

**Budget Hearings  
Meeting #42 - 2022  
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office  
October 11, 2022**

**Budget Hearing Meetings**

The Commissioners met at 11:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room located at 210 E. Main Street, Lancaster, OH, to conduct Budget Hearings. Commissioner Fix called the meeting to order with the following Commissioners present: Steve Davis, Dave Levacy, Jeff Fix. Also present: Aundrea Cordle, Jeff Porter, Rochelle Menningen, Bennett Niceswanger, Bart Hampson and Staci Knisley.

**Welcome**

Commissioner Fix opened the meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance.

**OSU Extension – 11:00 a.m.**

Shannon Carter from the OSU Extension provided an update on the items included in the budget for her department, which includes program, services, and several different informational pieces of literature to the public. Shannon moved on to speak about other programs and training opportunities available to members of the community, which includes a program aimed to teach people how to cook.

Commissioner Davis asked if the department was full staffed.

Shannon confirmed the OSU Extension is fully staffed at the moment.

Commissioner Fix stated his appreciation to Shannon and the OSU Extension. He asked if Carrie Brown with the OSU Extension has a project plan with the Fairfield Growing initiative.

Shannon stated she wasn't sure what Carrie's plans are or if she is satisfied with the progression of the initiative.

Shannon touched on the Financial Literacy program, and stated it is typically led by a social studies teacher. Students learn about financial topics like budgeting, balancing a checkbook, and additional life costs.

Commissioner Fix mentioned that he has learned from the Workforce Center that one of the biggest strains young adults face is a lack of financial literacy. He recommended Shannon and the OSU Extension work with Rick Szabrak and Economic Development to enhance financial literacy efforts.

The Commissioners did not wish to schedule a follow-up meeting with the OSU Extension.

**Prosecutor's Office – 11:15 a.m.**

Fairfield County Prosecutor, Kyle Witt, explained the table organization for the Prosecutor's Office is the same. They are proposing the addition of a position for a Drug Overdose Investigator. Fairfield County has seen a rise in overdose deaths. Kyle emphasized that timeliness is critical for prosecution of crimes.

Commissioner Davis asked if the current Investigator is not producing enough results.

Kyle explained the duties of the current Investigator prevent them from focusing more time on overdose investigations.

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Commissioner Fix asked for Kyle to provide more information on projected results from the addition of this position.

Commissioner Levacy asked if South Central Major Crimes Unit would play a role in this position.

Kyle explained it would not be a direct relationship, but instead through different combined efforts. Kyle also offered his concerns for filling vacancies in his department and the costs associated with hiring qualified applicants.

Commissioner Davis stated expenses are growing much faster than revenue.

Kyle thinks this position would be a collaborative effort between multiple departments but would have the Prosecutor's Office take point on it since they are the common denominator in the investigative process.

Commissioner Fix asked for Kyle to prepare a theoretical budget based off a \$162,000 reduction in the budget.

Kyle highlighted a reduction in costs associated with real estate questions from the Auditor's Office. He also thinks the Prosecutor's Office could reduce salary costs.

The Commissioners would like to schedule a follow-up meeting with Kyle Witt to discuss a theoretical \$162,000 reduction in the budget.

The Commissioners went into recess at 12:08 p.m.

**Recorder's Office – 12:30 p.m.**

Fairfield County Recorder, Lisa McKenzie, stated her office has nothing new to report. There are some planned improvements to the office, but they are in line with the available funds.

Commissioner Davis stated his appreciation for when a budget comes within the established parameters.

Commissioner Fix pointed out that the retirement PERS is up 14%.

Staci Knisley stated that amount is incorrect and should be closer to 3.5%.

The Commissioners did not wish to schedule a follow-up meeting with the Recorder's Office.

**Dog Shelter – 12:45 p.m.**

Deputy County Administrator and Director of Human Resources, Jeff Porter, stated the Dog Shelter is not asking for any general fund dollars for 2023. Jeff provided statistics on dog adoptions and shelter population for 2022. The proposed budget is up 18.9% which is due to staff transition changes, but expenditures are holding the same. They are being conservative with the figures so they can make updates as needed.

Commissioner Davis would like to hold an executive session in the future to discuss personnel at the Dog Shelter.

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Jeff reported that they are waiting on legal counsel regarding some of those issues. However, operations continue as planned.

Commissioner Fix asked how much time Jeff spends on the Dog Shelter.

Jeff stated the current leadership at the Dog Shelter handles much of the operations and loop him in as needed.

The Commissioners did not wish to schedule a follow-up meeting with the Dog Shelter.

**Sheriff's Office – 1:00 p.m.**

Fairfield County Sheriff, Alex Lape, stated the proposed budget reflects continued operations and efforts to increase effectiveness and services to the County, which the addition of the Sheriff Substation in Pickerington will bring. There are conversations happening in Canal Winchester about creating their own police department. The Mayor of Canal Winchester is satisfied with the services provided to the city by the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office and is not in favor of creating their own police force.

Commissioner Davis stated expenses are rising faster than revenue. He would like the Sheriff to consider a theoretical budget that reflects a potential \$500,000 decrease in the proposed budget.

Sheriff Lape thinks a recession is imminent. The Sheriff's Office faces overtime costs due to staffing issues. The office also faces strains due to vehicle usage and overturn.

Commissioner Davis stated it would be better if the vehicles were listed on the schedule.

Sheriff Lape explained the unmarked fleet is aging out as well.

Commissioner Davis asked if the Commissioners were to ask for a \$500,000 reduction, would the Sheriff's Office be able to accommodate.

Sheriff Lape thinks if his office goes to a hybrid 12-hour shift schedule, the \$500,000 reduction could be achieved.

Commissioner Levacy asked if operations were going well with the Fairfield Center and asked what the staffing at the facility would look like.

Sheriff Lape stated things are going well and they will have 18 staff throughout the week.

Sheriff Lape explained that the hybrid overtime work schedule will offer more time off which appeals to younger employees and could begin on January 1, 2023.

Commissioner Fix asked if the hybrid schedule will work if the department is not fully staffed.

Sheriff Lape stated there are a few vacancies which they are in the process of filling. The hiring and training process to fill a position takes 3 to 4 months. The Sheriff's Office continues to face hiring issues but thinks they have been successful to date.

Commissioner Fix asked what changing services to the northwest corner of the county looks like.

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Sheriff Lape stated it assists with a reduction in response time. There will always be an officer on patrol in that area. The current staffing system causes gaps in the response time, so they are trying to address that issue.

Commissioner Fix asked if the crime in the northwest area of the county was disproportionate to the rest of the county.

Sheriff Lape stated that the Canal Winchester area has a higher rate of retail theft. The Sheriff's Office works to avoid calling the Pickerington Police Department for assistance.

Commissioner Fix asked if the current jail capacity is manageable or if it should be expanded.

Sheriff Lape explained that an expansion at this time is not necessary, and they can likely even bring in more inmates. Vinton and Pike Counties have approached Fairfield County for contracting services through the jail.

Commissioner Davis stated the Prosecutor's Office included in their budget the addition of an Overdose Investigator. He wanted Sheriff's Lape opinion on which office should hold that position.

Sheriff Lape stated the Sheriff's Office has historically held that position. He thinks the Sheriff's Office would be able to get the best use out of the position.

Commissioner Davis asked Sheriff Lape to consider the theoretical reduction in the budget and requested a follow-up meeting with the Sheriff's Office.

**Engineer's Office – 1:30 a.m.**

Fairfield County Engineer, Jeremiah Upp, stated they are finalizing salary details. They are looking at a series of bridge improvements, resurfacing, and a chip seal program for the 2023 budget.

Commissioner Fix asked how often roads should be resurfaced.

Jeremiah stated in order to keep up with all the resurfacing needs the roads need to last 12 to 15 years. Most last closer to 7 years.

County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle, stated the addition of the salt barn to the capital project list will need pushed back to 2024.

Commissioner Levacy stated the cost of a cubic yard of asphalt is alarming. Resurfacing miles of county roads can become expensive very quickly.

Jeremiah stated chip seal has become common practice in the Engineer's Office. The end product looks and acts like asphalt and he doesn't think there is a more experienced crew in the State of Ohio to lay chip seal than his crew.

Commissioner Fix thinks Jeremiah has done a great job with the TID Board and looks forward to the addition of Mitch Noland to the Engineer's Office.

Jeremiah stated Fairfield County is following a similar path to that of Delaware County who have been hugely successful in their efforts.

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The Commissioners did not wish to schedule a follow-up meeting with the Engineer's Office

### Adjournment

Commissioner Davis does not want those involved to interpret his questions as being negative of their work. He is encouraged by Sheriff Lape's optimism for potentially reducing the budget by \$500,000.

The Commissioners think there should be a non-budget hearing to discuss the ask from South Central Major Crimes Unit.

Commissioner Fix asked if the follow-up meetings would be brief and scheduled on Tuesday.

Aundrea Cordle confirmed they would be brief meetings and would look to schedule on Tuesdays.

With no further business, on the motion of Steve Davis and a second of Dave Levacy, the Board of Commissioners voted to adjourn at 2:03 p.m.

Roll call vote of the motion resulted as follows:

**Voting aye thereon: Steve Davis, Dave Levacy and Jeff Fix**

The next Budget Hearing is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 18, 2022.

Motion by: Steve Davis                      Seconded by: Dave Levacy  
that the October 11, 2022, Budget Hearing minutes were approved by the following vote:

YEAS: Steve Davis, Dave Levacy, Jeff Fix  
ABSTENTIONS: None

**NAYS:** None

\*Approved on October 18, 2022

ABSTENTIONS: None

\*Approved on October 18, 2022

  
Jeff Fink  
Commissioner

  
Dave Levacy  
Commissioner

  
Steven Davis  
Commissioner

Rochelle Menningen  
Rochelle Menningen, Clerk