

Huntingdon, Pa.  
Tuesday December 11, 2012  
1:30 p.m.

The Huntingdon County Commissioner held a budget meeting on the above date and time in the Commissioners meeting room with the following being present: Commissioners O’Korn, Fluke and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Michelle Cerett; Treasurer, Rich Irvin; Fiscal Supervisor, Sherri Rogers and visitors Bruce Pergament, Jim Cassatt, Jim Hyslop, Soloman Shaffer, Ian Thompson, Bill and Kathy Strong, June Casella, Bill Hoover, Willis Sneath, Lorraine Pryhuber.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Commissioner O’Korn followed by Prayer led by Commissioner Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by Commissioner O’Korn.

Commissioner O’Korn opened the meeting with introductions and a review of rules of the meeting.

Bruce Pergament proposed several questions concerning the increase in revenues and State grants, department reimbursements, the amount budgeted for the yearly audit, the increase in the District Attorneys expenses, District Judge expenses, Bailey building mortgage payments and the 911 funding. Commissioner O’Korn answered several of the questions. He addressed the revenue increase stating that the tax anticipation note is being increased by \$250,000.00, CYS reimbursements are expected to increase \$83,000.00 due to increased expenses. He further stated that the Department reimbursements are determined by the Department heads. Commissioner Thomas addressed several of Bruce’s questions as well. He stated that the county audit cost is expected to cost up to \$47,125.00 but that is only a projection. Therefore, the original budget of \$45,000.00 was not increased. He also informed Bruce that while the announcement was made that a District Judge is retiring, the County is required to keep the office open until the State gives the Ok to close it. He addressed the Bailey building mortgage stating that 2012 was the first full year of making mortgage payments. Commissioner O’Korn also stated that one extra payment was made on the mortgage at the request of the bank. Commissioner Fluke addressed the revenue variance stating that reimbursements for CYS come at varying times. Reimbursements are made in the same year as the expense at times but not always, therefore causing a fluctuation in the budget. Commissioner O’Korn addressed the 911 line item stating that this is a new line item for 2013. This is necessary due to cuts of 48% in State funding.

Jim Hyslop asked what portion of the budget was required by law and what portion was discretionary. Treasurer Irvin stated that without doing some research, he doesn’t have those figures. Jim asked how we can manage a budget without knowing what expenses are mandated and what expenses are discretionary. He further stated that he didn’t see any cuts made in the proposed budget. Commissioner O’Korn addressed that by stating that after receiving all Departmental requests, which is the first step in the budget process, the budget showed a shortfall of \$2.055 million. After meetings with departments and expenses being minimized to necessities, the budget was still short over a million dollars. At that point, the tax increase was discussed and the remainder of the expenses were cut from the budget. Jim Cassatt inquired about the \$249,000.00 in salary increases and the lack of an increase in the FICA taxes. Sherri Rogers stated she will review those figures. Soloman Shaffer suggested elected officials forego their salary increases until the County is in a better financial state. He also commented on the salary increases for employees and while he doesn’t feel wages should be frozen, he feels an increase should be discretionary. Commissioner O’Korn stated that the majority of county employees are covered by union contracts, which include salary increases. Mr. Shaffer suggested elimination of union employees and replacing them with non-union employees. Lastly, he suggested that the county operate like a household budget and manage with what money is available. Commissioner O’Korn stated that the County must comply with the union contracts, which covers roughly 75% of County employees.

Commissioner O’Korn provided statistics on counties around the State. There are 21 six class counties and Huntingdon County is second from the bottom in budget figures.

June Casella addressed the Board stating that residents living on a fixed income cannot afford a tax increase.

Commissioner O’Korn stated that he is very dissatisfied with the cuts from the State. He plans to draft letters to local representatives. The Board urged residents to do the same. Ian Thompson suggested visiting Harrisburg to express the dissatisfaction. He asked if the Commissioners would be willing to accompany him. Commissioner O’Korn stated they would need to discuss it at a later time.

Bill Strong stated that residents are being taxed off their property and it is wrong.

Commissioner Thomas stated that there has been talk about the County receiving a portion of State sales tax.

Bruce Pergament suggested fighting mandates instead of funding them.

Bill Hoover inquired about the decrease in budgeted expenses for the jail and the public defenders office in 2013 compared to 2012. Treasurer Irvin answered that is partially due to 2011 expenses were paid in 2012, therefore inflating their actual numbers. Bill also stated that the reimbursements projected for CYS is 81% instead of 80%. Commissioner O’Korn stated that some services through CYS are reimbursed at 95% instead of 80%.

Willis Sneath thanked the Commissioners and their staff for the work on budget. He stated he would like to see 2012 budgeted versus actual expenses. He also suggested creating a financial advisory committee. Willis also urged the Commissioners to review the number of tax exempt properties in the County.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 3:06 p.m. Minutes prepared by Michelle Cerett, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary