

Kennebec County Budget Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 5, 2025  
5:58PM to 8:08PM in Augusta at Hill House 125 State Street

Members present: Theresa Haskell, Kathryn Mills Woodsum, Lloyd Irland, Kathleen Cutler, Michael Perkins, Ashley Sennett.

Members excused absent: Eric Austin, Garry Hinkley, Lee Trahan.

Commissioners Present: Patsy Crockett, Joseph Pietroski.

1. Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Crockett at 5:59PM.
2. New business. Budget Presentations by Agency/Department.
  - **Jail Budget Highlights: Bryan Slaney (32 minutes)**
    - The jail is a Linear Style Facility. Two officers are assigned per floor with a 60-inmate population. There are three floors total. Three officers are assigned to intake, one to central command, and overtime officers are used for medical transports.
    - Jail can house up to 166 inmates. Average count is 130 to 140 for Kennebec County inmates and they take boarding inmates from other counties at \$85/day including meal cost. Emergency medical costs are covered by the sending the County. When the jail fills up with Kennebec County inmates, boarders are returned to their county jail.
    - All utility costs are up.
    - Line A002-1050-3000 through -3915. These are all wage related lines. Includes six new positions for a staff of 54. To meet staffing minimum requirement, need 48 positions which they currently have. This does not provide any coverage for work absences nor medical transport; these are covered with overtime. With new positions overtime would be dramatically reduced; \$865,000 in 2025. Law dictates that the jail must fully staff; if staff is not available overtime must be used to fill the shift. In 2024 had 104 hospital send-outs, all of which were covered with overtime. Overtime can be offset with revenue from boarding out-of-county inmates. Wages are contracted at 7% increase for 2026.
    - Line -4017 through -4020. Medical costs for inmates. \$2,822,820. This \$441,895 less than 2025, due to new lines -4005, -4021, -4022 (which total \$470,000)
    - Line -4005 Medical Billing Audit. New line at \$30,000
    - Line -4021 Medical Contract Cost Plus Reconciliation. New line at \$200,000.
    - Line -4022 Medical Pharmacy. New line at \$240,000.
    - Line -4005, -4021, -4022 Medical are due to processing pharmacy requests in-house rather than by the pharmaceutical provider used previously. May be able to save 20% of lines -4021 and -4022 by managing in-house.
    - Line -4405 Lease and Service agreements need to stay with the current vendors as they support the systems that were previously purchased.
    - Line -4619 Plumbing. There are 88 toilets, cost \$450 each to replace; do 7 yearly. Replacing sinks. Water softener for new system is \$12,000.
    - Line -4909 Training. Needed for 6 new positions. Increase of \$10,000.
    - Lines -7314 Capital Vehicles. New vehicle for specific transports cost \$55,860. Would stop using current vehicle for this purpose which costs \$100,000 to \$125,000 to replace; thus extending it's life. Currently has 82,000 miles on it.
    - Giovanna Peruzzi-NCEU Union Rep for Jail employees spoke for two minutes about the need to raise wages again. They will be asking to reopen negotiations to ask for an additional increase to be in line with neighboring county jail wages. She stated that the members are safer now with full staffing levels and expressed their desire to continue employment with increased wages.

- Scott Ferguson, County Administrator, told us the statewide jail request to the state budget was for \$14 million, but the draft budget only lists \$4 million in funding. This is a drastic reduction that affects the local budgets. Last year Kennebec County was able to receive full funding the unfunded mandate for Medical Assisted Treatment as they could show all the expenses in detail.
- Legislature will consider a bill to increase Jail payments from the state to a fixed percentage rather than a fixed dollar amount now.
- **Sheriff Budget Highlights: Ken Mason & Chris Read (40 minutes)**
  - Sheriff Mason reports that the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office, KCSO, is a place people want to come to work for.
  - KCSO has the fourth largest number of calls in 2024, 19,000, in the State. Population is 127,000.
  - Kennebec County has 6 zones, 2 covered by Maine State Police and 4 covered by KCSO. Zones covered rotate regularly.
  - Important for this Budget Committee to authorize the number of School Resource Officers (SRO's) in addition to their pay; the current number of three is the maximum they can accommodate.
  - Scott Ferguson added that State bills include unfunded mandates, which in turn become part of the County budget and are then funded by local property taxes.
  - Line A001-1075-3105 Patrol Deputies Increase is 12.7%. (Includes 4% raise and 1 new deputy position at \$94,198. Check this.) Have 17 deputies which is the ideal number but 3 are SROs, so actually 3 positions short.
  - Line -3103 Removed federal Homeland Security funding.
  - Line -3606 Overtime. Used to fill the 6XX shift on the duty rotation sheet. This would decrease with additional positions.
  - Line -3911 Workers Compensation is up 89.9%
  - Line -4455. Body Camera & Software. New line. \$19,300 for 22 cameras. Looking at various manufacturers. DA is hoping to use Axon software which fully integrates their cameras.
  - Line -7345 Vehicles. Request 6 new vehicles. Asked for 6 last year and only 5 made it into the budget, the sixth was purchased with ARPA funds. 17 vehicles go home with the Deputies and there are 2 spare vehicles. Typical life to trade-in is 3 years for a patrol car and 4 years for a Sargent and Detective car. This is at approximately 120,000.
  - Line -4210 Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance. Car wash is in a self-serve bay at the garage; no car wash passes are budgeted for.
- **District Attorney Budget Highlights: Maeghan Maloney, Shay Freeman & Val Feeney (32 minutes)**
  - All utility lines have increased.
  - 28 positions in the department.
  - Line A001-1015-4630 & -4675 Maine District Attorney Services rates have increased. Mandatory.
  - Line -5505 Books, Periodicals and Subscriptions. Wants us to reduce by \$2,500 to \$4,500. Costs have decreased.
  - Line -7375 Computer Equipment & Software. Wants us to move the \$2,500 from line -5505 to here, for a total of \$11,500. Will also have a major increase here. The \$2,500 is for the current expiring ShareFile program. The \$9,000 is for 7 or 8 new laptops; this is an annual item.
    - The current program, ShareFile, is no longer meeting the needs of the office and is consuming one person's time to keep the program functional for the office. Its rate will be increasing to \$15,000 annually. It will most likely end providing services after next year.
    - An alternative program that is fully aligned to the needs of the office is Axon. First year cost is \$38,000, which can be offset with the \$2,500 moved to this line; ongoing cost is \$31,000 annually. The position which currently handles ShareFile will be freed up to do other critical work, including case research. Fully integrates with Axon bodycams for Deputy Sheriffs.
    - The options are an increase of \$12,500 or \$35,500 this year.

- Revenues have increased steadily. \$50,000 over last year; budgeted \$20,000 over here.
- Line -4081 Professional Services Security. This cost covers 70% of one position. Probate covers 30%. Total cost for position is \$191,800. Provided by local security company, not by KC Sheriff. Sheriff doesn't have staff to cover. Sheet provided by Sheriff for an SRO shows the first-year cost for a Deputy Sheriff with a car at \$167,567, without a car at \$103,607; a half-time cost would be 51,803. Subsequent years would be \$92,886 full-time, \$46,443 half-time.

3. Discussion:

- Public meeting access utilizing zoom was suggested. Discussion was followed by a motion.
  - Motion to ask the Kennebec County Commissioners to approve and authorize using zoom to allow the public to attend the Budget Committee meetings virtually while recording them, and then to post the meeting to the Kennebec County website by Kathryn Woodsum, second by Ashley Sennett. Approved by unanimous vote.
- Capital Planning was suggested to bring a longer view of the budget to the public. Budget Committee agreed to discuss at a future meeting.
- Chair Lloyd presented a series of graphs and spreadsheets with specific departments shown for comparison on a variety of metrics.
- Commissioner Pietroski asked that we review agencies asking for grants. They are:
  - Soil & Water Conservation at \$13,000
  - Maine Tourism Council at \$9,000
  - Cooperative Extension at \$47,216. This group utilizes Hill House for office space.
 Chair Lloyd asked Scott to get requests and mission statements from each group for our next meeting.
- Commissioner Pietroski asked for the committee members to request their towns voice support for a bill currently proposed: **LD 719 An Act to Amend the Share of State Funding for the County Jail Operations Fund.**

4. Motion to accept the Budget Committee Minutes of February 26, 2025 as amended to include the correct name for Hon. Libby Mitchell, made by Michael Perkins, second by Ashley Sennett. Vote: 5 in favor, Haskell abstained due to absence.

5. Motion to adjourn at 8:33PM made by Michael Perkins, second by Ashley Sennett. Approved by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted by Kathryn Mills Woodsum, March 8, 2025.