

Barton County Commission Agenda Meeting Minutes

Recorded audio is available on compact disk upon KORA request to the Barton County Clerk's Office, 1400 Main – Room 202, Great Bend, Kansas 67530.

Phone (620) 793-1835 \ Fax (620) 793-1990 \ Email clerk@bartoncounty.org

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August 15, 2023

The Board of Barton County Commissioners convened this 15th day of August 2023, at the 1500 Kansas location.

Members present:

Duane Reif, Commissioner, 1st District
Barb Esfeld, Commissioner, 2nd District, (*Chairman Pro-Tem*)
Shawn Hutchinson, Commissioner, 3rd District, Chairman
Tricia Schlessiger, Commissioner, 4th District
Donna Zimmerman, Commissioner, 5th District
Chris Saenz, Deputy County Clerk
Matt Patzner, County Administrator
Patrick Hoffman, County Counselor

BUDGET HEARING

At 9:00 A.M. Commissioner Zimmerman moved to enter into the Budget Hearing. Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion. All voted aye. Motion passed.

BUDGET HEARING: 2024 Operating Budget:

-Matt Patzner, County Administrator, will provide details. Elected officials, Department Heads and supported agencies were asked to submit budget requests for the 2024 Operating Year. The Commission reviewed the requests and, with the assistance of the Administrator, drafted a balanced operating budget. The proposed 2024 Operating Budget is now presented to receive public comment.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, said it was his privilege to present the proposed 2024 Operating Budget. The budget was the organizational blueprint to maintain delivery of quality public services at an affordable cost to the taxpayer. The main goals that led commissioners to the proposed budget were to remain revenue neutral, maintain quality public services in a way that was sustainable for years to come, invest in our employees who deliver these services and contribute to an expanding tax base at Barton County. Every budget year is unique and presents challenges, this year was no different. With continuing rising costs for commodities, services and personnel, as well as overseeing the largest courthouse improvement project the county had taken on in recent memory, and all the challenges that come with that. The proposed budget shows a mill levy of 37.146 for the countywide assessed valuation of \$323,024,644 which generates a total of \$11,998,892 in ad valorem tax dollars. When comparing the mill levy to 2023, the proposed estimate would be a reduction of 4.235 mills from 41.381 to 37.146. This budget also came in under the revenue neutral rate of 37.174 by 0.028 mills or \$9,226. When comparing the 2024 Operating Budget to the 2021 Operating Budget, there could be a 9.144 mill levy reduction in that time span if the budget were adopted as presented today. Expenditure authority across all budgeted funds was down \$173,491 from 2023. The overall decrease was largely due to the net effect of increases for personnel and 911 maintenance contracts and decreases to the General Fund for HVAC project related expenses and the Solid Waste Fund for contractual services. Several departments also identified areas in which reductions were practical and submitted those cuts in their budget requests to the commission. The proposed raise structure was \$1.00 per hour for all county employees. After addressing the challenge of bringing all full time and part time Barton County employees to a minimum threshold of \$15.00 per hour the past two years, more balanced wage increase across the board had proven to avoid payroll compression. Ad valorem tax made up just over half of the total revenue required for the county to have a balanced budget. Missing from the power point chart was Local Ad Valorem Tax Reduction Funds or LAVTR. This was a demand transfer agreement between the state, city and county governments in which the state has agreed to share percentages of certain excise and sales taxes with local

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governments for the purpose of reducing property tax collections. In legislative session, it was proposed to include LAVTR in the state's 2024 budget, which passed with 83 yes to 44 no, in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, the amendment was not included in the 2024 State Budget. Based on the mill calculation formula for LAVTR, Barton County would have received just over one million dollars in LAVTR funds, which equates to just over three mills.

Commissioner Zimmerman said that was incredible and that it was still in state statute, interesting that they do not fund it.

Commissioner Esfeld said it was on KAC platform again to be discussed.

Commissioner Hutchinson said basically, the state committed to paying Barton County a million dollars but decided not to.

Commissioner Zimmerman said Barton County had lost it for several years in a row.

Commissioner Hutchinson said that would reduce our levied taxes by almost ten percent.

Patzner said it was state money promised to cities and counties that was not received.

Patzner showed a breakdown of all mill levied fund expenditures. Of the \$22,582,734 in expenditure authority for levied funds, a total of 64% was either public safety, public works or public health. 33% was general government services and 3% was community development and outside agency support. Patzner showed slides explaining how tax dollars were distributed throughout the county. Only 20% – 26% of taxes support local county government. In summary, the 2024 Budget was funded by a mill levy that was over 4 mills less than the previous year and 0.028 mills below our prescribed revenue neutral rate which generates \$11,998,892. This was made possible with careful planning and foresight to begin 2023 with a sufficient level of cash carry forward to deal with project costs, inflation and ever-increasing commodity prices while still making a healthy transfer into reserves for the future. As future budgets present themselves, they will bring with them their unique challenges. I believe with adequate cash reserves, zero debt and careful planning, the county can address these challenges in a sustainable way as they come forward. With the leadership of the County Commissioners, the diligence and care of our department heads and the high quality of our employees, Barton County remains fiscally sound and is in a position to maintain a sustainable mill levy for years to come while contributing to the expansion of our tax base and continuing to provide quality public services. Patzner thanked the commissioners for their hard work on the budget as well as the elected officials, department heads and supporting agency heads for their assistance. Patzner also recognized his staff in the Administrator's Office for their time and assistance in putting the presentation together. This was a team effort, and he was proud to say this budget successfully reflected the goals and the vision that the board had provided.

Commissioner Hutchinson said he felt the mill levy was almost an arbitrary number and that the public should not necessarily focus on the mill levy. The mill levy fluctuates by valuation, and we cannot control that. We can only control how much we budget and spend. What the present commission and previous commissions have done was collect less tax dollars every year since 2021.

Commissioner Esfeld said she understood what Commissioner Hutchinson was saying but coming from years in the appraisal world, she had seen the mill levy go up so much that people could not afford their taxes. She said the commission was investing in growth and that will benefit the county.

Commissioner Hutchinson said there were only two ways to lower taxes: cut from the budget and services provided to the community or to grow and have more people paying in. He said if your taxes go up, Barton County citizens should try to figure out why.

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Wendy Prosser, County Appraiser, said the Revenue Neutral Rate notices had been mailed to taxpayers. The notices were to notify the taxpayers which taxing entities were intending to exceed the revenue neutral rate and when the hearings were to be held. Taxpayers may attend the hearings and ask questions.

Commissioner Schlessiger said it was important for taxpayers to look at the pie chart as it showed where their tax dollars go, and to which entities. The pie chart was available on the website.

Commissioner Hutchinson said he believed the information was going out with each tax statement later this year. Commissioner Hutchinson said if you live in Great Bend, Barton County represented 23.2% of your property taxes. Barton County collects 100% of the taxes and the County Treasurer distributes the funds to the taxing entities.

Commissioner Reif said the pie chart was the easiest way to understand where your tax dollars go.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to close the Budget Hearing.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

CLOSE BUDGET HEARING

AGENDA MEETING

Close of the Budget Hearing until Close

I. OPENING BUSINESS:

Commissioner Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 9:19 A.M.

Commissioner Schlessiger moved to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Reif seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

Minutes of the August 8, 2023, Regular Meeting were not available.

II. APPROVAL OF APPROPRIATIONS:

-Chris Saenz, Deputy County Clerk, will present details. An Accounts Payable Register will be submitted to the Commission for the period of August 1, 2023, and ending August 15, 2023.

Chris Saenz, Deputy County Clerk, presented details.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved to approve appropriations for the period of August 1, 2023, to August 15, 2023. Authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

-There was no Old Business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

A. ADOPTION OF THE 2024 BARTON COUNTY OPERATING BUDGET:

-Mr. Patzner will provide details. At the Budget Hearing for the proposed 2024 Operating Budget for Barton County, conducted prior to this Regular Agenda Meeting, public comments were received. The Commission is now asked to consider adoption of the budget.

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Matt Patzner, County Administrator, asked that the commission consider adoption of the budget as presented in the Budget Hearing.

Commissioner Zimmerman to adopt the 2024 Barton County Operating Budget.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

B. ADOPTION OF THE 2024 AUTHORIZED POSITIONS LISTING:

-Mr. Patzner will provide details. To assure that offices are operating with appropriate personnel, the 2024 Authorized Positions listing is presented for adoption. The listing includes all County positions, including Central Kansas Community Corrections and 20th Judicial District Juvenile Services, as both fall under the umbrella of County operations.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, presented details and noted there was a decrease of one authorized position in the Noxious Weed Department.

Commissioner Zimmerman added one part-time decrease as well. Patzner said that was correct.

Commissioner Esfeld moved to approve the 2024 Authorized Positions Listing.

Commissioner Zimmerman seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLANS:

-Mr. Patzner will provide details. Through the budgeting process, Barton County transfers cash, as savings, to both the Capital Improvement and the Equipment Replacement Plans. These plans, revised annually, allow the County to plan for projected long-term expenditures.

Matt Patzner, County Administrator, said it was refreshing this year to be able to drop off some of the capital improvements that had been on there for several years because we were addressing them currently.

Commissioner Hutchinson asked what an example would be. Patzner said the HVAC for instance.

Commissioner Reif moved to adopt the Capital Improvement and the Equipment Replacement Plans for 2024.

Commissioner Esfeld seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

D. ROAD AND BRIDGE: Overrun – KanEquip – Equipment Repair:

-Darren Williams, County Works Director, will provide details. On May 10, 2023, the Commission authorized the repair of a 2016 Case/IHC Maximum 150 mowing tractor. KanEquip had estimated labor and materials for the clutch repair at \$28,195.04. With a not to exceed cap of \$30,000.00, final billing totaled \$31,905.28. Mr. Williams will ask that the Commission approve the \$1,905.28 overrun.

Darren Williams, County Works Director, presented details and asked for approval.

Commissioner Zimmerman asked Williams if they explained the overrun. Williams said when they got into the tractor, they found more things wrong. Labor went up by \$1,234.04 and parts went up by \$2,335.00.

Commissioner Reif said everything costs more than you think it does and this was a 2016 model.

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Commissioner Esfeld moved to approve the overrun cost for the repair of the 2016 Case / IHC Maximum 150 mowing tractor by KanEquip for a cost of \$1,905.28. Cost to be paid from Road and Bridge Fund, Equipment Repairs Line, 002-92-5310.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

No Executive Session Held

E. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

-Chairman Shawn Hutchinson will present. Any Commissioner may make a motion for the board to recess to executive session at this time as allowed by K.S.A. 75-4319. Any motion must contain the justification for the executive session, the subject matter to be discussed, any individuals in addition to the board who will attend the executive session and the time at which the regular session shall resume.

V. ENDING BUSINESS:

1. Announcements
2. Appointments

VI. OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Hutchinson – impressed with County Administrator Matt Patzner, his work on the budget as well as the HVAC project. Thanked Patzner for his hard work.

Commissioner Zimmerman – echoed the comments.

Patzner – spoke about the RNR notices sent out. Barton County showed zero because the county did not intend to exceed the RNR and cannot exceed. There was also a software error that caused the field to not auto populate.

Commissioner Esfeld – said there were other taxing entities not exceeding and they also had zeros.

Patrick Hoffman – the notice's purpose was to notify taxpayers of taxing entities intending to exceed the revenue neutral rate. Different vendors handled it differently in how those not exceeding showed on the notices.

Commissioner Esfeld – keeping up on legislative things coming up.

VII. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Zimmerman made a motion to adjourn at 9:34 A.M.

Commissioner Schlessiger seconded the motion.

All voted aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:



Chris Saenz
Barton County Deputy Clerk



Shawn Hutchinson, Chairman