

Special Meeting

April 6, 2023

The Board of County Commissioners, in and for the County of Otero, State of New Mexico met in a Special Meeting at the Administration Building in Alamogordo, County and State aforesaid. The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 9:00 a.m., April 6, 2023; and she announced that reasonable notice for this meeting was given to the Alamogordo Daily News and Radio Stations, KYEE, KZZX and KINN.

Present:

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| Vickie Marquardt | Chairman |
| Gerald Matherly | Vice-Chairman |
| Amy Barela | Member |
| Pamela Heltner | County Manager |
| R. B. Nichols | County Attorney |
| Sylvia Tillbrook | Executive Assistant |
| Julianne Hall | Financial Director |
| Brittany Pulido | Deputy Clerk |

Roll call was taken as follows:

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| Vickie Marquardt | Here |
| Gerald Matherly | Here |
| Amy Barela | Here |

Commissioner Marquardt made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Matherly. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

This is the second Budget Work Session for County offices for the 2023/2024 Budget.

A. Buildings & Grounds

- a. Travel/Per Diem- \$2,000
- b. Rental of Equipment- \$3,500 (decreased by \$1,500)
- c. Building Repair/Maintenance- \$69,000
- d. Fuel- \$13,000
- e. Employee Training- \$3,000
- f. Minor Capital Outlay- replace tires on articulating boom lift- \$3,000

g. Capital Outlay- requesting funds to make necessary repairs to East pod roof at the Otero County Prison Facility. The commissioners chose option 2A both East and West, \$1,193,121.

h. Request for department name change- Mr. Arellano requested Buildings & Grounds Department be changed to Facilities Maintenance Department. The Board of Commissioners agreed unanimously.

The commissioners addressed the cleaning issue with the Annex Building; Mr. Arellano stated his department does bathrooms, floors, and trash.

Ms. Whiteside and Ms. Black requested a deep cleaning of the building and agreed to have all employee personal belongings moved in order to get a thorough cleaning. This will be scheduled outside of office hours and notice will be given to employees. Ms. Black also requested that the elected officials have a key to the janitorial closet and dumpster.

Commissioner Matherly said no to the requested cleaning contract for the Annex Building.

Reduce \$15,000 from the Maintenance Contracts in the submitted budget requests from the Clerk, Assessor, and Treasurer, which was for the cleaning contract.

B. Film Liaison Budget (New Department)

This would be a new department which would create a full-time position. Jan Wafful came before the Board of Commissioners at the Regular Meeting, March 9, 2023, requesting \$1,000 and to renew a Letter of Endorsement.

The commissioners had previously approved the Letter of Endorsement. They approved the \$1,000 request and will continue supporting her in the same way we are currently, but do not want to add a full-time position.

Capital Outlay

C. Information Technology

Abe Saldana was present with a representative from HB Pro Sound to discuss the details for upgrades to the commission meeting room.

Commissioner Matherly said he wants video/sound for the entire meeting room.

The commissioners decided not to purchase equipment for an overflow meeting room; instead, HB Pro Sound will run necessary cables and when/if needed the county can rent the necessary equipment. The representative from HB Pro Sound will rebuild the quote to include running cable/wiring and removing the equipment for the overflow room. The estimate for the commission meeting room upgrades and pre-wiring for overflow room is now around \$30,000.

D. Rifle Range

a. Capital Outlay- \$40,000

Mark Douglas is requesting \$40,000 for a new 100-yard general purpose bay; the Board of Commissioners approved this request.

E. Detention Center

- a. New vehicles- updated quote for 2 new 2023 Dodge Durango Pursuit- \$84,666

F. Road Department

- Capital Outlay- New Polteck dual AC machine- \$6,800

G. Tularosa Basin Regional Dispatch Authority (TBRDA)

- a. New vehicles- updated quote for 2 new 2023 Dodge Durango Pursuit- \$84,666

John Barney was present today and introduced himself to the Board of Commissioners; he is the new PSAP Director.

New Hires

H. Tularosa Basin Regional Dispatch Authority (TBRDA)

- a. New Hires- 5 Telecommunication Specialists- Approved

I. Sheriff's Office

- a. New Hires- Sergeant Supervisor- Approved

J. Administration/Finance

- a. New Hire- Part time Disbursements Specialists- Approved

K. Rifle Range

- a. New Hire- 2 Part time Rifle Range Attendants- Approved

Commissioner Marquardt advised Mr. Douglas about a new program through Workforce Solutions. Mr. Douglas will look into this option as well.

L. Detention Center

- a. New Hire- 7 Detention Officers for new construction- Not Approved

The commissioners would like to fill current open positions before approving new positions.

Salary Requests

Mr. Nichols gave the commissioners a memo that outlined options for employee raises, cost of living allowance, and elected official pay raises. The wage study from 2020 showed that about 75% of our positions were being paid below the market value. Since then, employees have received raises and COLA increases, and now most positions are now with the market average of 2020. In the past 3 years with the economy changes, most positions are still below market average

for today's economy; a 15% increase would put employees to be in the market average for today. He stated that it is a budgetary impossibility to be able to get employees salaries ahead, so any realistic raises we can provide will get them back to the baseline. Mr. Nichols said one option would be to raise GRT which would bring in about \$2.2 million and we also have the new cannabis tax bringing in about \$134,000. These sources would offset the expense of employee pay raises.

The Board of Commissioners are considering approving a 15% pay increase.

Commissioner Barela would prefer not to give a 15% raise across the board but instead would like to see specialized positions, such as employees with a CDL, get enough of a salary increase to allow the county to be more competitive with the public market. She thinks we need to get the lower paid employees higher wages first.

Ms. Black and Ms. Whiteside had a suggestion-perhaps instead of a percentage across the board, do a flat amount across the board.

Sergeant Emery suggested giving a 10% increase to all employees and then taking the other 5% and divide it among the lower paid employee and give them a scale jump.

Mr. Porter's proposal, for the Road Shop and the Convenience Center, was to bring the lower paid employees up; starting truck drivers at \$16.00/hour and 7% increase for the rest of the employees who have been there longer.

Ms. Hall will put some new figures together with multiple options to consider; which will be ready for the May 4, 2023 Budget Session.

Elected Official Pay

Mr. Nichols gathered salary information from the comparable Class B-High counties; we are below average. The increase needed to bring the elected official pay to the 2018 salary maximum would be a 14% increase. This increase would take place in the fiscal year of 2025.

Commissioner Barela does not think elected officials need raises. She believes that being an elected official is servitude to the community.

Ms. Black stated that she knows of several county employees that make more than elected officials. She said that the Sheriff, Assessor, Clerk and Treasurer are full time positions.

Sgt. Emery said he believes there needs to be incentive for people to run for elected office and salaries need to be increased. He stated that our county still holds the ordinance for a 95% cap on the chief deputy, he feels it needs to be repealed. Sgt. Emery stated that he is considering running for Sheriff and thinks it will be difficult to find an Undersheriff that would choose to take a drastic pay cut and potentially have more work/stress to deal with.

Commissioner Matherly said he believes the elected officials need a pay increase; stated that many Sheriff deputies have a higher salary than the Sheriff/Undersheriff. He said that besides the commissioners, who each have different jobs, the rest of the elected officials work full time within their departments. He feels pay increases will help get people interested in running for elected offices.

Mr. Nichols said he could get a resolution together for the May 11, 2023 Regular Commission Meeting so that they could discuss and debate the exact details.

Other Business

Mr. Nichols said the county is getting requests to deal with dilapidated buildings. Last year, we passed an ordinance giving us the authority to deal with the dilapidated buildings, but we do not have a budget for this issue. These issues are expensive, ranging from \$15,000-\$30,000 a building. He said to possibly start this first year with a budget of \$150,000 and we could at least get started on cleaning up the community.

Commissioner Matherly has been talking with Mr. Clark and Mr. Porter about alternative ways to handle these dilapidated buildings, such as using Mr. Clark’s fire crew and having a fire training on the building. He agrees with starting with a budget of \$150,000.

Ms. Hall stated that she will add \$150,000 to the Emergency Services budget.

Mr. Murphy said we might be able to work out a deal with the landfill and see if they can handle private dumps for the debris from dilapidated buildings.

Ms. Mayhall stated that her department could possibly preemptively identify properties that have the potential to become dilapidated properties. The county has the option to become a creditor on an individuals’ estate, which would require legal to get involved in District Probate cases.

There being no further business before the Board, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 12:27 p.m.

APPROVED:

Vickie Marquardt, Chairman

ATTEST:

Robyn Holmes, County Clerk

