

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

Budget Work Session

May 11, 2010

James C. Church, President
Linda C. Busick, Vice President
Judith O. Boggs
Robert L. Cowger, Jr.
Louise L. Gulyas
James L. Purnell, Jr.
Virgil L. Shockley

The Commissioners deliberated on the projected revenues and requested expenditures in the FY2010/2011 Operating Budget, which currently reflects estimated revenues and expenditures of \$163,155,811. Chief Administrative Officer Gerald T. Mason advised that based upon new information and adjustments since the requested budget was submitted to the Commissioners in April, projected revenues have increased by \$2,489,952, and expenditures have been reduced by \$2,422,430 in order to present a proposed balanced budget.

The Commissioners met with Human Resources Director George Bradley to briefly review Salary and Benefit recommendations, Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and Step Increase recommendations. Mr. Bradley proposed Medical and Prescription Drug Insurance Premiums of \$22.57 for individual coverage, \$45.01 for parent/child coverage, \$62.44 for husband/wife coverage, and \$67.69 for family coverage, all of which reflect a 5.5% increase from the prior year; Life Insurance contract renewal with a premium rate of \$0.21 and the three-year contract for Long-Term Disability Insurance rate of \$0.15 per unit, which is a reduction from the prior year; Employee Assistance Program contract renewal with a total rate increase of \$73.00; and due to severe budget constraints no step or COLA for FY11.

In a related matter, the Commissioners confirmed their intention to offer the retirement incentive for the second consecutive year to all eligible employees 62 years of age and older who agree to retire on or before July 1, 2010 and to continue to eliminate vacant positions to further reduce expenses and downsize government.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed proposed revisions to the County take home vehicle privileges for several staff members, which is included in the draft budget. Mr. Mason explained that while all current staff members with take home vehicle privileges are on-call and subject to being called into work from time to time, he had identified 15 employees, mostly from the Department of Public Works, who could leave their County vehicles at work, which would save approximately \$16,523. The Commissioners concurred.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the revised Elections Office budget of \$1,049,802, noting that further changes to be made therein within the next week would likely result in additional cost savings to the County.

The Commissioners noted that the towns and social service programs would receive level grant funding for the second year in a row, with the exception of those accounts that are formula driven. They discussed the request from Brenda J. Dingwall of Camp Agape in Easton, Maryland asking each of the lower Eastern Shore counties to provide a grant for \$10,000 to help cover the cost of sending the children of prison inmates to camp. The Commissioners noted the merit of such a program, but reconfirmed their prior position not to take on new programs.

In response to questions by Commissioners Boggs and Shockley, Budget Officer Kathy Whited confirmed that Economic Development Director Jerry Redden had reduced his budget request for the NASA Internship Program from \$75,000 in FY10 to \$60,500 in FY11. Ms. Whited agreed to determine what, if any, impact this funding reduction would have with regard to the 50% cost share agreement between the County and NASA.

The Commissioners reviewed a letter from Pete Buesgens, Social Services Director and Local Management Board (LMB) Co-Chair, advising that the adopted Maryland Fiscal 2011 budget includes additional cuts to LMB programs and administrative funding to facilitate restructuring efforts. In his letter, Mr. Buesgens advised that the LMB Executive Committee is requesting a County grant of \$32,295 to keep current personnel in place during this transition year through June 30, 2011 as the LMB considers the following options to reduce expenditures: relocating the LMB office within a County or State agency; folding the LMB into another local agency; or sharing resources regionally with LMBs from other counties. Mr. Mason advised that additional cost saving measures being implemented within the Elections Office budget are to be announced within the week, which could free up the funding needed to provide a one-time grant to assist the LMB through this time of transition. The Commissioners agreed to revisit the matter once the final Elections Office Budget is presented to them.

In response to a question by Commissioner Gulyas, Mr. Mason confirmed that staff is currently in the process of developing a revised fee schedule for their consideration on June 1, 2010, and any proposed changes for vending machine licenses would be included within the proposed resolution.

Commissioner Church thanked staff for their committed efforts on the proposed FY11 Operating Budget.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on May 18, 2010.