done.
- Why is there so much change in cell phone expense from office to office?
  - The County has previously been giving a cell phone stipend of \$30 to many employees for using their phones for County business. Felt that this has gotten out of hand.
  - County will be moving to County owned cell phones for those who need it for their positions.
  - County cell phones will also reduce the liability of public records on personal cell phone data.
- Why has the Commissioners travel budget increased so much for the 2018 year?
  - The Commissioners have a one time opportunity to attend the National Western Interstate Region meeting of the National Association of Counties (NaCo) which will be held in Sun Valley this year. Have increased travel and registrations for this one time opportunity.
- Opposed to raises, former Commissioners attended all the same meetings and many times did not charge the County for mileage and time and had others cover their normal job so they could attend.
- Only so much money to go around. Each taxing district seems to want more and more. Only so many drops in the bucket. Why can't the different taxing districts come together on issues and save some money.
- Concern about the time the Commissioners say they are spending. What are they doing with all this time?
  - The Agenda book is at the back of the room for public review. You can see all the topics and projects that are discussed at each meeting.
  - Anyone who wishes to receive the Commissioners agenda and meeting minutes can do so by sending their email to the Clerk at [bfarnworth@lincolncountyid.us](mailto:bfarnworth@lincolncountyid.us).
- As a former County employee was grateful for all the benefits and felt the job was a great learning experience. Should consider those benefits over asking for more money.
- County Commissioners are an Executive Position, not an hourly position. They knew what the pay was when they were elected. Not hearing anything about what they are going to do to improve the County. Don't take on more duties yourself, delegate duties. Use more volunteers. Tax base is going down. Need to watch indicators.
  - County Commissioners want to do more to increase the tax base for the County. Would like time to work with companies who are looking for a place to establish and Idaho is a great place. This all takes time, extra time that cannot be done during the regular meeting time.

We need to look for grant opportunities, that takes time. There are employers in the County who need employees with technical skills, ITD & Glanbia. Working on a pipeline for the Colleges to the local business needs. Takes a lot of time.

- Appreciate the Commissioners and all they do, know they have a big job. Maybe more information ahead of major decisions would help minimize concerns.
  - Re-iterated that anyone who wishes to get the Commissioners Agenda and minutes can give their e-mail to the Clerk and they will be sent with the group.
- Understand that the Commissioners don't have enough time to dedicate to be able to work on issues in a lot of areas that need attention. Commissioners need more time to be able to spend on ways to improve our County and they shouldn't be expected to work for free. We get what we pay for.
- Understand that the Commissioners are taking over the P&Z Board duties and the Board has been dissolved. Why weren't more people asked to serve? Where is the revenue to cover all the increases? How does \$24.10 per hour relate to a Commissioners salary? What about a County grant writer?
- Why does the Sheriff's department need a vehicle for every deputy? Why do they need a Humvee and the upkeep? Why is the Sheriff's budget so high?
- Too much of an increase, don't deserve that much. Is taking over P&Z even legal? A P&Z Board can't get paid.
- The salary grade for elected officials seems to be an incentive not to keep them on for an extended period of time as the salary gets very large. Seems it is an incentive for the public to turnover the positions and have them paid at the beginning salaries.
  - Lincoln County deserves the best Elected Officials. Having to make a living, which is a full time job, and be a Commissioner, which we need to be able to devote more time to requires a better salary. A better salary will bring in a better leadership.
- Thanks to the Commissioners, City and Community for being there. Always answer calls, no matter what the time or what they are doing. If we continue to think like a poor community, we will always be a poor community. Bothered by those who take our taxes for payment and then don't show up.
- Seems that maybe a part-time position to a more full time position is a legal change, does it need a ballot vote?
  - Prosecutor has been involved in all of the discussions for the change and has not recommended there needs to be a ballot vote.
- Will the libraries still be helped by the County?
  - Yes, it's in the budget.
- We only have a set amount of revenue to work with, don't see how it can be accomplished.
  - The budget has been balanced with appropriate revenues.
- What days will the Commissioners be at the Courthouse?
  - The regular Commissioners meetings are every Monday, except on a 5<sup>th</sup> Monday. If there is a holiday, they usually meet on the next Tuesday. The weekly administrative day has not yet been decided, each will take a different day. Looks like probably Friday they will not be there.
- Do Commissioners look for grant opportunities? Would be happy to help with grant writing.
  - The County got a grant to help with the renovation of the Care Center 3 years ago. The Sheriff's department get grants every year for different projects. The County does have a few grants they are getting.
  - Commissioner Wood has done grant writing in the past for the school districts and is comfortable with grant writing, just needs more time.
- Don't see the 25 hours as needed or the increase in the wage. Is this so they can get County benefits?
  - Elected Officials are automatically eligible for PERSI and County insurance coverage.
- Being an Elected Official takes public trust. All patrons should review the Idaho Statutes. Title 74 deals with ethics in government. Are our Commissioner being ethical? Title 31 deals with County

Government, are they following the rules of their position? Government governs best when it governs least.

- Impressed with offers from those present of help and service. We all need to be more aware and contribute more to our communities and Counties. Maybe then the Commissioners wouldn't feel like they had to spend so much time. Not sure it's the best solution, limits those involved.
- Concern about budgeting to use so much of the PILT. PILT is not guarantee revenue. Has to be appropriated from the Federal Government each year.
  - Yes, there is that concern. However, PILT has not only been funded each year but has also increased each year. Starting 10 years ago with around \$400,000 and last year the County received \$892,000.
  - PILT is "Payment in Lieu of Taxes". Which is the federal government payment to the County for all the BLM land they own that we cannot levy property taxes on.
- Why does the County need so much money in reserve and why do we need to build a new Courthouse.
  - ADA is a big issue these days. Counties across the nation are being sued by the ACLU for Courthouses that are not ADA compliant. We need a Courthouse that is ADA compliant and it would cost more money to make the current Courthouse compliant than it would to build new.

Chairman McConnell announced that we will close the meeting. The budget will be finalized on Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am during the regular Commissioners Meeting.

Commissioner Hubert wished to acknowledge the passing of a great Idaho Statesmen, Cecil Andrus.

8:20pm Chairman McConnell adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully,  
Brenda Farnworth, Clerk

---

Cresley McConnell, Chairman

Attest:

---

Brenda Farnworth, Clerk