

COMMISSIONERS MEETING

March 29, 2023

YORK,ss

At a special 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, March 29, 2023 A. D. at 5:00 P. M.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

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

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

03-29-2023 ITEM

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

None

2 FY'2023 AUDIT REVIEW

County Manager Zinser introduced auditor, Christina Howe from RHR Smith who reviewed the county's statement and opinion via ZOOM. She explained that they also performed a Compliance test on the county's ARPA funds and found no deficiencies.

Ms. Howe displayed the county's balance sheet for 'FY 2022 and explained that the focus for this discussion would be on the general fund. She continued that the county's cash balance has gone up largely due to ARPA funds. Ms. Howe continued that there are some increases to accounts receivables that mostly relate to EMA with their request for reimbursements.

The general fund liabilities saw limited changes.

The non- spendable, committable, restricted and assigned and non-assigned fund balances show an increase of 17% to the past year. The unassigned fund balance is considered to be healthy, explained Christina Howe. She explained that both revenues and expenses have gone up.

Auditor Christina Howe addressed the Management letter comments and explained that most had to do with bank reconciliations and general ledger reconciliations. She addressed the final comments that stated the Finance department is under-staffed. Other entities of your size have more employees than you do, she stated.

Commissioner Chenette asked Christina questions regarding the management letter. He asked about the regulatory requirements stated in the management letter and asked, are we not in compliance? Ms. Howe replied that she believes the State statute expects funds to be deposited in the bank within 10 days. Some of the deposits went out quite a bit beyond that. She explained that some of the reasons could be due to too many sites collecting funds and getting them to the Finance Department in a timely manner.

Commissioner Chenette asked Auditor Howe to elaborate on the comment regarding the receivables section and lack of communication between EMA and Finance. Christina replied that reporting to Finance is not their central duty and that we all understand they were extremely busy with other issues. It was found during the Federal compliance testing that EMA has so many outstanding accounts receivable that are not being reported to the Finance Department in a timely manner. We produced several rounds of adjustments for EMA in particular. Some offsets within the general fund aren't reported until you know there is an accounts receivable coming across to Finance.

Commissioner Ring asked the County Manager why the audit has taken so long when Christina mentioned in her presentation that it took 2 to 3 weeks.

County Manager Zinser explained that in between all of this there are questions and answers going back and forth. He reminded the Commissioner not to forget there are two parts being the initial audit and then we began the Federal Compliance part. Christina added that at the end of the report there is a breakout of the federal compliance part.

Commissioner Chenette asked what the next steps would be. Does Finance or the County Manager walk through the suggested items for corrective action. How do we address some of these issues?

County Manager Zinser replied that they will review and correct the issues brought forth in the Management letter. He added that we really need more staff.

Commissioner Chenette responded that while he appreciates the answer, he is concerned specifically with the lack of internal communication. He added that he wants to make sure we have clearly articulate processes.

Commissioner Chenette added that he has an issue with referencing accounting issues with staff. He said to the County Manager that he is asking the Commissioners to approve additional staff but he wants to know how we are going to fix these (items).

Commissioner Dutremble replied that the County Manager will work on these items and come back with a report.

Commissioner Chenette commented that it seems like we could be out of compliance and that is a big deal. He added that he wants updates on how we are addressing these things.

Commissioner Clark motioned to accept the audit done by RHR Smith for fiscal year ending 6-30-2022. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

3 TO BEGIN THE 'FY24 BUDGET PROCESS

a. County Manager Zinser to give budget overview and present Commissioners, new requests, administration, treasurer, public agencies, retirement benefits and medical/dental budgets-

County Manager Zinser informed all that the initial budget was coming in high, much higher than what is being presented. The budget presented to you reflects a 4.98% increase. The County Manager continued that the primary driver is the wages. Benefits are not astronomical this year, he stated.

County Manager Zinser explained that this budget incorporates all the approved positions from last year. There is some concern about revenues coming into the county. Deeds recording is going down and we don't know where it is going next year, commented the County Manager. Most departments show increases in software and communications for. Commissioner Zinser continued that we are asking for 5 new positions this year- two in Finance, one for Probate, two janitorial and one part time court officer.

County Manager Zinser informed all that this budget is under LD-1 by about \$340,000.

County Manager Zinser explained the impact of this county budget increase to the towns.

He stated that this budget proposes 4% COLA for non-union.

Commissioner Ring asked if the union contracts' payscales are negotiated for this budget?

The County Manager replied, yes.

Commissioner Ring asked if their COLAS were 4%?

County Manager explained that CPA contract was 7% 3%, %3, MSEA at 3%, He was not sure where NCEU is.

County Manager Zinser stated that in the issue of fairness, the non-union is a non-compounding pay scale.

Commissioner Ring asked is there an actual pay scale for non-union employees?

County Manager Zinser replied that we do not have a scale.

Commissioner Ring commented that she feels that COLA is COLA. If a non-union gets 4% on their pay and then 2% it's still based on their pay. Why wouldn't that compound?

County Manager Zinser replied that he will e-mail a graphical depiction.

Payscales can be confusing. Everything is applied to the base for non-union.

With the unions, it is to the pay scale.

Commissioner Ring stated that another concern she has is the way it is prepared.

We used to have a year end estimated column to see where each department is at.

County Manager Zinser explained that this information was e-mailed to the Commissioners.

The County Manger continued by reviewing the revenues. He stated that deeds revenue is down as there aren't a lot of houses on the market. We budgeted more than we thought on deeds revenue last year. This budget is largely driven by deeds revenue. County Manger informed all that I do not intend for this budget year to end with massive.

COMMISSIONERS - Commissioner Ring stated that for clarification purposes, this budget has almost 6%.

The County Manager explained that this year, after seeing the initial budget was coming in higher, we looked at wages individually using the daily approach. In the past, we did blanket percentage increases. These are estimates.

This will have a long-term impact for year-end surpluses.

As you go through every employee was calculated down to the day.

Commissioner Chenette asked if the benefit of moving to daily rate was to find savings within departments to cover raises?

County Manager Zinser said yes and there is no play room. Moving forward, this complicates matters for collective bargaining.

The decision was made to do it this year as the budget was coming in high, explained County Manager Zinser.

He added that the Commissioners' budget shows an increase of a little over 7.63%

County Manager Zinser explained to all that the county's worker's comp. was a huge increase. He circulated the invoice showing the breakdowns of classifications with the charges.

He informed all that also the Safety Committee helps reduce our workers' compensation cost with a credit of \$61,000.

Commissioner Ring asked if we have a lot of worker's comp. claims?

The County Manager explained that this is also a function of payroll but, yes, we do have some large claims.

H.R. Director Corliss informed all that there are a couple of long-standing claims. She continued that they will be having a mid-annual review in May so some may be coming off.

County Manager Zinser explained that this does not mean money coming back to us.

NEW REQUESTS- The County Manager explained that he will talk about the two Finance(positions) in the context of the administrative budget.

ADMINISTRATIVE- County Manager Zinser explained that the increase in computer software is a function of Microsoft office licensing.

DUES and MEMBERSHIPS- County Manager explained this line.

TELEPHONES-County Manager Zinser explained there was an increase in costs.

Commissioner Ring asked about employees receiving stipends for phones.

County Manager Zinser explained the employees receiving this stipend use their personal cell phone for county business so vs. giving them a county phone, he gives them a stipend once a year of \$300.00.

EQUIPMENT,TECHNOLOGY and SOFTWARE- The County Manager explained that this covers MUNIS and a monthly fee for KRONOS (payroll system).

Commissioner Chenette asked if all the technology needs are included for the new renovated space?

County Manager Zinser responded that is included in construction costs. The estimate came back last week at around \$80,000 for the new AV system.

County Manager Zinser stated that as far as the Finance positions, the auditor's comment regarding the need for more staffing was there.

As far as the receivable issue and specificity regarding EMA, communication is fine. EMA did a fantastic job on their end accounting for and getting reimbursements. That alone is a tremendous feat. I am not worried about the ongoing communication, stated County Manager Zinser.

"EMA was so busy on their end to let us know so I am not sure how one would overcome that. In the future, as that is reduced, I'm not worried about it," said the County Manager.

County Manager Zinser added that we were down in Finance for 3.5 months to 2.5 people as there was a medical issue and an employee was out for 2 months. Other entities have a full-time person assigned to each of those tasks.

I do believe the two position requests are needed, stated the County Manager.

Commissioner Ring stated that when we create new non-union positions, they get 41 days up front and that is one concern. Another concern added Commissioner Ring is to add two people up front might be too much. There is no other justification than the auditor said so. We don't document how many hours they use to get that job done.

She continued that she is not comfortable with two new positions. She added that she could support one.

Commissioner Ring also asked for consideration to “grandfather” those that are currently under the receipt of forty-one days of earned time and alter the receipt of forty-one days upon hiring for new employees.

County Manager Zinser responded that this is a Board-level discussion, but the need is clear for the two added positions. These are two separate conversations.

H.R. Director Corliss stated that hourly, non-union employees accrue their earned time and that it is the department leader’s responsibility to manage it. Typically, one is not given a lot of time off the first 6 months.

Commissioner Ring replied that she understands but they still get 41 days and that she thinks that it should be reduced especially on an hourly employee. It is a very generous package, stated Commissioner Ring.

Commissioner Chenette asked if historically there have been two additional Finance positions vs. one added to Finance?

County Manager Zinser replied that in the past it has been a slow ramp up. Typically we would bring them in in January. There are other ways to bring them in, he explained.

Commissioner Dutremble explained if we hire both in January, it would be like hiring one (new) person.

County Manager Zinser replied, essentially yes but what are you looking at for next year’s budget? He continued that if the Commissioners wish to reduce that, we can run the numbers and see what that looks like, but the reality is the net impact is not huge.

Commissioner Ring questioned why the positions show funding at 32 hours.

County Manager Zinser explained that is how it averaged out by hiring them in October.

Commissioner Ring responded, so, there will be a larger increase next year?

County Manager Zinser responded, yes, by either 40 or 37.5 hours?

Commissioner Dutremble stated that the administrative budget would have to be increased (if these positions are approved).

County Manager Zinser replied, yes. They are not in the budget now.

Commissioner Ring stated that there are two other hourly employees that are budgeted for 37.5 hours.

County Manager Zinser replied that non-union (employees) typically work 40 hours.

Commissioner Chenette asked about the Development Director position as a new request.

County Manager Zinser responded that will be on the April 5th agenda to discuss. TREASURER- County Manager Zinser informed all that this position has been ceremonial for many years.

Commissioner Dutremble added that prior to the County hiring a Finance Director, the Treasurer would sign the tax anticipation notes. Finance Director Some counties have eliminated their Treasurer. We now have professional people doing things, stated Commissioner Dutremble.

County Manager Zinser commented that it is a Board decision on how you want to move this forward but the Treasurer has played a zero role and therefore the position not needed.

Commissioner Chenette remarked that the voters did go to the voting box to say they felt that position is needed.

County Manager Zinser stated that it is also up to the Board and it is not all about constituents. Individuals can elect the Treasurer but it is up to the Board on how they want this position to work.

Commissioner Chenette responded that he does think this warrants further discussion on how to best use that role. We need to allow some kind of conversation to take place as the constituents have the right to respect free and fair election results. We can all interpret election results. This (position) could benefit the Finance Department if we had someone that had this expertise could they be a benefit especially when we are talking about adding other positions. This is a natural time to talk about it, stated Commissioner Chenette.

County Manager replied that he and others have received e-mails from the current Treasurer looking to increase his compensation to sign off on warrants so he does agree that conversations will need to take place.

PUBLIC AGENCIES- County Manager Zinser informed the Board that the Extension's budget request did go down, but Southern Maine Regional Planning and Development Commission increased by \$2,000.

The County Manager explained state statutes surrounding requests for funding of public agencies.

Commissioner Chenette asked if we ever get an update from them (public agencies)? Do they ever come before us?

County Manager Zinser stated that perhaps a long time ago and that if the Commissioners would like, he can certainly request that they come before the Board.

Commissioner Clark asked if there had been any further conversation with the agency that had inquired about renting office space at the courthouse?

County Manager Zinser replied that we had just had a conversation with them yesterday and that he is not so sure we can accommodate their wish list but there have been lots of conversations about organizations looking for space.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS-County Manager Zinser explained that these benefits are driven by wages.

MEDICAL/DENTAL- The County Manager explained that these items are also relative to payroll. He added that he can provide full backup documents if requested.

Commissioner Ring asked if there was an increase in health insurance premiums. County Manager Zinser responded 5%.

Commissioner Ring asked who absorbs the 5%?

The County Manager responded it is different based on the Union.

MSEA absorbs the 5% explained County Manager Zinser. He continued that Non-union is a combination and does not absorb the full amount. For FOP, stated County Manager Zinser, we agreed to increase their contribution.

For NCEU we agreed to give them an increased 5% contribution, explained the County Manager.

What was the percentage for non-union asked Commissioner Ring.

County Manager Zinser replied that we will get that for her.

EMA- EMA Deputy Director Megan Arsenault addressed the Board.

She highlighted some of EMA's activities over recent years to include 3 years in an active disaster that will officially close in May, over 100,000 vaccines given at the vaccine clinic, additional covid testing, 1.3 million pieces of PPE distributed in 2022.

Deputy Director Arsenault informed the Board that they are demobilizing the clinic and moving the lab here.

She added that they secured another \$1.4 million in reimbursements in 2022.

They hosted 41 training sessions and now have a targeting outreach campaign for community preparedness.

EMA has created an emergency sheltering program with the recruitment of volunteers and staff. Local EMA directors will secure more sheltering in their towns.

EMA revamped EOC procedures and reduced our response time about 25%, explained Deputy Director Arsenault. The EOC was activated 22 times in 2022 and special teams were deployed 34 times.

EMA Deputy Director Arsenault stated that their budget remains largely unchanged since the last budget cycle.

Notable changes are increases in computers, phone and software. Also, we are seeking an increase in vehicle maintenance as we use the vehicles heavily in deployments.

EMA is reimbursed on what it spends on operations and personnel up to 50% or \$262,000.

We secured an EMPG grant for \$730,000 for G and H block renovations.

She continued that we have homeland security grant funds that we use towards a full-time position here in EMA.

Commissioner Dutremble asked about the special teams line that depicts \$45,000 transferred to the fire fund.

County Manager Zinser explained that the hazmat money is being housed in different funds for accurate tracking.

Commissioner Ring asked if they are given stipends?

County Manager Zinser responded, no they are paid hourly.

Commissioner Ring asked how many vehicles does EMA have?

Deputy EMA Director Megan Arsenault replied 6 total vehicles.

Commissioner Dutremble asked if they have enough money (in their budget line request) to service all these vehicles?

Deputy Director Arsenault responded that she believed so.

Commissioner Dutremble asked Deputy Director Arsenault if she is satisfied with this budget?

She replied that she believed so. We have been strategic in the way we use our grant funding, she explained.

Commissioner Chenette asked if the emergency management specialist position is the one we are advertising for now?

Deputy EMA Director Arsenault replied that it is.

Commissioner Chenette asked Deputy EMA Director Arsenault if she could send the items of EMA accomplishments to the Commissioners. She responded that she would.

Deeds- Register Nancy Hammond reviewed handouts provided to the Commissioners (attached as record of the minutes).

Register of Deeds Hammond informed all that 2022 was in line and we continued to have an increase. Unfortunately, that is not continuing for our budget as we are about \$850,000 below where we would be.

Register Hammond stated that in her 40 years of real estate experience, this is the slowest she has ever seen the real estate market. We used to average 200 to 500

documents a day. Right now, we average 100 only a day. Register Hammond believes this decrease is due to the interest rate climbing and lack of available real estate.

The sale of coastal property is the biggest drive, she explained.

Transfer tax is half of where we would normally be at just under \$1 million.

Transfer tax will be ok. It's our recording fees that are down.

We have recorded 31,000 documents to date and last year it was closer to double that. She continued that they finished last year just under 80,000 documents.

The next 3 months don't bode well for that to catch up, stated Register Hammond.

Commissioner Dutremble asked isn't there a Bill to use transfer tax for something else. Will that hurt us?

Register Hammond replied, absolutely. If they want to touch our 10% that will be a huge hit.

Commissioner Dutremble added that there is talk of using transfer tax for operations of something else.

Register of Deeds Hammond explained that every dollar we collect, 10 cents comes to the county.

She added that the state of Maine does have the lowest in the entire country.

There is a lot of talk at the State level about making adjustments. We have stalled that for a couple of years, explained Register Hammond.

As far as our projections on our revenues are concerned, we think we can hold the same. We lowered our recording fees by \$100,000, stated Register Hammond. Maybe in 2024 we will have a better outlook, said the Register of Deeds.

Register Hammond continued that their expenditures show a 2.04% increase. We have eliminated another deeds clerk position as someone transferred to another job in the county. I am not looking to fill that position at this time, explained Register Hammond. Upgrades that we have done including having all the department in one room and e-files have made us more efficient. Also, continued Register Hammond, we have seen a downturn in our photocopy income as a result of electronics. This can be done 100% online now. 500 free copies so we don't get as much revenue. She informed all that the Deeds Association is starting to work on bills for increases in copy fees for us by eliminating the free copies as well as an increase in our recording fees.

Register of Deeds Hammond explained that Lilly Archivals is reflected in the professional services amount of \$25,000 as authorized by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Chenette asked Register of Deeds Hammond if she felt her estimate was conservative as he is concerned about \$850,000 below (in revenues). He asked if she had factored that in to that 2% (budget increase) or do we need to talk more about needing a buffer?

Register of Deeds Hammond asked if Commissioner Chenette was suggesting deeper cuts?

Commissioner Chenette responded that he is just trying to figure out how we are handling lower revenue streams.

Register Nancy Hammond explained that is not driven by us and that is county money. Deeds only collects it, she explained.

Deputy EMA Director Megan Arsenault presented the Juvenile Fire Prevention requested budget and stated that there are no changes requested for this. We will discuss more our strategy about the program moving forward, she explained.

Commissioner Chenette asked since the two part time positions are vacant is it accurate that you want one full time position instead.

EMA Deputy Director Megan Arsenault replied that Commissioner Chenette's understanding is correct but for now we are fine with keeping it as we explore the benefit of a full-time vs. part-time employee.

Commissioner Chenette responded that now is the perfect time to talk about it as the two people have left. It is the natural time to want to address this before we hire the 2 part-time folks, stated Commissioner Chenette.

County Manager Zinser responded that there is a conversation about converting to one full-time person. Some letters have gone out to perhaps change the position to a community risk reduction position. That didn't really meet this year's priority of the budget.

County Manager Zinser continued there was a discussion of hiring a permanent part-time person maybe for 20 hours per week and convert to a Fire Marshall's position. Another suggestion is to combine those two part-time positions into one permanent 20-hour position.

County Manager Zinser continued, are we prepared to make that leap to a Fire Marshall? He explained that is not really where we ended with our internal conversations. This may be better addressed when we have the training facility.

Chief Fire Administrator Rod Hooper addressed the Board and stated that he thinks we should consider a full-time fire marshall position but take this year to figure this out. He added that he does not have a lot of time to devote to this right now.

Commissioner Dutremble advised that we take our time to make sure it's right.

Chief Fire Administrator Hooper agreed and suggested that we put the juvenile program on a pause. He added that he does have some people that could help out in an emergency situation.

Commissioner Chenette commented that in the budget we have 2 part time (20 hour positions). If we are pausing the budget, do we need to fund it?

County Manager Zinser replied that it is a 20 per hour a week position.

Commissioner Chenette responded that he respects that you are pausing (the program) so if we are not hiring why would keep that in the budget?

Chief Fire Administrator Hooper replied that we would keep it in the budget as it is a tool to help if needed.

The County Manager explained that we are having a lot more people coming to us advising us what we should do. We would like to take some time to look at Juvenile Fire program. He continued that he still thinks the opportunity to hire a 20 per hour person is there.

Community Risk Reduction to me is a different, separate request but we need time to think about it, explained County Manager Zinser.

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

County Manager Zinser informed all that next week we will hear from the following departments: Probate, Sheriff, D.A., Facilities. We will hear from Layman Way Recovery Center on the 12th.

NO public comments.

Commissioner Dutremble asked the Commissioners if they wished to vote now? Commissioner Chenette responded that, just a thought, but it is the first time people are seeing this and if we are going to take straw votes we do this the beginning of next meeting.

Commissioner Dutremble replied that it is not a straw vote. People can bring it back as it is pending but you can reverse it.

Commissioner Ring commented that for clarification if someone votes they are the only ones that can open it up again. If you don't vote for it you can't open it up.

Commissioner Chair Dutremble stated that no motions were made so no one is voting at this meeting.

5 ADJOURN

Commissioner Ring motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.