

October 06, 2009

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT

The Personnel Committee met Tuesday, October 6, 2009 at 3:30 p.m., in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville.

Committee Members Present: Wolf, Sandlin, Allen, Harrison, Winscott

Others Present: County Judge David Bisbee, Sheriff Keith Ferguson, Assessor Bill Moutray, Collector Gloria Peterson, Juvenile Probation Director Petie Cobb, Election Commission Chair Bill Williams, Election Coordinator Helen Peltier, Comptroller Richard McComas, Human Resources Manager Barbara Ludwig

Media: Tabatha Hunter – Benton County Daily Record
Ryan McGeeney – Morning News

JP Wolf called the meeting to order.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Schedule 4 – Reductions/Modifications

01. **Sheriff's Office**
 - a. Delete Sergeant – Courthouse Security, Field Sergeant – Training, Sergeant – CID Narcotics; and CID – Drug Interdiction.
 - b. Add four (4) Sergeants
 - c. Delete six (6) Deputy Sheriff – Courthouse Security Positions
 - d. Add (6) Deputy Sheriff – Field

Sheriff Keith Ferguson stated that they are not adding or losing any people, and there will be no costs associated with the reorganization. He said they are simply making it possible to move people between the Field and Courthouse to intermingle responsibilities. JP Winscott asked if this is going to compromise courthouse security. Sheriff Ferguson stated that it would not; all they are doing is making it possible to move someone else into courthouse security if they are short-handed.

The committee discussed where the proposed changes needed to be forwarded to. It was determined that they will go to the budget committee, and considered along with the 2010 budget. JP Wolf stated that if they have a problem with something, they can consider it separately.

02. **Assessor's Office**
 - a. Delete one (1) GIS Tech I position
 - b. Delete three (3) Appraiser Assistants' positions

Assessor Bill Moutray stated that the four positions are not needed at this time due to the decrease in real estate activity in the Assessor's office.

JP Sandlin asked if it takes any fewer people to review all of the properties. Bill Moutray stated that they completed maintenance this year faster than they ever have, and are almost three months ahead in the reappraisal.

JP Wolf asked if these positions are currently filled. Bill Moutray stated that they are, except for the Tech I position, which has recently been vacated.

JP Winscott stated that he certainly applauded the effort in managing the department, but he is concerned that whoever is terminated is given appropriate notice. Bill Moutray stated that they were given three months' notice, and he is trying to run the department exactly as he would run his own business. JP Allen asked if he wanted to keep the positions open, but unfunded. Bill Moutray said that he does not foresee the kind of boom that would justify the need, but if it happens, he will be back asking for more people.

03. **County Attorney's Office**
 - a. Delete one(1) County Attorney Position
 - b. Delete one (1) Paralegal Position
 - c. Delete Part-time Law Clerks
04. **Maintenance Department**
 - a. Delete two (2) Building Janitor Maintenance
05. **Department of Emergency Management**
 - a. Delete one (1) Project Manager/Data Base Coordinator Position
06. **Planning and Development**
 - a. Delete one (1) Building Inspector Position
07. **Environmental Service**
 - a. Delete one (1) Environmental Officer

Human Resources Manager explained that all of the positions listed in Items 3 through 7 were left unfilled at the beginning of the year, but were left on schedule 4 because the insurance funding is based on the total number of employees at the beginning of the year.

08. **Jail**
 - a. Delete one (1) Jail Corporal Transport position
 - b. Delete ten (10) Jail Deputy Transport positions
 - c. Add language "*not to exceed 11 positions*"

Sheriff Keith Ferguson stated that this reorganization is just like the one they are doing in the Field and Courthouse Security divisions. He said they will have the same number of personnel, but they will all be jail deputies instead of the transport deputies being separated out. Richard McComas explained that it will enable them to co-mingle the two departments.

The committee voted unanimously by a show of hands vote to forward Reductions and Modifications numbers 1 through 8 to the budget committee.

B. Reorganizations

01. Collector's Office Reorganization

- a. Add one (1) Deputy Collector Supervisor (Grade 10)
- b. Add one (1) Deputy Collector III (Grade 7)
- c. Delete three (3) Deputy Collector I's (Grade 5)

Collector Gloria Peterson stated that this reorganization will add two positions and delete three, for a savings of \$33,000 annually in the Collector's budget.

02. Juvenile Probation

- a. Add one (1) Juvenile Intake Officer Supervisor (Grade 14)
- b. Add one (1) Juvenile Probation Officer Supervisor (Grade 13)
- c. Delete one (1) Juvenile Intake Training Officer (Grade 13)
- d. Delete one (1) Juvenile Probation Training Officer (Grade 12)

Juvenile Probation Director Petie Cobb stated that they have restructured the office and made two people supervisors. She stated that the net increase in compensation would be approximately \$3,255, but a juvenile probation officer who was high in the salary range gave notice yesterday, so if that position remains vacant for one month, that will cover the additional \$3,255 because a new hire will come in at a lower rate.

The committee voted unanimously by a show of hands vote to forward Reorganizations 1 and 2 to the budget committee.

C. Wage Adjustments

- a. Request for wage adjustment for Bailiff Dept 60 (Internal Equity)

Barbara Ludwig explained that a longtime employee has taken the position of bailiff for Judge Schrantz, but the maximum for the position is set at the rate of pay that was being paid to the previous incumbent. She said she looked at the salaries of other bailiffs with similar lengths of service and is recommending an increase of \$977.60, with a total compensation increase of \$1,192.88.

- b. Request for wage adjustment for an Investigator II - Narcotics

Sheriff Keith Ferguson stated that he is requesting a wage increase for one of his investigators. He said that the deputy in question has worked in several different positions over the last four years, and is now part of the crime suppression unit, which has benefitted the county through the crimes they have addressed and the revenue they have brought in. He said he is asking for a 90-cent per hour increase so that he is on the same level with the other members of the unit.

The committee voted unanimously by a show of hands vote to forward Wage Adjustments "a" and "b" to the budget committee.

D. Additional Staffing Requests

01. Election Commission

a. Add one (1) Staff Assistant

Election Commission Chair Bill Williams stated that they are requesting a full time staff assistant to provide assistance and back up for the Election Coordinator. He said they can reduce the part time clerical budget by \$10,000 to help cover the salary, which totals \$38,222.64 with benefits.

He said that they have administered 10 elections in 2009, and this is supposed to be a slow year. He said they are facing the primary and General elections in 2010.

He said they are looking to capture more of the general and administrative costs of the elections than they have in the past. He said the amount of reimbursement has generally been about 50%, but they believe they can go beyond that, which is one of the things a Staff Assistant will be doing. He added that will free up the Election Coordinator to allow her to do what she is supposed to do.

Bill Williams noted that following the 2010 Census, they expect to redistrict the JP boundaries, increasing the number of JPs from 13 to 15. He said that job in itself is huge, and not something they can take lightly. He said these two things are of the greatest value immediately, but they also hope to avoid the situation which occurred earlier in the year when they found themselves without an Election Coordinator, and no one who was capable of stepping in immediately to fill the vacancy. He said they need someone on staff who is familiar with everything necessary to conduct an election. He said he cannot express how fortunate the Election Commission and the citizens of Benton County are that Helen Peltier agreed to take the position of Election Coordinator.

JP Wolf asked how much the Election Coordinator is paid. Bill Williams stated that it is a part-time position which pays \$30,000. He added that they would not hire anyone before 2010, so this will not affect the 2009 budget.

JP Allen asked how the amount of compensation was determined. Bill Williams stated that it went through the JESAP process.

JP Winscott asked if the Election Commission is completely reimbursed for school elections. Bill Williams stated that everything the Election Commission and County Clerk's office spends is billed to the school district. He said in the past, the general and administrative costs have not been covered, and that is what they hope to change. JP Winscott asked if the reimbursement is 100%. Bill Williams stated that it is. JP Winscott asked if the electronic voting machines are proving to be less demanding on personnel. Bill Williams stated that they are in the process of developing a plan to improve the overall voting process, which includes increasing early voting to decrease some of the workload on Election Day. He said as they redistrict, they will most likely reduce the number of polling places, which will ultimately affect the number of personnel needed to work the polls, and the associated training expenses. He said the biggest cost saving associated with using electronic machines is the reduction in printing costs. He said the accuracy of the election is also affected, because they simply do not make as many mistakes counting electronic ballots as they do paper ballots. JP Winscott asked if they are anticipating an increase in the budget from either the state or federal government for more electronic machines. Bill Williams stated not at this time.

JP Allen stated that from a personnel standpoint, he just needed to be sure that there is a demand for the position, and right now, they are trying not to add anything to the budget.

Bill Williams stated that if they are to be successful in capturing the general and administrative costs of the elections that they have not done in the past, this staff position is going to be critical in accomplishing that.

There was brief discussion regarding how the county is reimbursed for elections. Richard McComas stated that the state reimburses at 50%. Bill Williams stated that in the past they have only billed for the actual cost of printing, materials, and poll workers. He said their intent is to more accurately capture what it costs to have an Election Commission. He said they cannot bill all of their customers the same way, because they are responsible for the General Election, and the state is going to pay what it wants to pay. He said they are trying to come up with a fair, workable formula to distribute the expenses. JP Winscott stated that he wants to make sure that the county is fully reimbursed for the total cost of school and special elections, and to him that includes, the lease, the overhead, and the personnel. Bill Williams stated that they have only been billing for the immediate expenses, so all elections cost the county some money, but that is what they are trying to change. He said it is a substantial undertaking just to determine what the Election Commission costs the county.

JP Winscott asked if the Election Commission has the authority to dictate the number or timing of an election. Bill Williams stated that the Annual School Election is a statutory requirement, but any other entity can petition for an election, although there is room for negotiation. He said the goal is to make sure they pay for what they are getting.

JP Allen asked if the \$28,000 is all new money. JP Wolf stated that it is. JP Allen stated that what they have to decide is if the work is there and if the position is really warranted.

Bill Williams stated that he would like to summarize that the work will consist of the redistricting effort, general and administrative duties, and a permanent backup for the Election Coordinator. JP Allen asked if the redistricting is required. Bill Williams stated that it is, because after the 2010 Census, the county's population will be over 200,000.

JP Sandlin asked where the \$10,000 is coming from that they are applying to the salary. Richard McComas explained that they took it from poll worker pay, and moved it to a part time line item in the Election Commission's budget. JP Wolf asked if they would not need the poll workers for the elections next year. Richard McComas stated that there will still be enough money in the budget for poll workers. Bill Williams stated that it is their goal to reduce the number of poll workers through some of the things they are now working on. JP Sandlin asked if that would be done in time to handle the 2010 General Election. Bill Williams stated probably not. JP Sandlin asked if they remove the money from poll workers' pay now, will there be enough money left to hire a sufficient number of poll workers in 2010. Richard McComas stated that historically, there has always been poll worker money turned back at the end of the year. He said they always plan for more than they need every year.

There was brief discussion regarding who is technically responsible for the redistricting process.

County Judge David Bisbee was recognized and stated that the constitution clearly states that it is the Election Commission's responsibility. Bill Williams added that they will be working with several county offices to get the job done, but it is ultimately the Election Commission's responsibility.

The committee discussed what action, if any, needed to be taken. JP Allen made motion to forward the personnel request without recommendation to the October 13, 2009 Committee of Thirteen agenda for discussion among the entire court, seconded by JP Winscott.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.