

OFFICIAL MINUTES

January 18, 2011, 11th DAY OF THE JANUARY ADJOURN TERM

The County Commission met in the Commissioner's Hearing Room at 9:00 AM with Ron Houseman, Danny Strahan and Jim Strafuss present. The following proceedings were had and made a matter of record:

PRAYER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Strafuss led the prayer and Commissioner Strahan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2011 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Commissioner Houseman invited any members of the press to ask questions of the Commission, regarding the public meeting held Monday, January 17, 2011 in the Judicial Center.

Tyler Francke with the Branson Tri-Lakes News posed the following questions/comments:

- If the Commission could clarify whether or not it was, in fact, requesting a million dollar budget cut from the Sheriff's Department.
 - Commissioner Strahan stated that the Sheriff's Department by percentage contains the largest number of employees, and that was why their budget was being cut by roughly that amount.
- There had been one individual at the meeting that stated that the Commission had hired employees during last year's hiring freeze.
 - Commissioner Strafuss gave a list of all Departments who had payroll change forms for new/refilled positions in 2010, and stated that the Commission rehired no one. He then read the 2010 Budget Goal letter written and presented to the Elected Officials in late 2009.
- Comments that the Assessor's Office had not been cut at all in 2011.
 - Commissioner Houseman stated that there are two county budgets that are protected by Missouri Law – those being the Assessor and Collector's Office. The Commissioner stated that due to these laws, the Commission can only appeal to those officials to take part in the cuts. He stated that the Assessor had agreed to comply with their request and had voluntarily cut 1 ½ positions.
- Statements were made in reference to the financial losses of the airport; the \$200,000 allotment of funds for the proposed Regional Park; and the \$180,000 of funding set aside for animal control, which was supposed to be funded by the Health Department.
 - Commissioner Houseman replied that he was not sure on the Airport's capital expense vs. income ratio; that the Regional Park had received no allocation, there had only been \$20,000 for parks & recreation for mowing, etc.; that there was a contract in place with Animal Control and that the County must meet those obligations.

- Commissioner Strafuss stated that the Airport ran in the black in 2010 and would do so again in 2011.
- Commissioner Strahan stated that animal control was a lease renewal, and the Health Department had done \$20,000 more in upkeep than they requested in funding.
- Did all Departments take an equal percentage cut?
 - Commissioners Houseman & Strafuss stated there were a couple departments that did not have cuts, and gave the example of the Treasurer's Office with only one employee. They further clarified that excepting those few, all others took a cut.
- Commissioner Strafuss expressed his desire that everyone understand the proposed budget is a working document; they are hoping to hear some creative ideas on where else they could cut; but realistically employees and benefits make up the majority of the County's budget.

County Clerk Donna Neeley stated that the proposed payroll budget for her office would mean that she would have to cut not only two additional people, but that those people would have to be her two highest paid employees, because the hourly wage would have to average out to \$10.17/hr. She did not understand why the IDA budget was increased from 2010, or why the Commission would be creating two new departments – HR & legal.

- Commissioner Houseman stated that the outsourcing of legal services would greatly exceed the cost of having an addition to the legal department, and that the IDA budget was actually proposed to decrease by \$10,000.
- Clerk Neeley pointed out that the IDA Budget was not based on 2010 actuals like all other offices, and if it had been the proposed budget for 2011 would be a \$25,000 increase.

Sheriff Jimmie Russell remarked that he was in support of the addition of a legal department, if it saved the County money. He further explained that the Sheriff's Department did not create new positions, but replaced positions that were vacated. He stated that he is required statutorily to have a certain amount of employees, and that he had to have enough people in the jail to operate it safely. After questioning from Commissioner Houseman, Sheriff Russell stated that with the 20 laid-off employees he would be within statutory requirements, but he did not believe they could operate the jail with that number of people. Russell then questioned who created the mail office, and whose office was responsible for it.

- Commissioner Strafuss stated that it was created at the request of a group of offices, mostly in the Judicial Center, due to concerns about not having enough staff to handle mail.

Sheriff Russell then inquired about the creation of the Purchasing office.

- Commissioner Strafuss relayed that it was created in 2009 with the goal of going into centralized purchasing, which would help save money.

Bendie Anderson, County resident, expressed concerns about the safety of citizens within Taney County if the proposed cuts to the Sheriff's Department were made.

- Commissioner Strafuss stated that it would not reduce road deputies.

- Sheriff Russell clarified that if there are any trials, etc., the department would have to pull deputies off the road to fill-in detective positions, or provide front-door security.
- Commissioner Strafuss stated that at his MAC Board meeting the following day, January 19, 2011, he would discuss the possibility of having the State pay for front-door security, as it had for other Counties.

Bendie Anderson then requested that the Commission hold an evening meeting for citizens to attend. After discussion, they agreed that it was a good idea.

Collector Sheila Wyatt asked if the Commission had approved 2010 raises in the 2011 budget.

- County Auditor Rick Findley explained that anything before 8/5/10 was allowed in the 2011 budget.
- The Commissioners and Mr. Findley discussed a State Statute that prohibits the Commission from reducing the budget mid-year, but that allows for increases at that time. They stated that if the economy did not decline as was expected, they could revisit the situation then, and add money back in if needed.
- The Collector referred to a State Statute which prohibits the Commission from reducing her budget, but said that the Commission had done so despite this.
- Mr. Findley said that he understood the Collector had consented to their proposed changes.
- Collector Wyatt replied that no, she had not consented to their proposal, only noted it. She requested that the Commission raise the budget back to its original amount, adding back in a half time person.

Sheriff Russell asked that the Commission send out a daily email updating Department Heads/Officials on what had happened during the day with the budget.

Assessor James Strahan clarified that his office had three long-time employees leave in 2010, and that he had only replaced one and half of those three. He further stated that he has had the same number of employees since he started as the Assessor.

- Commissioner Houseman clarified that the Assessor's office used to be included in GCR just like all other offices, until the Missouri legislature created the assessment fund, but that now the State was falling short on funding it.

Recorder Bob Dixon stated that he had reduced his staff and did not rehire for one lost position, and is down to eight total. Also, he relayed that the net increase of recordings had increased, and that he expected to put money back into GCR in 2011, just as he had in 2010. He further clarified that, overall, last year the Recorder's budget expenditures were down 27%.

Commissioner Houseman congratulated Mr. Dixon for being a great steward with his budgetary funds, and expressed the Commission's appreciation for his budget practices.

RECESS
10:48 AM

RECONVENED
11:00 AM

Commissioner Strafuss announced that the mailroom position saved money recently by doing a large bulk mailing for the Assessor's Office, and that the savings from that one job alone more than made up for the expense of the position.

Carol Davis, Public Administrator, stated that she did not agree with cutting her part-time position, as her office was already extremely busy and only had one other full-time employee.

- Commissioner Strafuss replied that he would ask other county Public Administrators for input on how they were operating their offices during this economic crisis at his MAC Board Meeting the following day.

Commissioner Strahan asked Bob Paulson to look into the liability issues related to not providing front-door security. Mr. Paulson stated his largest concern would be with the funding of the jail staff, as that is the place where most lawsuits came from.

EXECUTIVE SESSION –PERSONNEL AND LITIGATION PER SECTION 610.021 (1) & (3)

Commissioner Strafuss moved to go into Executive Session pursuant to RSMo. 610.021 (1) & (3). Commissioner Strahan seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote: Houseman (aye), Strafuss (aye) and Strahan (aye).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

11:32 AM

See Executive Session minutes for actions if any.

Commissioner Strafuss moved to go out of Executive Session. Commissioner Strahan seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote: Houseman (aye), Strafuss (aye) and Strahan (aye).

OUT OF EXECUTIVE

11:50 AM

RECESS

11:50 AM

RECONVENED

2:15 PM

2011 BUDGET DISCUSSION – CONTINUED

For the record, the Commission wished to note that Commissioner Strafuss was absent do to a meeting he had to attend in Branson.

The Commission continued budget discussions with Sheriff Jimmie Russell. There had been some question as to how the Commission's computations, as posted on the internet, had been

produced. Based on the figures on the posting, Sheriff Russell was concerned that even more cuts might be necessary. After discussion, it was determined that the Commission had used an average, which did not take into account specific employees that would be released and their exact salary amounts. The Commission and the Sheriff agreed to rework the numbers. The final proposed number of lay-offs, as presented by the Sheriff, included twelve individuals from the Sheriff's Department, and seven from the Jail. The Commission and Sheriff Russell agreed to revisit the budget concerns when Commissioner Strafuss was present.

RECESS
2:58 PM

RECONVENED
2:59 PM

2011 BUDGET DISCUSSION – CONTINUED

A general discussion of budget matters resumed.

Commissioner Houseman moved to recess for the day. Commissioner Strahan seconded the motion. The motion passed by vote: Houseman (aye), Strafuss (absent), and Strahan (aye).

RECESS
3:14 PM

The minutes were taken and typed by Cristy Smith, Deputy Clerk.