

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
BOARD OF LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET HEARING
July 16, 2007

Chairman Connelly called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Others in attendance included: Commissioners Archibald and Harmon; County Clerk, Jeanne Wagner and Commissioner's Secretary, Corey Roberts.

PARA 1: Commissioner Archibald moved to approve the agenda for the evening and Commissioner Harmon seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PARA 2: Chairman Connelly opened the Public Hearing for the 2007-2008 budget at 5:04 p.m.

PARA 3: Tony Tomassi asked if the proposed mill levy is at 12. Commissioner Harmon said no. Tony asked the Commissioners to reconsider and he strongly supports them going to 12 mills. He stated that 80-90 percent of taxes are paid by industry and the increase to others in the county would not be that significant, but it would be to the county generating around \$800,000. Chairman Connelly said it would be about \$786,000. Tony said that the state has said that if you aren't taxing at 12 mills, don't come asking for money and this could be an injustice to the people in the county.

PARA 4: Keith Swenson with the Upper Valley Fire District had a request for additional funds to help with the fire district. They would need \$10,000 for the remainder due on their new fire truck. Keith said they are the only fire district in the north end of the county and the Commissioners are funding the fire departments. Commissioner Harmon said they are telling those entities to form fire districts.

PARA 5: Sheriff Shane Johnson had concerns with his vehicle replacement, training and equipment tentative budgets. With the new school resource position added in for School District #2, he will have to provide a vehicle and equipment to that person. He said that this is a huge benefit to the department and the Sheriff's Office agreement with the school is that the school district will cover the salary and the Sheriff's Office will cover equipment, vehicle, and benefits. The Sheriff's Office needs a total of 2 new vehicles and needs to replace older ones. He asked for \$105,000 to budget for in the vehicle replacement line item. Captain, John Stetzenbach discussed the uniforms and costs. They would need more than the \$6,000 that was budgeted for this. He also went over what it costs to equip a deputy and that the \$6000 budgeted for that would not be enough over the course of a year. With the 2 new positions and just general replacement of equipment, this would leave them with a shortfall. Commissioner Harmon said the salary line item would have to be increased for the school resource position. Sheriff Johnson said that the school district will reimburse the county for the salary. Chairman Connelly said that the reimbursement would go to the General Fund and not back to the salary line item.

PARA 6: Clerk of District Court, Ken Roberts had a housekeeping issue with the budget. He said his department is shown as District Court and it needs to be shown as Clerk of District Court. He then asked why the Jail budget was separate from Sheriff's Office and the Elections budget separate from the Clerk. Chairman Connelly said that statutorily he thought the Jail had to be its own budget. County Clerk, Jeanne Wagner said that the Election budget had been set up that way when she came to work in 1995, but didn't care if it was separate from her office or not.

PARA 7: County Treasurer, Jerry Greenfield said that he supported Mr. Tomassi's comments on going to the 12 mill levy and that his point is well taken that the state is looking at docking and keeping counties from getting grants if they don't tax to the full 12 mills. The county needs to go to 12 mills because of the maintenance of roads and other capital assets that need to be addressed and this can't be done in one budget year. He said that the county needs to set up reserves.

PARA 8: Chairman Connelly closed the Public Hearing at 5:48 p.m.

Commissioner Harmon stated that he appreciated Tony and Jerry's comments. In this budget session they made reductions to some entities and will start weaning others off to end future budgeting. He would like to see less civic centers but more road building and landfill operational costs. He feels that if the county goes to the 12 mills, that we won't see the optional 1% come back. He doesn't like taxes and feels for the widow that has a fixed income and has to deal with rising property taxes. That is a big deal to him.

Commissioner Archibald said the cost of doing business is not going down. The budget is over 20 million, and in the future they will have to look at cutting the Human Service budget. She encouraged districts forming as the county can't sustain the requests. She said that Lincoln County funds more in the Human Service area than any other county. She thanked everyone for their comments

Chairman Connelly said setting the mill levy is not an easy thing. It is one of the few ways that you can control taxes. They don't know what will happen on the food tax and does not feel comfortable raising to 12 mills. They are one of the few counties that fund fire departments and in future budgets; they will need to be more conservative.

Commissioner Harmon moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m. and Commissioner Archibald seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Attest:

Jeanne Wagner, County Clerk

Kent Connelly, Chairman