MINUTES
Board of County Commissioners Meeting
Thursday, April 29, 2021 4:00 PM
Pender County Public Assembly Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: George Brown
Fred McCoy
Jacqueline A. Newton
David Piepmeyer
David Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Chad McEwen, County Manager
Trey Thurman, County Attorney
Nancy Avery, Interim Clerk to the Board
Doug Shipley, Assistant County Manager
Allen Vann, Assistant County Manager
Other Staff and Members of the Press and Public.

1 CALL TO ORDER

2 OPEN DISCUSSION - McEwen/Blue

4:00 PM
Chairman Brown called the budget session to order at 4 pm.
Board members in attendance: Chairman George Brown, and Commissioners Fred McCoy and Jackie Newton
Board members absent: Commissioners David Piepmeyer and David Williams.
Staff in attendance: County Manager Chad McEwen, Assistant Managers Allen Vann and Doug Shipley, Interim Clerk Nancy Avery, Department Heads Tammy Proctor, Roy Horne, Travis Henley, Allen Phillips-Bell, Sue Sava, Jennifer Kimler, Kenny Keel and Meg Blue.

3 TOURISM - Tammy Proctor

Department Head for Tourism Tammy Proctor stated:

- Pender County tourism has huge outreach
- Tourism creates jobs – about 850

- Tourism increases tax base
- Her department does marketing and public relations for the county
- It brings programs to enhance living in county
- A successful programs are shop local as a 'Pender spender' and 'beach week' which takes advantage of traffic to push visitors inland once they are sunburned. Provides information on other things they can do.
- Fall and spring campaigns for Southern Living blew postage budget
- Folks are looking for a place that is safe and not crowded
- The department has done well for it being a Covid year
- Last year's budget was cut by $30,000. In fact two beach towns closed during pandemic,

Questions from the Board:
Why is the training budget increased?
Answer – additional training for staff and attendance at conferences

Why increase in promotions?
Answer – we are having a media mission where we host travel writers to get them into the area

Ms. Proctor introduced the members of the Tourism Board

4 VETERANS AFFAIRS - Roy Horne

Veterans Affairs Department Head Roy Horne stated:

- Budget is very similar to past budgets with a few minor variations
- Original budget was flat with no increases but IT added some expenses for new computers $6,055
- The manager said it is cost allocation. Before it was all under IT's budget and this budget shows cost for each department
- Travel budget is less than he asked for. He wanted $4,100 but the proposed budget is only $2100

Manager McEwen stated that if it turns out he needs more training funds, he will transfer it from manager's budget

5 PLANNING | INSPECTIONS - Travis Henley

Planning and Inspections Department Head Travis Henley reported:
Inspections

- Growing quickly over past year even with Covid
- Since July 1, 2020, the department issued 612 residential building permits at $208.5 million valuation. Most since January 1st of this year. Approximately 73 a month this year.
- Turnaround time is average 14 business days for residential. He wants to get thatdown to 10 or less days

- Department has seven inspector positions
- Not requesting any new positions
- No major increases in proposed budget

Planning

- Similar to current year's budget with focus on in-house modernization of department and allocation of responsibilities
- Big change is inclusion of new vehicle cost

6 LIBRARY - Allen Phillips-Bell

Library Department Head Allen Phillips-Bell stated:

- Starting outdoor story time next week .This is the first program we have been able to do since pandemic.
- Goal is to keep expenses steady year to year with input from library board and staff and public
- Areas of substantial increases are salary study and computer replacement schedule
- Any increase in line items has corresponding decrease in another line item
- There is increase for temporary staff wages. There is now a step system for increase based on length of service proposed in salary study

7 HOUSING - Sue Sava

Housing Department Head Sue Sava stated:

- Country Court flooded during Florence and we spent this year trying to get it back up and operating
- Instituted a rate increase of $25 and it is paying for itself
- Increase in admin fees from $9,863 to $10,189 from HUD
- Scheduled for one laptop to be replaced
- Eliminated HQS inspector position because maintenance is training and will take over
- She requested another ½ position staff and manager told her no.

Board comments:
Commissioner Newton asked if the savings for elimination of HQS inspector could be used for this ½ position.
Manager McEwen replied yes, but there are things he will discuss with the Board in closed session about his reasoning

8 BREAK

The Chairman called for a break at 6:20 pm.

The meeting resumed at 6:47 pm.

9 HUMAN RESOURCES | INSURANCE - Jennifer Kimler

Human Resources Department Head Jennifer Kimler explained:

- Providing Board with turnover rate information as requested
- Onboarded 320 employees this past year.
- There were 113 voluntary separations and twelve retirements and/or deaths
- FMLA cases spiked to 120.
- There were 56 workers compensation cases, up from 37 last year. Twelve to fifteen were Covid related
- Working on developing supervisor orientation. She has procedures but wants to start training in person with supervisors
- Engaged with employee retention. The department just released a satisfaction survey.
- No new positions requested and no major outstanding changes requested.
- We bundled employee assistance program which helped reduce cost
- Retirement rates went up from 10.21 to 11.4 % for non LEO (police) and from 10.84 to 12.0% for police personnel
- State Health Plan rates went up from $6,236 annually per employee to $6,326
- Started the 457b plan through Prudential which is retirement for governmental entities for elected officials
- Workers comp rates decreased by 5%
- P&L rates will increase by 10%

10 UTILITIES | SOLID WASTE - Kenny keel

Utilities Department Head Kenny Keel said:

- Factory road water project is $500,000
- Upgrade of water plant and installation of new pump to grow western part of county will cost $586,000 and would basically double capacity
- Working on deploying sensors in water basin in treatment center to identify and alert when changes in chemicals to fix problem immediately
- Putting money towards changing out older meters with remote reading
- Working on meter replacement for new accounts, new development, problem accounts
- Requesting three new positions; two in utilities, and one in solid waste

Commissioner Newton stated she wants water lines in the western part of the county.

11 WRAP UP DISCUSSION

Chairman Brown adjourned the budget session at 7:48 pm.