

York County Budget Committee

April 29, 2026

A meeting of the York County Budget Committee was held on Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the York County Government Building in Alfred.

1. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance: Marc Lessard, Chair

Board Members Present:

Lisa Chase
Glenn Dochtermann
Thomas Hooper
Marc Lessard
Lisa Pratt
Thomas Small
James Smith
Susan Wiswell

Board Members Absent:

Jonathan Martell

County Manager Greg Zinser, Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss, Facilities Director Rick deRochemont, EMA Director Art Cleaves, EMA Deputy Director Megan Arsenault, Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond, Deputy Register of Deeds Wendy Caiazzo, RTC Director Roger Hooper and Finance Director Lori Lemieux were present at the meeting.

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

2. Introductions

Thomas Small (Shapleigh)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-28
Lisa Chase (Berwick)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-27
Lisa Pratt (Kennebunk)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-28
Marc Lessard (Biddeford)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-27
Glenn Dochtermann (Alfred)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-29
Thomas Hooper (Dayton)	Public	Term expires 3-30-28
James Smith (Wells)	Elected	Term expires 3-30-27
Susan Wiswell (Kittery)	Public	Term expires 3-30-28

3. a. Election of Budget Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary

(Please note: Patricia Murray, Executive Assistant to the County Manager will assist the Committee Secretary.)

MOTION: Member Pratt moved to nominate Marc Lessard as Chair. Member Wiswell seconded the motion.

Motion carried 8:0

MOTION: Chair Lessard moved to nominate Susan Wiswell as Vice Chair. Member Dochtermann seconded the motion.

Motion carried 8:0

MOTION: Member Chase moved to nominate Lisa Pratt as Secretary. Member Dochtermann seconded the motion.

Motion carried 8:0

b. Confirm date and time of meetings to be on Wednesdays at 6:00pm

Chair Marc Lessard expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve again and reflected on his years on the Budget Committee. He noted that his approach has shifted from focusing on individual line items to emphasizing broader policy priorities, programmatic goals, and long-term benefit to the county. He stated that while line-item adjustments remain welcome and valued, the committee's primary focus should be on areas of greatest impact.

Chair Lessard reported that he had spoken with County Manager Greg Zinser prior to the meeting and invited him to provide a high-level budget overview to help identify departments with significant changes requiring closer review, while noting that departments with minimal year-to-year changes may require less detailed discussion.

He also expressed a desire to move efficiently through the agenda and indicated an intent to conclude the meeting by approximately 8:00–8:30 p.m., noting that excessively late meetings do not serve the public well.

The next Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.**

4. Begin Review of FY 2027 proposed budget, Greg Zinser, County Manager (Q&A)

County Manager Greg Zinser provided a high-level overview of the proposed budget and directed committee members to the budget summary tab. He noted that federal revenues are declining, particularly for EMA, requiring the county to consider whether to continue certain programs previously supported by Homeland Security funding.

He reported a positive budget adjustment related to jail funding, recommending a \$407,000 reduction following the state's approval of supplemental funding. With this adjustment, the overall proposed budget increase is approximately 9%, remaining below the LD1 limit.

County Manager Zinser explained that variations among departmental budgets are driven by factors such as staff retirements, completed union negotiations, and wage adjustments. Wages and benefits remain the primary cost drivers, with an established 4% COLA and changes reflecting collective bargaining agreements and internal staffing realignments.

Additional cost pressures include increased electricity costs due to expiring energy contracts, rising facility and heating system repairs, higher legal and audit expenses, increased software costs (including implementation of a countywide CAD system), and higher vehicle and special team expenses. County Manager Zinser reviewed county tax impacts, noting that municipal assessments are driven by state valuation changes and that individual town increases vary accordingly. He confirmed that the county remains compliant with LD1 requirements.

He also outlined the county's fund balance status, noting the General Fund is within the statutory limit and that the Jail Fund operates separately under state law.

County Manager Zinser highlighted the financial impact of bringing online the Regional Training Center and the Recovery Center, noting these long-planned facilities drive significant operating costs. The Recovery Center will support detox and long-term recovery services and is funded through a combination of county funds, MaineCare reimbursement, insurance, and private donations, with an estimated funding gap remaining.

He concluded by emphasizing that rising costs are largely unavoidable due to wages, facilities, and program expansion, and invited questions and guidance from the committee on how to proceed.

Member Wiswell asked how long the county's new electricity contract is in effect. County Manager Zinser responded that the county has entered into a one-year contract, explaining that due to current market volatility, staff did not want to lock in a longer-term agreement.

a. Review department budgets with department leaders

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (EMA):

Megan Arsenault, Deputy Director of EMA, presented the proposed EMA budget, noting that while there are some changes, no significant overall increases are requested despite expanded accomplishments and initiatives since the previous budget cycle. These include growth in community outreach and emergency preparedness education, mitigation and coastal resilience efforts, and the continued development of six special teams that support municipalities and first responders.

Since the last budget season, EMA has added approximately 65 new special team members, primarily volunteers, and activated these teams 79 times in 2025. To support this activity, EMA is requesting targeted increases for special teams, reserve personnel, and equipment maintenance.

Deputy Director Arsenault also reported anticipated reductions of up to \$100,000 in federal grant funding, largely due to changes in FEMA programs. In response, EMA is implementing a succession plan to maintain essential services, including transitioning one EMA division coordinator position from federal grant funding to county funding, while continuing to maximize grant opportunities to reduce budget impacts.

Member Jim Smith asked about the increase in cellular and telephone costs, questioning whether it was due to additional lines or higher service rates.

Finance Director Lori Lemieux explained that the increase reflects both higher service costs and the need to maintain multiple communication plans. EMA uses AT&T, Verizon, and a satellite service to ensure connectivity throughout the county, including areas with limited or no cellular coverage. The cost increase applies to existing services rather than new phones, and also includes office telephone lines, mobile devices, tablets, and data plans used in mobile command vehicles and by special teams, including drone operations.

Member Jim Smith noted that his personal costs for cellular service had declined.

Finance Director Lori Lemieux explained that the increase reflects the cost of providing services across multiple devices, including cell phones, tablets, and computers with data plans, rather than an increase in the number of phones. County Manager Zinser added that the increase is attributable to higher overall service costs.

Chair Marc Lessard asked if there were any further questions for EMA and then suggested exploring opportunities in the coming year to rebid cellular and phone services across the organization to potentially reduce costs. He noted that while any savings would not be reflected in the current budget, rebidding vendors (e.g., AT&T) could present line-item savings during the budget year.

Action Item: County Manager to evaluate the feasibility of rebidding countywide phone and cellular service contracts in the upcoming year to identify potential cost savings.

Chair Marc Lessard asked for clarification on the 7.7% increase shown in the department head wages line item.

County Manager Greg Zinser explained that the increase reflects a combination of the 4% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and additional longevity or step increases under the pay plan, which can add approximately 2% for eligible employees. He noted that timing differences between the fiscal year and calendar year can cause these increases to appear higher in a single budget cycle.

FACILITIES:

County Manager Zinser introduced the Facilities budget, noting that the county is bringing online two new buildings totaling approximately 100,000 square feet, which significantly increases maintenance demands. He emphasized the county's commitment to maintaining its facilities and referenced the addition of groundskeeping staff approved in the prior year. To address the increased workload associated with the new space, County Manager Zinser indicated that the budget includes a request for one additional maintenance technician, anticipated to begin in January 2027, when the full operational impact of the new buildings is expected to be realized.

Facilities Director Rick deRochemont presented the Facilities budget, noting that the most significant increase is due to electricity costs, which more than doubled following the expiration of a five-year contract. A one-year electricity contract was intentionally selected to allow the inclusion of two new buildings in a future long-term bid once they are fully online.

He explained that other increases largely reflect the added square footage and operational demands of the new buildings, rather than new discretionary purchases. Heating repair costs increased by approximately 62%, primarily due to the expanded building inventory and the need to rebid service contracts, noting that these costs have continued to rise annually.

Facilities Director deRochemont reviewed several line items, explaining that minor equipment includes tools, landscaping, and contract plowing; miscellaneous supplies cover legally required items such as safety equipment and hardware; and cleaning and propane costs reflect contractual increases.

Vehicle maintenance costs decreased due to the addition of a newer vehicle, while HVAC maintenance remains a major expense driven by routine quarterly servicing of multiple systems, including those in newer facilities, some of which are still under warranty.

Member Jim Smith asked about the increase in gas and oil costs.

Facilities Director deRochemont explained that the increase is attributable to higher-than-anticipated fuel usage associated with expanded grounds maintenance activities, including the operation of lawnmowers and other powered landscaping equipment. He noted that both the addition of a new vehicle and increased use of fuel-powered tools contributed to higher gas and oil expenses than originally expected.

Facilities Director Rick deRochemont noted that fuel cost projections for gas and oil are uncertain, describing them as estimates made jointly with Finance Director Lori Lemieux due to recent price volatility and rising fuel costs.

In response to questions about property and casualty insurance, County Manager Zinser explained that costs reflect the addition of two new buildings, one of which is already insured, with the second estimated based on square footage.

Member Smith asked whether the county has on-site solar facilities. County Manager Zinser and Director deRochemont responded that the county does not have rooftop solar but participates in net energy billing and solar credit programs through energy consortia to offset electricity costs.

Member Smith shared his positive personal experience with solar as a long-term investment. County Manager Zinser noted that solar installations have been evaluated previously, but high upfront costs and building limitations made them infeasible at the time, though the topic continues to be discussed.

Chair Marc Lessard requested a follow-up action item asking the County Commissioners to review potential solar opportunities during the year and provide an assessment of which county buildings may be suitable, including estimated costs, savings, and payback periods.

Action Item: County Commissioners to review potential solar energy opportunities during the year and provide an assessment identifying which county buildings may be suitable, including estimated installation costs, projected savings, and anticipated payback periods.

Member Pratt commented on solar installations and noted that the Town of Kennebunk recently received community action grants to install solar panels on two municipal buildings.

County Manager Greg Zinser, with assistance from EMA Director Art Cleaves, responded that counties are not currently eligible for community action grants through the state, having been excluded in the initial funding rounds despite advocacy to be included. He noted, however, that the county administers and houses several community action grants on behalf of municipalities, including Old Orchard Beach, Biddeford, Saco, and Acton, highlighting the county's behind-the-scenes support to towns across the region.

Chair Lessard asked for clarification regarding a 25% increase reflected in the Facilities budget.

County Manager Zinser explained that the increase represents an adjustment to Facilities Director Rick deRochemont's compensation, noting that he had been underpaid given the scope of his responsibilities. He stated that the increase reflects the addition of approximately 100,000 square feet of new facilities, expanded supervisory duties, and the frequency of required call-outs. County Manager Zinser noted that the increase was reviewed and authorized by the County Commissioners.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS:

County Manager Greg Zinser introduced Nancy Hammond, Register of Deeds, and the Registry of Deeds budget, noting that the department is proposing a relatively minor increase. He highlighted ongoing archival and records management efforts, explaining that the county maintains an extensive collection of historic deed records housed at the courthouse.

County Manager Zinser noted that several years ago the county retained a records management specialist to begin preserving and organizing these early records, and described the material being uncovered as significant and historically valuable. He indicated that while no additional funding is currently requested,

future budget requests may be brought forward to support efforts to make early records searchable and accessible online.

Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond presented her department's budget and discussed the ongoing work to preserve and make accessible York County's historical records. She explained that the Registry is responsible not only for current records, but also for safeguarding and managing documents dating back to the 1600s, many of which have never been indexed or easily searchable.

Register Hammond described the work of Andrew O'Neill, a records management specialist hired to preserve and prepare these materials for digitization. The process includes carefully restoring fragile documents and creating searchable indexes from handwritten records, which is labor-intensive but required, as these records are public by statute.

She noted that once completed, this effort will significantly improve public access to historical records and provide important historical context for York County communities, particularly as the state approaches its 250th anniversary.

REGIONAL TRAINING CENTER:

County Manager Zinser introduced Roger (Rod) Hooper, Director of the Regional Training Center (RTC), and noted the high level of activity and strong utilization of the facility.

Director Hooper reported that the Training Center became operational in late December and has hosted firefighter, EMS, and law enforcement training programs since early January. He noted approximately 1,527 student-days in the first four months of operation, reflecting strong participation from county agencies.

Director Hooper highlighted partnership programs with York County Community College, including Firefighter I/II and EMT training, and noted that the college's criminal justice program will relocate to the Training Center this fall. He reported plans to pursue state licensure as an EMS training center, contingent upon filling a vacant EMS Program Manager position.

Director Hooper explained that the facility generates revenue through user fees charged to out-of-county agencies and private organizations, while offering discounted rates to York County agencies. Grant funding supported initial equipment purchases, with ongoing operational and maintenance costs reflected in the proposed budget.

Member Jim Smith asked about the Professional Services line item. Director Hooper explained that the costs relate to accreditation and licensing processes, including becoming a licensed EMS training center and securing fire service certification, rather than instructor fees. County Manager Zinser clarified that these costs fall under professional services in the county's standard accounting system, and staff agreed to consider a clearer terminology where feasible.

Member Smith also asked whether the Training Center generates revenue. County Manager Zinser responded that revenue is generated through training fees and facility use; however, under commissioner guidance, this revenue is maintained in a special revenue (enterprise-type) fund to directly support training costs, instructors, and consumable supplies. The General Fund subsidizes building operations. He noted that historically, training revenues and expenses largely offset each other. In response to questions about future programming, Director Hooper confirmed that paramedic training is planned once state licensure is obtained, noting the statewide need for increased paramedic training capacity.

Committee members discussed facility utilization, training capacity, and long-term operating costs. Hooper reported that usage fluctuates but has reached up to 75% capacity during peak weeks, with some weeks scheduled at 100%, and stated a goal of reaching full utilization at least two weeks per month in FY27.

Discussion also addressed grant funding and donations. Director Hooper noted that he coordinates most grant applications with support from county staff, EMA, Finance, and the county's development office. County Manager Zinser highlighted donated services, including a multi-year agreement providing internet and telecommunications services at no cost, and noted that federal compliance requirements necessitate dedicated staffing.

Several members expressed positive feedback regarding the facility and interest in future training opportunities, tours, and expanded partnerships.

b. County Manager to review remaining budgets

COMMISSIONERS:

County Manager Zinser reviewed the Commissioners budget and explained that the county has a long-standing practice of compensating County Commissioners for their service. He stated that commissioners play an active and significant role beyond regular meetings, representing the county on numerous committees, organizations, and at the state level. The County Manager noted that commissioners routinely attend association meetings and legislative matters on behalf of the county, coordinating follow-up work with staff as needed. He emphasized that the compensation reflects the level of responsibility and time commitment expected of the commissioners.

ADMINISTRATION:

County Manager Zinser presented the Administration budget and explained that apparent percentage increases in administrative wages are primarily the result of reallocating existing positions, not new spending. He noted that the Development Director position was previously funded through the former Layman Way Recovery Center budget and has now been moved to the Administration budget, reflecting an expanded countywide role. When this shift is accounted for, the general administrative wage line reflects a net decrease.

County Manager Zinser further explained that similar reallocations account for increases in department head wages, including the reassignment of the Finance Manager position. He emphasized that these changes represent budget realignments rather than new expenses.

The Development Director's role was highlighted for generating measurable returns through fundraising and grant activity. The County Food Pantry was cited as an example, noting that food and equipment costs are fully supported through funds raised by the First County Foundation, with no direct county funding for food purchases. He also noted that pantry operations are labor-intensive and require dedicated staffing, volunteers, transportation, and insurance coverage.

Committee members asked about the Professional Services line item and the separation of audit costs. County Manager Zinser and Finance Director Lemieux explained that audit expenses have increased significantly due to federal program audits and a new requirement for a separate annual jail audit, resulting in total audit costs estimated between \$50,000–\$60,000 annually. They noted that the county has maintained continuity with its current audit firm through one-year extensions due to limited auditor availability and the county's strong working relationship with the firm.

County Manager Zinser confirmed that professional services terminology reflects the county's standard accounting structure and agreed to continue internal review of line-item clarity where feasible.

TREASURER:

County Manager Zinser addressed the Treasurer position and advised that the County Commissioners plan to advance a referendum at a future meeting to eliminate the elected Treasurer position in York County. He stated that the role is largely ceremonial and that the statutory responsibilities of an elected county treasurer are very limited.

County Manager Zinser explained that the county transitioned to a Finance Director model in 2008–2009 in response to prior financial challenges, and that this model has since proven effective. He noted that many other Maine counties, including Washington, Hancock, Penobscot, and Knox Counties, have taken similar approaches, emphasizing that county government operates under outdated statutory structures that no longer reflect modern financial management practices.

COMMUNICATIONS:

County Manager Zinser briefly reviewed the Communications budget, noting that it reflects the county's contractual costs with the Sanford Regional Communications Center. He explained that the contract includes a built-in annual increase and stated that the increase for the current year was lower than anticipated.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL:

County Manager Zinser reviewed the Medical and Dental budget, noting that projected costs represent the county's best estimate based on current information and annual bids through Harvard Pilgrim Health Insurance. He explained that the county experiences relatively high utilization rates, though recent jail usage showed improvement.

A modest increase is budgeted for the coming year. The County Manager noted that if actual costs exceed projections, the county may utilize its insurance reserve, which was established specifically to offset unanticipated medical and dental expenses. He stated that staff believes this approach will adequately manage potential cost overruns.

RESERVE:

County Manager Zinser reviewed a supplemental report listing current county reserve accounts and year-to-date balances.

Member Pratt asked whether the county maintains a reserve specifically for fuel costs. County Manager Zinser replied that no such reserve exists, explaining that the county cannot maintain reserves for every expense category.

Chair Marc Lessard asked about the availability of a contingency fund. County Manager Zinser confirmed the county maintains a \$100,000 contingency reserve, as required by state statutes. He explained that the contingency is used for unforeseen expenses, must be replenished annually if used, and can only be accessed by affirmative order of the County Commissioners. He noted that expenditures from the contingency are treated as budget adjustments and are subject to statutory and audit restrictions.

Member Jim Smith asked for clarification on the purpose of the special grant reserve.

County Manager Zinser explained that the reserve was established years ago as a set-aside to cover matching funds required for grant applications. He noted that departments, such as the Sheriff's Office,

have historically relied on this reserve when grant opportunities required a local match, allowing the county to pursue grants without seeking unplanned appropriations.

PUBLIC AGENCIES:

County Manager Zinser reviewed the Public Agencies portion of the budget and noted that the County Commissioners added \$20,000 for York County Community Action Program Transportation following a presentation they deemed worthwhile. He clarified that this addition was made by the Commissioners, consistent with their authority.

County Manager Zinser explained that the Commissioners have historically limited funding to agencies required by statute or those providing essential countywide services. He cited Soil and Water Conservation and York County Extension as statutorily required agencies, and Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission as a discretionary but important entity serving all municipalities.

He further noted that the additional transportation funding aligns with anticipated service needs associated with the opening of the Recovery Center, which will include a transportation stop, and that the Commissioners determined the funding would provide clear public benefit.

Member Chase asked for clarification regarding the county's funding of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) and whether continued county funding was necessary.

County Manager Zinser explained that the county's contribution, approximately \$40,000–\$42,000, helps support SMPDC staffing and services, including mapping and coordination work used by EMA and other departments. He noted that while the county is not a heavy user of SMPDC services, the contribution helps reduce the membership fees paid by cities and towns and eliminating it would result in higher municipal costs.

County Manager Zinser added that while SMPDC has assisted with grant writing in the past, the county now primarily relies on internal resources, including EMA, the Sheriff's Office, and the Development Director, which have proven effective.

RECOVERY CENTER:

County Manager Zinser presented the Recovery Center budget, explaining that it is structured differently due to extensive DHHS licensing requirements that require strict separation of programs and funds. The Recovery Center is being operated similarly to an enterprise fund, with program revenues offsetting costs and the General Fund used to bridge remaining gaps.

He explained that the proposed budget reflects a transition from the former Layman Way Recovery Center to a more complex, fully licensed Recovery Center model. Two primary programs are included: a six-month residential recovery program with expenditures of approximately \$1.1 million, and a detox program with expenditures of approximately \$2.05 million.

After accounting for projected MaineCare reimbursements and foundation support, the General Fund is expected to provide approximately \$447,000 for the residential program and \$1.4 million for detox, resulting in a total General Fund contribution of approximately \$1.85 million. This represents an increase over the prior year's Layman Way budget due to expanded services and higher operating complexity.

County Manager Zinser noted that revenue projections of approximately \$600,000 are conservative and based on detailed unit-based and per-diem billing models. He explained that providers will bill under individual licenses, with administrative staff and clinical supervisors coordinating billing for MaineCare

and private insurance. The county has engaged private insurers to begin billing previously unavailable revenue sources.

He concluded that while MaineCare billing is documentation-intensive, the structure is in place to maximize reimbursements and manage revenues efficiently as the Recovery Center becomes fully operational.

County Manager Zinser noted that Recovery Center operations are complex and require the assistance of outside consultants, with funding previously approved to support this work. He explained that increased legal costs reflect the need to contract with medical professionals, address licensing requirements, and secure malpractice insurance, which is not covered under the county's existing insurance policies.

He stated that this first year of operation will involve refining processes and verifying cost assumptions based on prior experience operating a six-month recovery program. County Manager Zinser also noted that food services will be contracted through a medical vendor, with required meals provided as part of the program, while optional snack items would be available through a commissary.

He concluded that the budget reflects best estimates as the Recovery Center begins full operations, with adjustments expected as the program develops.

County Manager Zinser invited committee members to provide feedback on the Recovery Center budget, noting that this is the county's first budget including medical personnel, which required new assumptions and planning. He explained that preparation for hiring has necessitated a review and revision of personnel policies, particularly leave and benefit structures, to ensure they are competitive for medical professionals while remaining reasonable and sustainable for the county.

He stated that the budget was developed with the assumption that time-off and benefit policies will change to accommodate the unique requirements of medical staffing, and that these adjustments are part of establishing the operational framework for the Recovery Center.

FOOD PANTRY:

County Manager Zinser reviewed the Food Pantry budget, noting that the program is staffed by one full-time employee and operated as an enterprise fund, with all revenues retained in the Food Pantry Fund. He reported that due to the successful fundraising efforts of Rachel Stansfield, Chief Advancement Officer, no county funds are used for food purchases.

The budget primarily supports operating costs, including staff wages and benefits, vehicle fuel and maintenance, payroll taxes, utilities, and HVAC expenses associated with that portion of the building. He noted that any remaining funds stay with the Food Pantry to support ongoing operations.

5. Items to be discussed at the next meeting and Information Requests

District Attorney
Sheriff's Office
Jail
Probate

6. Set Public Hearing Date and Time

Chair Lessard recommended postponing scheduling a public hearing until the next meeting to ensure all details are finalized and to avoid selecting an incorrect date. He confirmed that the next Budget Committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., at the same location.**

Prior to adjournment, the County Manager requested that the committee consider a motion to reduce the Jail budget by \$407,000, reflecting updated funding information. The line item 2600120040342 needs to be increased to account for the state's approval of supplemental funding for the jail.

**MOTION: Member Smith moved to increase line item 2600120040342 by \$407,000.00. Member Dochtermann seconded the motion.
Motion carried 8:0**

7. Public Comment
None.

8. Adjournment

**Motion: Member Pratt moved to adjourn. Vice Chair Wiswell seconded the motion.
Motion carried 8:0**

Meeting adjourned at 7:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Murray, Executive Assistant to the County Manager