



Lawrence County  
**BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Thursday, May 29, 2025 | **Time:** 3:00 p.m. – 5:20 p.m.

**PRESENT: County Executive** David Morgan. **Commissioners:** Phillip Heatherly, Barry Luffman, Chris Sutherland, Shane Eaton, Rick Skillington, Scott Franks. **Director of Accounts & Budgets** Brandi Williams, **Highway Department Assistant** Pasty Lee, and **County Purchasing Agent** Kelly Odom.

**ROLL CALL:** Chairman David Morgan, Vice-chair Scott Franks, Phillip Heatherly, Randy Brewer, and Barry Luffman.

**Executive Morgan** called the meeting order.

**Litigation Tax Increase Resolution:**

- **Williams** noted the resolution was recommended by the Barrett Group.
- The committee discussed the Litigation Tax Resolution.
- **Commissioner Franks** clarified that we need to convey to all commissioners what this resolution is. Essentially, it's a user fee for those who use the court system instead of the tax payers.
- **Executive Morgan** expressed that majority of the opposition to this resolution is most people in these situations can't pay the cost.

**Motion to Approve the Increase Litigation Taxes for General Sessions Court.**

**Motion:** Heatherly. **Second:** Brewer.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

- **Williams** stated the committee needs to decide on the Purchasing Committee's recommended bid for the transfer station remodel.

**Motion to Approve the Summertown Construction Bid Recommended by the Purchasing Committee for the Solid Waste Transfer Station Remodel.**

**Motion:** Franks. **Second:** Brewer.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

## **BUDGET REQUEST REVIEW:**

- **Executive Morgan** stated the goal is for each department to review and reduce their own budgets.
- Williams went over the “Changes Made After 5/19/25 Meeting” presentation, available in the meeting folder.
- **Commissioner Brewer** mentioned the Nonprofit Committee will meet next week for funding requests. He expressed his desire to fund the same amount requested as the previous year without adding much more. He noted a handful of nonprofits may request more than the previous year.
- **Executive Morgan** spoke about the Animal Shelter’s management. The interlocal agreement that did not pass at the Regular Session meeting was due to a lack of understanding. After speaking with several Commissioners, he believes there are now enough votes for it to pass in the June Special Session. The agreement is simply a transfer of authority, not money. He noted the Sheriff is in support, as he is currently sending officers who are only partially trained in animal control to handle these situations. With this new agreement, a fully trained animal control officer could handle these cases completely.
- **Williams** noted the animal control officer will cost \$60K, while the other \$120K reflects what we’ve already been doing for the Sheriff’s Department.
- The committee discussed the Animal Shelter, leash law, and the Sheriff’s Animal Control Officer.
- **Commissioner Brewer** asked for a ballpark number for the fund balance without any adjustments—just as it currently stands.
- **Williams** went over Fund 101, Fund Balance Sheet, which is available in the meeting folder.
- **Executive Morgan** emphasized that we have only spent 77% of last year’s budget (FY 24-25) with one month left. We have a healthy budget.
- Williams noted allocating County Fire & Rescue a lump sum like we did last year. If we give them around \$500K out of this year’s budget (FY 24-25), it would result in a minimal—if any—hit to the fund balance.
- **Commissioner Heatherly** added that we trust our department heads to make decisions on their budgets but not when it comes to employee raises.
- The committee discussed department head budgets and merit-based raises.
- **Commissioner Brewer** suggested 3% raises with a 5% cut from departments.
- **Executive Morgan** mentioned that we will have more funds after the Solid Waste Convenience Center is built, as it’s coming in under budget. He said we need to preserve the exterior of the courthouse, enhance safety for the entire building, and repair the façade of the Sheriff’s Department. He

received a verbal, ballpark estimate from TLM that the cost for all three projects would be roughly \$1-1.2 million. The county needs to move ahead with a preservation and security project.

- **Williams** added that we have \$3.5 million remaining from the bond. We will still proceed with the other Solid Waste Convenience Centers. All of this is in addition to those projects.
- **Commissioner Luffman** moved on to the Chamber's budget request. He wanted a breakdown from the Chamber of Commerce and questioned whether they truly need the full amount they are requesting.
- The committee discussed the Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Development Board (IDB), and tourism funds.
- The conversation then moved on to the Veteran Services building.
- **Williams** replied that the storage building requested is included in the budget, but the addition is not.
- The committee also discussed relocating the department. They didn't want to spend money on the existing building if a move is planned.

## **CUTS AND RAISES**

- **Executive Morgan** clarified that we are at 41-42% expenditures in the budget, audit recommends we are at 15%. We have a very healthy budget.
- **Williams** explained some departments will not be able to cut 5% from their budgets. Sheriff, Jail, and EMS will have a hard time making a 5% cut.
- **Williams** moved onto and went over the **Highway Department, Fund 131 on tab 10**. *Available in the meeting folder.*
- **Williams** clarified the roller will have to be a budget amendment so we took it out and will look at doing a budget amendment later if needed. Their budget also includes the \$1 raise as they manage their own raises.
- **Williams** asked what the Committees end goal was. Add raises or no raises?
- **Commissioner Luffman** suggested seeing what each department can cut from their budget and see what they bring back to the committee. From that point the committee can evaluate raises.
- The Committee agreed with the commissioner's suggestion.
- **Commissioner Sutherland** was concerned that raises are discussed every year.
- The committee discussed inflation, employee raises, and the cost of living.
- **Commissioner Heatherly** shared his concern and wanted the committee along with the Commission as a whole to be careful with raises and MOE's.
- **Commissioner Brewer** expressed not feeling right having \$10 million excess in the budget but we can't afford to give raises to employees because we want to be conservative.

- **Commissioner Franks** suggested the option of doing an employee bonus instead so it's not recurring hit.
- In relation to retaining employees, **Commissioner Skillington** didn't think a 3% raise was out of line.
- **Executive Morgan** recommends that each department head make cuts in their budget and then the committee can contemplate and base raises on the results.

## COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE

- **Williams** emphasized that the committee needs to make a decision for County Fire & Rescue today.

### Motion to Accept County Fire & Rescue's Funding Request from FY 24-25 Budget.

**Motion:** Brewer. **Second:** Heatherly.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

- **Commissioner Eaton** brought up the point that part of County Fire & Rescue's funding request last year was a \$250K one-time contribution to the Training Center. So technically, they are asking for more this year than just operations.
- **Williams** explained that their proposed budget will still have to be presented at the Nonprofit Committee, so nothing is final yet.
- **Commissioner Luffman** emphasized that each fire hall has different calculations to work with, such as call volume, insurance costs, number of trucks, etc.
- **Executive Morgan** clarified that this committee will recommend funding County Fire & Rescue for what they need. Safety and security is a primary agenda for government.

## BUDGET REQUEST REVIEW CONTINUED

- **Williams** discussed that the School System will have an MOE increase. She shared a slight concern about the MOE, noting that while we currently bring in more sales tax than previously, what do we do if the economy declines?
- **Commissioner Brewer** doesn't think we should worry, stating that the new Magna plant will benefit the economy in significant ways.
- **Williams** explained that last year the county collected \$2.2 million in debt services, and we are projected to do the same based on the two-year average.
- The committee moved their discussion to the RYE Engineering waterline project. The committee requested reports from RYE Engineering.

- **Williams** assured the committee that RYE Engineering has sent her reports, as the grant requires them to do so.
- The committee agreed to ask department heads to cut 5% of their budgets to help fund raises and then discuss the update requests on Thursday, June 5th at 5:00 p.m. or immediately after the Nonprofit/Tourism/Economic Development Committee meeting concludes that day.
- **Williams** went over **One-Time Capital Expenditures** on Tab 3. She then went over **Courthouse and Jail Maintenance – Fund 112** on Tab 4. She told the committee they could vote on this fund now.

### **Motion to Accept Fund 112, Courthouse and Jail Maintenance Funding Request.**

**Motion:** Franks. **Second:** Heatherly.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

### **SOLID WASTE FUND**

- **Williams** went over Solid Waste – Fund 116 on Tab 5. She explained that it includes 6% raises. They are asking for a truck replacement, as the transmission is going out and will cost too much to fix. On Tab 6 is their budget with the new truck included and without raises. *She noted there was a slight miscalculation with the 3% raise on the sheet presented.*
- **Williams** reminded the committee that last year the general fund gave some funds to Solid Waste to help boost them for the new convenience centers. Now we are taking some out of this year to put back into the general fund. We are slowly getting Solid Waste to the point of supporting themselves.
- The committee discussed Solid Waste and the possibility of implementing systems or a database for Solid Waste billing.
- **Williams** added that by the end of 2026, the current software with our billing company will no longer be supported. The new software will cost \$57K more per year.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND**

- **Williams** moved forward to Industrial/Economic Development – Fund 119 on Tab 7.
- **Commissioner Franks** suggested using the \$400K for the Chamber's portion.

- **Williams** said it was possible, but \$200K of that will be allocated toward the CDBG Grant for the water booster pump in Leoma. We are waiting to see if we will receive the grant or not.
- The committee discussed the utility districts.
- **Williams** recommended leaving 25% of the wholesale beer tax here and allocating the other 75% to the general fund.
- The committee agreed with her recommendation.
- **Williams** went over the Drug Control Fund – Fund 122 on Tab 8. She said the committee could vote on this fund.

**Motion to Approve Drug Control Fund, Fund 122.**

**Motion:** Heatherly. **Second:** Franks.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

- **Williams** mentioned that the rest of the Tabs will be discussed after the School System presents their budget and the Nonprofit/Tourism/Economic Development Committee provides their recommendation to the committee.
- Committee discussed selling the Columbia State College.

**Recess Until Thursday, June 5, at 5:00PM or Immediately Following the Nonprofit/Tourism/Economic Development Committee Meeting that Day.**

**Motion:** Heatherly. **Second:** Franks.

**Vote:** Motion passed unanimously 5/0.

**Minutes Submitted By:** Christian Tyree