

**BOARD OF MADISON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARINGS  
May 12, 2021, Minutes**

On Wednesday, May 12, 2021, the Board of Madison County Commissioners conducted Preliminary Budget Hearings beginning at 9:35 a.m. in the Second Floor Courtroom of the Madison County Administrative Office Building in Virginia City, Montana, with Commissioners Dan Allhands, Chairman, Jim Hart, and Ron Nye present. Jane Bacon, Commissioner's Clerk, was present to take minutes.

Those people in attendance at the hearings were Suzanne Nellen, Jordan Allhands, Phil Fortner, Vicki Tilstra, Linda Holt, Dave Welch, Jake Stewart, and Kacey Smart.

**Justice of the Peace Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Suzanne Nellen, Justice of the Peace, and Jordan Allhands, Justice Court Administrator, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for Justice Court. Suzanne said no changes need to be made to the Justice of the Peace budget, there is plenty there to handle whatever comes up. Supplies expenses have been higher this year partially due to State requirements about the kind of toner to use. There were quite a few jury trials with increased witness fees, and those expenses have almost doubled but still can be covered in the existing budget. Discussion ensued about getting courtroom equipment in the Administrative building.

**Sheriff/Jail/Dispatch Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Phil Fortner, Sheriff, presented the Board with the preliminary budgets for Sheriff, Care or Custody of Prisoners, Coroner Services, and Drug Forfeiture. Vicki Tilstra, Finance Officer, was present for this hearing.

- **Sheriff:** Phil reviewed staffing, current and upcoming vacant positions, and discussed cross-training. There are currently 15 deputy positions including the Sheriff, and three are open. He went through budget line increases: \$5,000 to clothing and uniforms, noting the hire of new deputies; \$5,000 to supplies; \$3,000 to tires on 15 vehicles; \$3,000 to towing, reflecting an increase in the number of vehicles seized/towed, and stolen vehicles that must also be towed; \$5,000 to publications and subscriptions; \$7,680 to telephones which will include an additional amount for a computer-linked system in each deputy vehicle and two additional phone lines; and \$5,000 to motor vehicle repairs and maintenance, noting that the vehicles are higher mileage but they are better vehicles than in the past so the plan is to run them until mileage reaches about 150,000. Nothing was added to the fuel line because Phil felt there is enough of a cushion to cover the increasing prices. He pointed out the increase of \$65,000 to transportation equipment, noting last year's amount was probably too low – the remaining amount of \$18,000 isn't enough to buy a new vehicle since they cost \$38,000 or more, he acknowledged the chip shortage causing new vehicles to be unavailable, and although he can start ordering new vehicles in July there is no guarantee about when specialized vehicles will be available, so the next type of vehicles will depend on what can be obtained. There was an increase of \$28,000 to the contingency fund, since last year's total was too low. The increases amounted to \$126,680 but were offset by a decrease of \$48,450 in the contract payments line reflecting Big Sky law enforcement agreements, resulting in an overall increase to the budget of \$78,230.
- **Care and Custody of Prisoners:** Phil reviewed the two changes to the Care and Custody of Prisoners budget, which increased by \$1,000 in the chemical and laboratory supplies line, and the medical/dental/hospital line went up \$10,000 for a total increase of \$11,000. He mentioned that Jefferson County charges a chemical fee, and discussed medical expenses incurred by some long-term prisoners. He noted that costs for boarding prisoners should be decreasing because a two-year prisoner is no longer being held.
- **Coroner:** The Coroner budget was increased by \$3,000 in the other professional services category due to an increase in coroner cases and subsequent increase in autopsies, which cost about \$1,500 each.
- **Drug Forfeiture:** There were no changes to the Drug Forfeiture budget. Phil briefly discussed drug activity and prevention organizations in the area.

**Communications and 911 Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Lynda Holt, Communications Coordinator, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for the Communications Department. Phil Fortner, Sheriff, was present for this hearing. There was no net change to the Communications Coordination budget because the line for inventory items over \$50 was decreased by \$2,000, and other office supplies as well as clothing and uniforms each increased by \$1,000. On the 911 Emergency budget there was also no net change: the vehicles and equipment line was decreased by \$25,000 and the computer software and hardware line was increased by \$25,000 due to anticipated computer purchases. Lynda said their five-year old computers are in use 24/7 and need to be replaced. Further discussion included plans to purchase a Dispatch radio system, recent server replacement by DIS Technologies who is also maintaining system management, hourly (or more often) status checks for officer safety, the completion of a two-year 911-grant funded project to install a new CAD computer dispatch RMS record management system, enabling communication and visibility between vehicle location and MDT systems, DIS improvements to the paging interface and evidence printer/labeler/scanner, and computer and technology enhancements in deputy vehicles. There was additional discussion about 911 funding, a House bill that would change the designation of dispatchers from a clerk category to first responders/emergency services if passed, and staffing.

**Ruby Valley Search and Rescue Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Dave Welch, Ruby Valley Search and Rescue, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for Ruby Valley Search and Rescue. Phil Fortner, Sheriff, was present for this hearing. Dave gave an overview of RVS&R activities for the last quarter, including wilderness first aid and advanced response training, life flight training on helicopter hot loads, swiftwater training on the Big Hole, upcoming jet boat training, and a joint training session coming on July 10<sup>th</sup> simulating a grizzly attack in the high country that will involve several agencies. RVS&R is doing very well with 22 members outfitted, a snowbird, summer-only group starting, and two winter-only people who come down from Alaska and have winter activity expertise. Regarding the budget, Dave said the biggest item is the capital expense line with a \$15,000 increase to purchase a used UTV after selling their old vehicle. Phil and Dave discussed using S&R funds to purchase the vehicle versus having it be 501C3-owned, reviewed the pros and cons about selling it when the time comes, and Dave will do more research, talk with the Finance Officer, and possibly revise the budget. Dave pointed out that the line for building maintenance was left as "tbd" (to be determined) because there was hailstorm damage to the building, an insurance payment was received and funds are being held by the Finance Department, but repair bids came in unacceptably high so he will have a separate discussion with the Board about a plan to get the building back in shape. He noted that damage is not expected to show up substantially for several years so there is some time leeway. For now, work that needs to be done includes painting, and upgrading heat and air conditioning systems on the roof. The Board reviewed the other line items which included a \$2,000 increase in small items of equipment, \$500 added to electric, \$1,000 added to meals/lodging travel, and decreases of \$2,500 from other professional services, \$1,500 from motor vehicle repair and maintenance, \$2,000 from schooling/tuition, and \$1,500 from the contingency fund. Overall, including the \$15,000 capital expense increase which may be revised, there was a net increase of \$11,000 with building maintenance still to be discussed. Dave also mentioned looking forward to having their interest-free mortgage paid off soon.

**Madison Valley Search and Rescue Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Jake Stewart, Madison Valley Search and Rescue, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for Madison Valley Search and Rescue. Phil Fortner, Sheriff, was present for this hearing. There was some discussion about a recent incident in the Bear Trap Canyon. Jake said he still needs to talk to Vicki about the capital improvement plan format and options about rolling over some of the mill levy from year to year. He said the plan projection is for 10 years or more, depending on commercial land acquisition and the sale of their building. They have already been very busy this year with an increase in callouts. Jake said the rest of the budget is about the same, and went on to discuss spending \$3,000 on building maintenance, acquiring new members and upgrading old equipment, a new first aid/EMT program getting underway with Dr. Davenport as the medical director, and vehicle sales and the probable addition of another vehicle in the near future. When he can meet with Vicki he will also discuss fuel costs to clarify which fund is being used for fuel card bills, since the \$60 amount of actual expense for the year so far seems lower than it should be. There was discussion about sharing one mill with RVS&R, which is working out at 50/50 and will be adjusted based on need in a given year.

**Solid Waste, Junk Vehicle, and Recycling Preliminary Budget Hearing:** Kacey Smart, Solid Waste/Sanitarian Administrative Assistant, presented the Board with the preliminary budget for Solid Waste. Denny

Lueck, Solid Waste Manager, was unable to attend the hearing so Kacey pointed out that Denny rearranged a few things but the bottom line is unchanged. She reviewed the changes, including increases of \$6,500 for other operating supplies, \$12,500 for tires and tubing, \$750 for printing and duplicating, \$10,000 for other machinery repair, and a \$33,000 increase to Beaverhead City tipping fees which is for materials taken to the landfill. Decreases to line items included \$30,000 from buildings and \$32,750 from vehicles and equipment, resulting in a net change of zero. Additional discussion included metal and plastic recycling, staffing, and the downturn in construction and demolition permits.

With no further business, the hearings concluded at 1:10 p.m.

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Dan W. Allhands, Chairman  
Board of Madison County Commissioners

Date Approved: May 18, 2021

Minutes prepared by:

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Jane Bacon, Commissioner's Clerk

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paula McKenzie, Clerk and Recorder, Madison County