

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
YORK COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE

York County Government Building (Commissioners' Meeting Room)
149 Jordan Springs Road, Alfred, ME June 4,
2025 6:00 P.M.

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81437900477?pwd=rcesTnZQd8ywbvccQ2SwHbWRTPzhhbz.1>

I. Welcome and Introductions

Lisa Pratt, Susan Wiswell, Glenn Dochtermann, Becky Bowley, Marc Lessard, Jim Smith County Manager Zinser and Finance Director Lori Lemieux were present.

II. Public Hearing on FY'26 County of York proposed budget

Chairperson Marc Lessard explained the budget Hearing process and everyone made introductions.

Marc asked the County Manager for a high-level explanation of the budget.

County Manager Zinser explained that they are on track to have a little savings with the current budget. All is on track with not ending with too much money showing good budgeting.

This year's budget increases are largely due to three union contracts and technology needs resulting in an increase of \$3.4 million. Also, at the last meeting the Budget Committee approved the Commissioners' request to add \$100,000 to the Food Pantry, the County Manager explained. Other increases are usual and customary. No new requests are in this budget. We are changing some of the general operations in Facilities. Instead of outsourcing we are now hiring someone to do the mowing.

Marc asked if there were any questions.

Tom McGurty, Selectman in Acton, addressed the Committee and stated that the county budget has been growing significantly over the years. It looks like the current year is 13.5%. Towns have controlled their tax rates. How does the county feel about putting the burden on the towns?

County Manager Zinser replied that it is responsive to the needs of the county and the needs of the employees. The County has over 200 employees. The budget is a large function of wages and benefits. It trickles down to all the taxpayers. Is that something we can put a stop to? Not necessarily, stated the County Manager. We need to respond to the departments and their needs.

Budget Committee Chairperson Marc Lessard stated that back in the 90s, the City of Biddeford residents fought over a 1% increase. We would have a large crowd. Early 2000's they argued about a 2% budget increase. When we got in 20teens, they still argued about a

2% budget. He continued that in the last 4 years we have seen more than a 25% increase in four years (total). This year we only have a 5.9% increase.

Last year we gave the police department a 20% increase. We were only staffed at 75% and we could not get staff. Our police budget and fire department budget went up 6% each this year.

Marc Lessard stated that he completely understands what Mr. McGurty is saying and is sympathetic. This 13% increase is a big deal for all of the towns. Ten (10) years ago, there was more we were able to carve out of the county budget (as a budget committee).

County Manager Zinser commented that one year we decreased the budget. We are a point with our union contract where we had \$400,000 in wages, half a million dollars for other contracts and then we must factor in health insurance. This cost could be about \$2.2 million. The County has contractual increases, also that include Sanford Dispatch.

County Manager Zinser informed all that we have 200 non-union employees. Mr. McGurty asked if we are going to keep seeing this level of increase in the county assessment. County Manager Zinser replied that it is hard to say but we are entering year one of the contracts and that is typically more expensive. Future years contracts are not projected to go that high.

We struggle to keep the jail staffed. Tom McGurty commented that the three-year average is a 12 to 13% contribution from his town (Acton). It would be helpful to provide an explanation of what is driving these increases in writing. Where are these increases coming from? Some explanation would be helpful, he stated.

III. Review, discuss and vote on minutes of the May 21, 2025 meeting of the County Budget Committee

G lenn Dochtermann motioned to approve the minutes with changes made by Susan Wiswell. Lisa Pratt seconded the motion. Vote unanimous.

IV. Vote to Transmit FY'2026 Budget to the Commissioners

Lisa Pratt motioned to transmit the "Fy 2026 budget to the Commissioners. Becky Bowley seconded the motion.

Becky thanked the Commissioners and other department heads for presenting a budget that we can all understand and that will move our county forward. Vote unanimous.

V. Other matters

None

VI. Public Comment

Commissioner Clark, who represents District 5, addressed the Committee and stated that prior to being a commissioner he served (8) eight years on the budget board. He thanked the Budget Committee for the time they put into this. It is much appreciated.

Marc Lessard commented that none of the budget process is easy. We all fight to try and provide services and balancing costs to taxpayers. It was a close vote this year only a one vote difference. He stated that he wished that things could not be quite as big of an increase. He thanked the Commissioners for putting the budget together. He also thanked Greg and

Kathy. Thank you to the staff in the county and the jobs they all do, commented Marc Lessard.

County Manager Zinser clarified that he looked further into the 20% mark in the budget. The budget is not to exceed 20%. It doesn't require us to have 20% in reserves but once we hit that it requires the excess to go back to the public. He stated that he did not articulate that. We are healthy at 16% to 17%. We are projecting some good revenue coming in from Deeds as they are almost at full collection and we have the month of June still.

VII. Adjournment

Lisa Pratt motioned to adjourn. Jim Smith seconded the motion. Vote unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.