

Minutes (approved)
Budget Work Session
May 4, 2010

Chairperson Courtney Watson called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. on May 4, 2010, in the C. Vernon Gray Room, 8930 Stanford Boulevard, Columbia, MD.

Members Present: Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty, Jennifer Terrasa (arrived 8:52 a.m.) and Courtney Watson.

The Council discussed proposed operating budgets with department representatives, as follows. Ray Wacks, Budget Director, participated in the discussion of all departments.

Circuit Court: Judge Leasure

Budget reductions including vacancy, conversion of social worker to part-time status, participation in County and State furloughs, temporary charge of law library to general library fund, eliminate of County contribution to jury fee, paying recalled judges from State funds, and reduced professional development. The Court is also experiencing State cuts. As caseloads increase, some of the cuts will not be sustainable. (Note: Judge Leisure also indicated that the proposed Court house renovations cannot be performed without relocating.)

Orphan's Court:

Tom Mullinex indicated that the budget now includes pension costs for the three judges. This cost is offset by other reductions.

Police: Chief McMahan

Budget reduction (1.7%) despite fixed costs. Maintenance of staffing and programs, including successful community policing, domestic violence initiative and high school program. There was a discussion of sworn and civilian positions. Use of Court Liaison has contributed to reduced overtime. However, special events continue to draw overtime. Efficiencies include limited training and travel. (Note: There was also discussion of taser training.)

Fire and Rescue: Chief Goddard

Cost reductions. Increase for contingent Fire Marshall offset by inspection revenues. Contingent employee hired for Training Facility to replace retiree. A reorganization makes the bureau chiefs accountable for all budget items. There was a discussion of the conversion of the Medical Director from part-time to full time. Finally, it was noted that the Fire Tax is uncapped, which means that revenues track assessments.

Howard Soil Conservation District: Robert Ensor

Reduced by 15%. Agricultural program received level funding. Working to access Chesapeake Bay funding for farmers. Urban program facing unknown impact of review of Environmental Site Design and Concept Plans. There was a discussion of the recent audit by the County

Auditor and the options for funding. Lynn Robeson, Assistant County Solicitor indicated that there are on-going discussions with the District's Counsel. One question is the items of work that are not reimbursable from fee revenues.

Corrections: Jack Cavanaugh

A maintenance budget with minor salary increases. There was a discussion of the use of minimum security inmates on week-ends for parks and road initiatives

State's Attorney – Dario Broccolino

1.7 % reduction reflects two unfunded full-time positions. The office has implemented staffing efficiencies and anticipates additional benefits through the utilization of a scanner for discovery.

Sheriff – Jim Fitzgerald

Reductions in travel and training; vacancy. (Note: Working to identify vendors for secure holding facilities during Courthouse relocation.)

Board of Elections – Betty Nordaas

Increases associated with two elections and the implementation of early voting. (Note: There was also a discussion of new lease.)

Planning and Zoning – Marsha McLaughlin

Continuation budget with 10% vacancy. Savings in reproduction. Anticipate increased grants for Transportation Planning.

Department of Inspections, Licensing and Permits – Bob Frances

Efficiencies through on-line submissions.

Department of Public Works – Jim Irvin

Unfunded positions, especially in Highways. (Note: There was a discussion of sidewalk retrofit options, the future for solid waste disposal and sewer capacity.)

County Council

Mr. Wacks acknowledged that but for an error of about \$100,000 in salaries for FY 2010, the Council's budget would show a decrease rather than an increase.

The Council voted to go into closed session at 11:05 am to obtain advice of counsel.

Following the closed session, the Council adjourned at 11:55 a.m.