

Kennebec County Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
5:58PM to 8:08PM in Augusta at Hill House 125 State Street

Members present: Eric Austin, Theresa Haskell, Kathryn Mills Woodsum, Lloyd Irland, Kathleen Cutler
Members excused absent: Garry Hinkley, Lee Trahan, Michael Perkins, Ashley Sennett.

Commissioners Present: Patsy Crockett, Joseph Pietroski, George Jabar.

1. Meeting was called to order by Commissioner Crockett at 5:59PM.
2. Commissioner Jabar: Presented comments on the statewide Jail issues. The State is failing to fully fund the State share of the County Jails as requested by the Jail Council Committee. The Counties asked for a \$14 million increase, the Governor reduced this to \$4 million. A bill has been introduced to ask for a fixed percentage payment rather than a fixed dollar amount so that in future years the amount needed will be funded. The County cannot control the number of inmates nor their individual needs; their care is mandated by law and must be provided. If the State doesn't fully fund their share, then the cost rests with the County and is passed on to the Town's to be directly paid through property taxes. Our three commissioners are actively involved in trying to secure more funding from the State.
3. Motion to accept the Budget Committee Minutes of March 5, 2025 made by Theresa Haskell, second by Eric Austin. Vote: Unanimous. ***Should be: Vote: 4 in favor, Austin abstained due to absence.***
4. New business. Budget Presentations by Agency/Department.
 - **Deeds Budget Highlights: Matthew Boucher** (12 minutes)
 - The Registry of Deeds processed over 27,000 documents and raised more than \$1 million in revenue. Transfer tax was \$3.3 million of which 10% stays with the County.
 - Line A001-1065-5506 Community Outreach is a new line for just this year. Will be used to inform the public county-wide of a new system that notifies property owners when something has changed with their deed. This is a protection system against title theft of property that is becoming widespread. \$2,800
 - Line -4825 Professional Service-Legal. This line had the new deeds system here last year; that has been moved to line -7375 Computer and Software. Asks to reduce this line by \$1500 to \$3,500 and add \$1,500 to line -7375 Computer, increasing it to \$52,500 to cover the cost of the program. The remaining amount is for any issues that may arise throughout the year.
 - Line -7375 Computer Equipment and Software. This increase is due to the discussion above.
 - Line -4940 Training & Education. Used for staff development which has previously been minimal. Will keep this amount in future years.
 - Line -3000 and -3100 are non-union positions.
 - Motion to: Reduce line A001-1065-4825 Professional Service-Legal by \$1,500, from \$5,000 to \$3,500, and to increase line A001-1065-7375 Computer Equipment and Software by \$1,500, from \$51,000 to \$52,500, made by Theresa Haskell, seconded by Eric Austin. Vote unanimous.
 - **Finance Budget Highlights: Lisa Bryant** (5 minutes)
 - Information on the COLA amounts from other counties was presented to Lloyd; he will share with the Budget Committee.
 - Line A001-1030-3101. Finance Specialist. This was a new position last year that began in January. The hiring wage was higher than budgeted, at \$55,889. The raise for this year is 4%. The 11.2% increase reflects the higher starting wage and the 4% increase.
 - Line -3902 Employee Health Insurance. Decrease is due to actual costs compared to estimates the previous year.

- Line -4000 Professional Services Other. This position is held by a former audit company worker who is familiar with the County finances and was funded with ARPA funds last year. Wants to continue this position.
- **Treasurer Budget Highlights: Tom Doore (5 minutes)**
 - Line A001-1025-3000 Treasurer. Full-time for this position is about 2 days monthly. Prepares the materials for the Commissioners to sign at their meetings to pay County expenses.
 - Line -3001 Deputy Treasurer. This position covers the Treasurer when they cannot be present.
- **Cooperative Extension: Alicia Targonski (5 minutes)**
 - Receives funding from all levels of government: Federal, State and County.
 - They have use of the entire third floor of Hill House which is approximately 3,800 square feet. Market value would be about \$2.25 per square foot. Approximately \$2,500 monthly. They do not pay anything; it is a benefit by written agreement; it should be an MOU.
- **Executive Budget Highlights: Scott Ferguson (3 minutes)**
 - This is the Commissioners Budget.
 - Line A001-1020-4100 Commissioner Transport-Meals-Lodging. For the MCCA Conference. The other conference they attend is covered by the NCCA.
- **Administration Budget Highlights: Scott Ferguson (20 minutes)**
 - Changes are noted on the Budget Summary Sheet.
 - Line A001-1022-3100 County Administrator. Contract position. Increase was approved by the Commissioners at 9.2%
 - All other employees are non-union.
 - Line -3102 Human Resources Administrator. Duties have increased, commensurate pay of 12.3%.
 - Line -3102 Human Resources Assistant. New position in January of this year, keeping position as full-time now.
 - Line -3910 Retiree Sick & Vacation. Beginning to fund now. Question raised by Budget Committee if this should be a reserve account item?
 - Line -3998 Unemployment Insurance. Entered here and will transfer to other departments.
 - Line -3999 Health Insurance Cash in Lieu. Entered here and will transfer to other departments.
 - County Administrator brought in \$1.1 million revenue for the Jail in 2024 through State funds he found were available. Those are no longer available.
 - Notes on Jail:
 - Current deficit is about \$1.2 million. County is up about \$1 million.
 - PL732 passed in May 2022 mandated Medical Assisted Treatment for Jails and was not funded. This is a large expense at approximately \$1 million.

5. Discussion:

- Various Budget Committee members spoke to areas where they will likely propose cuts at our next meeting.
- Department heads were requested to be present at the March 19th meeting when cuts will be discussed. The Committee wants to seek their input and ask for clarification of expenses when needed. Scott will ask them to attend.
- Plan for next meeting is to discuss changes and make motions. Will utilize the Motion worksheet. Might complete the budget this meeting.
- LD 852 Jail Funding was discussed and asked for support from the public.
- Public Hearings. Monday: Theresa and Lloyd can attend in Waterville. Tuesday: Eric and Kathryn can attend in Augusta. Other members are asked to attend at least one of the hearings.

6. Motion to adjourn at 7:50PM made by Kathleen Cutler, second by Kathryn Woodsum. Approved by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted by Kathryn Mills Woodsum, March 13, 2025. Revised on 3-18-25 to correct the time meeting was called to order.