



Tuesday, May 9, 2023

OFFICE OF THE COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES (BUDGET)

2:00 p.m.

In Person at Highlands Fire Station

3350 Old Munds Highway, Flagstaff (Mountainaire), AZ 86005

Present: Chair Patrice Horstman, Vice Chair Jeronimo Vasquez were present in-person. Supervisor Lena Fowler joined the meeting at 3:48 p.m.

Absent/Excused: Supervisor Matt Ryan.

Also Present: County Manager Steve Peru, Deputy County Manager Sue Brown, Deputy County Manager Andy Bertelsen, Deputy County Manager Lucinda Andreani, Finance Director Siri Mullaney, Human Resources Director Erika Philpot, Assistant County Manager Esliir Musta, Budget Analyst Erin Beckett, Budget Analyst Chris Bringard, Special Assistant to the County Manager Corey Ringenberg, and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Lindsay Daley were present in-person.

Call to Order:

Chair Horstman called the meeting to order at 2:24 p.m.

1. Count Attorney FY24 Budget presentation and discussion – 2:00 – 2:45 p.m.

County Attorney Bill Ring introduced himself and introduced Ammon Barker, the Chief Deputy County Attorney.

Chief Deputy County Attorney Ammon Barker spoke about a case they had in which a child ingested fentanyl and died and how the codefendants went to prison. He spoke about the Attorney's Office valuing justice and advocating for fair and equitable outcomes. He spoke about the costs of trial preparations, witness travel expenses, expert fees and administrative expenses. He explained that there is also a cost to law enforcement, court, defense and jury for trial cases and how it is crucial to spend money to seek justice. Attorney Barker went over cases, which they resolved and what the cost could have been and how their office looks at what cases they can settle without going to trial. He spoke about the Attorney's Office valuing service and how they value working for something bigger than themselves. He spoke about the paper files that the Attorney's Office has and how they paid over \$10,000 in storage fees last year but how they were able to consolidate cases and save about \$3,000 a

year overall. He explained that the Attorney's Office values trust and how they inspire confidence with truth, reliability and respect. He spoke about there being a method to prepare for trial and the need for trust with the community and with each other. He spoke about trainings and the in-house trainings they provide on communicating with victims, jury selection, rules of evidence, implicit bias, confirmation bias and how they have provided over 100 hours of training in house and the estimated \$10,000 of savings by having the trainings in-house. Attorney Barker spoke about their office valuing integrity and honoring their commitments with courage. He spoke about the trial calendar they have that identifies the cases they have committed to trying, which is approximately 29 scheduled felony trials for 2023 and how this is a 57% decrease from what they usually have. He stated that the next value their office has is connection and how they invest in each other and their community. He provided an example of staff caring for each other and he also explained how they have reorganized the office so that it is not attorney and staff but rather teams of attorneys and staff, such as the business team, office support team, civil team, trial and training team, and more. Attorney Barker stated that they value excellence and how they strive to do their best every day. He spoke about the staff in the office and provided an example of a staff person trying to be better. He went over a chart that shows the process of arrest, charge, conviction, probation, and treatment and explained that they needed to find a way to short cut that process so changed the process to arrest, treatment, probation, conviction and charge, He explained that if someone is arrested for drugs and they agree to treatment then the Attorney's Office will not charge the case and give that person a way out of the criminal justice system as long as it is just drug possession and the offender does not have a violent past. He stated that they are identifying opportunities to be innovative.

Vice chair Vasquez stated he appreciates their approach to justice and the innovative things being done by the Attorney's Office especially connected to pathways program.

Attorney Ring spoke about human capital. He spoke about citizens having interactions with law enforcement because they are suffering due to their health and they may need health services and how things like housing insecurity, food insecurity, health issues and lack of transportation can create issues. Attorney Ring spoke about the number of cases their office has including 3200 misdemeanor cases and 2000 felony cases. He spoke about some of the statistics in the number of cases they take to trial and the economic return of investment to the Attorney's Office when they exercise discretion provides benefits of safety and security. He spoke about having 5200 cases and approximately 40% of perpetrators are not from Coconino County and 30% of the victims are not from Coconino County. He spoke about this being a result of having a tourism industry and having a university with international students as well. He explained that they will come back to the Board in the future to talk about how they will pay for these services. Attorney Ring stated that the Attorney's Office will work to protect the community's sense of justice and will be just, fair, reasoned and complete.

Attorney Ring spoke about the civil division and how they have 38 clients for the civil division and stated that they can do better and need to be vigilant towards the quality of civil service as they have had turnover in the division, and it is not an easy environment. He explained that the issue isn't so much as salary but competition from other jurisdictions, because the cost of living in Flagstaff is costly. He stated that they want to make a commitment to the Board, Managers, and Department Directors that he and Ammon know the situation on the civil side and look to constantly improve.

Attorney Ring spoke about the things his staff does outside of work to show how they are part of the community and gave specific examples of his staff's involvement in the community doing volunteer work. He explained that the quality of services they deliver are informed by all those extracurricular

activities. He spoke about how they provide newly hired attorneys a challenge coin that reads, honor, integrity and truth so that when they are in service and things become uncertain for them as a lawyer or staff, they can come back to this center point of conducting with honor, integrity and truth and will find their way home. He stated that he thinks they are a good investment for the budget.

Chair Horstman stated they appreciate what Attorney Ring and his team provide to the community and the advice they provide to the agencies in the county, especially for the Board. She stated they will miss Attorney Ring but is leaving the office in good hands. She stated the budget items are difficult decisions but will do what they can. Upon a question from Vice chair Vasquez, Attorney Barker spoke about how the new organization of staff came about as a result of meetings with staff and hearing them feel like they were not connected and don't feel like they are a part of the team and mission. Attorney Ring explained that they are constantly organizing and reorganizing and open to the possibility of changes. He also expressed appreciation to Human Resources Director Erika Philpot for being insightful and flexible. Vice Chair Vasquez stated he was impressed with the presentation and does want to support the budget as best they can. He stated he appreciates Attorney Ring's work and sees this as his legacy when he leaves. Supervisor Begay also thanked Attorney Ring for his presentation and stated that they have seven increment requests.

County Manager Steve Peru went over the increment requests of the Attorney's Office and the County Manager's Office recommendations for funding. He also spoke about what services can be funded by grants. Attorney Ring further explained the grant funds from the Victim of Crimes Act and that there may be a depletion of those funds which pay for mandated services. He stated he thought the funding source was fixed, but it was not fixed. Business Manager Janice Bradley explained how the funds are used. Upon a question from Supervisor Begay, County Manager Peru stated that one of the requests will be funded out of the general fund.

Chair Horstman stated that she looks forward to hearing how those who commit crimes from elsewhere can help pay for this. She also stated she appreciates Attorney Ring opening the door to having a discussion regarding civil support as she needs more help because she relies on lawyers. She stated she is pleased with the leadership that has been shown in the Attorney's Office and knows it will change but that the mission will continue. Vice Chair Vasquez expressed appreciation for showing the different ways they have made cost savings and how there is a need for workforce housing and how they need to find a way to help with that. The discussion on this item ended at 3:27 p.m.

2. Community Wildfire Defense Program FY24 Budget presentation and discussion – 2:45 – 3:15 p.m.

County Manager Steve Peru explained that the requested increment requests for the Community Wildfire Defense Program are to support fire districts to update their local plans and the request is for \$60,000. He stated that the program will require additional funds beyond the general fund, so in the future, the Board may need to consider a ballot measure for this program. Chair Horstman stated that she thought there was already a commitment to get the plans together and that there is no information provided in the packet regarding this topic.

Forest Restoration Director Jay Smith explained that the funding request is for funds out of the general fund and not out of the flood district. Director Smith provided an overview of the program and identified the areas of need and where those locations are. He spoke about who is impacted by the program and spoke about the impact to the local economy and the partners involved in the program,

such as fire districts, landowners, nonprofits, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and the county. Director Smith spoke about the goals of the program and explained that it is dependent on the fire districts, and how it needs to be determined who will run this program and maintain the contracts with the districts. Director Smith spoke about the costs of the program and that they will also ask landowners to provide to provide funding as well. Director Smith explained that the program will need fire districts to identify the priorities and assist with the landowners' commitment.

Chair Horstman stated that the program will have an individual benefit but communal purpose to get on private property that needs to be taken to protect the whole community. Director Smith stated the county will control where to provide the funding and that the biggest cost is doing the work but there will also be a need for public education regarding the program. Vice Chair Vasquez stated it is exciting that the county can qualify for funding for the program and that it encompasses areas outside of Flagstaff. Director Smith answered questions and explained that this is a competitive grant process, and that the county would take the risk to do the work and then may not get the grant. Upon questions from the Chair, Director Smith provided more details about the grant application process and needing to meet two out of three qualifications to get grant funding.

Supervisor Lena Fowler arrived at the meeting at 3:48 p.m.

County Manager Peru stated that staff is recommending \$60,000 from the general fund for the program; however, investments in the future will be substantial and not within the reach of the general fund capacity. Chair Horstman stated she wasn't sure if they should spend the money on it if there isn't a guarantee that the county would get further funding for the program. Director Smith stated that even if the county does not get funds to move forward then at least with the \$60,000 funding the fire-wise plans would be done so the community would have the information.

The Supervisors spoke about the pros and cons of doing this program now. Vice Chair Vasquez stated that he believes it is important to invest the \$60,000 based on what he saw last year with fires, and it is important to have plans to educate the community. Chair Horstman stated she thinks it is needed also but there may be other ways to do it and stated she would like to consider something countywide. Director Smith mentioned the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) program being a countywide program that can be done but it is more extensive and takes longer to complete and would cost approximately \$100,000. Director Smith explained that goal one would be to develop and revise community wildfire protection plans and that goal two would be implementing projects under a CWPP.

County Manager Peru spoke about the reoccurring costs of the program and the proposed budget for it.

Supervisor Begay spoke about this being a new project and the county may have the money but may not being able to do everything due to the expenditure limit and how they need to prioritize funding requests, especially when considering requests that will have a reoccurring need each year. She stated that as a Board member she does not want to be blamed for going with the flow and how she still does not know about the budget and how much specifically is being paid for salaries, materials and more for departments. She stated there are grants expiring and the county needs to look at how to fund those programs that have relied on grants that are expiring. She stated that the Board is smarter this year and asking more questions and understands that departments are communicating needs and that they need to have performance evaluations and desk audits and that the Board will need to make decisions, yet there are a lot of issues that need to be talked about. She states she wants more detailed information on

the dollars. She thanked Director Smith for the presentation and stated that they need to see what they can do regarding advocacy to help.

Supervisor Fowler apologized for being late and stated that she had motion sickness from flying and she stated that she would like to down with Director Smith as well as the Attorney's Office to hear more about what they presented. Vice Chair Vasquez stated that he understands the preference is to do local communities rather than a countywide plan and he asked the County Manager if the Board can elect to do a countywide plan. County Manager Peru stated that he was not aware that the option would be provided and that he would need to talk further with staff. Chair Horstman stated that she understands the need for the program but is not sure of the recommended program as she wants to ensure the county does whatever gets the best bang for the buck. Flood District Administrator/Deputy County Manager Lucinda Andreani stated that one plan would be for eight communities. Chair Horstman stated that the county will be going to the community regarding the County Comprehensive Plan and that staff should make this issue/topic part of those meetings with the community to educate about wildfire. Chair Horstman stated she is disappointed that they did not have time to go for these grants last year but that she appreciates the work. Supervisor Fowler stated she appreciates the work and wants to catch up on what she missed. She asked if she could be provided any of the documents from today's presentations.

3. Public Works Department FY 24 Budget Presentation and discussion – 3:15 - 4:15 p.m.

County Manager Peru stated that in the interest of time the Board likely should not start the presentation of the Public Works Department. Item 3 was not addressed at the meeting.

4. FY24 Budget Presentation and Discussion – 4:15 – 5:00 p.m.

Chair Horstman stated that she wants the County Attorney's Office to look at the expenditure cap issue and help determine what can be done, and the possibility of an executive session to do so.

County Manager Peru briefly provided information on the expenditure limit issue and the impact to the county. Due to time, the Supervisors did not discuss anything further under item 4.

Chair Horstman adjourned the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



Patrice Horstman, Chair

ATTEST:


Lindsay Daley, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



