

**WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**Budget Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Called to Order at 15:05

**Roll Call:**

**Board Members Present**

Position 1 – Heather Glass  
Position 2 – David Applegate  
Position 3 – Claudia Pratt  
Position 4 – Bill Ertel  
Position 5 – Brian Barton

**Budget Committee Members Present**

Position 1 – John Kester  
Position 2 – Dorothy Butz  
Position 3 – Lyndsey Hayes  
Position 4 – Mike Connor  
Position 5 – Wendy Giordano

**Williams Staff Present**

Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter  
Chief Rick Vetter  
Captain Nicco Holt

**Public Presence:**

None

**Nomination of Budget Committee Chair:**

A motion to make Mike Connor the Budget Committee Chairperson was made by Claudia Pratt and seconded by Heather Glass. Motion carried unanimously.

**Nomination of Budget Committee Vice Chair:**

- A motion to make John Kester for Vice Chairperson was made and John Kester Declined.
  
- A motion to make Wendy Giordano the Budget Committee Vice Chairperson was made by Brian Barton and seconded by Heather Glass. The motion passed unanimously.

**Presentation of Budget Message:**

Chief Rick Vetter presented the budget letter to the community, Board of Directors, and the Budget Committee. The Budget Message was followed by information about the fire district and then followed by the budget sheets which reviews the breakdown of each of the line items on each of the LB-Sheets. The proposed budget includes personnel service items that break down each item of payroll, the inclusion of employee benefits, payroll taxes, material and service items, and capital outlay items. Discussions were held on the use of the SAFER Grant and how it ties into the proposed budget for the 2023-2024 district expenses.

During the presentation, Chief Vetter answered questions and elaborated on pictures that were in the budget book. Some of the discussions were around the Rum Creek Fire, volunteers and mutual aid cohesion.

Board Secretary Heather Glass inquired if we could deploy all engines at once if we had a 'Paradise' fire. Chief Vetter explained how alarm levels work. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt inquired on how much water a structure fire can consume. Captain Nicco Holt fielded the question with an answer to explain how water usage can vary depending on the size of fire, overhaul, and full extinguishment. Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano inquired how and where we refill our apparatus. Chief Vetter explained the district's overhead fill and hydrants flow capacities.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired on designated landing zones. Chief Vetter stated that the district does have designated landing zones and responders have the capacity to set up landing zones if needed. The fire district is not a transport agency.

Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter spoke about the staffing grant of \$35,000 that was awarded the night before the budget meeting via email for temporary staffing for the upcoming fire season. Board Member Bill Ertel asked if the board will review the grant before acceptance and Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt asked "Why would we not accept it?". Board Member Bill Ertel inquired why would the Board be bypassed by the department accepting it? Chief Vetter stated that there wasn't any intent to hide anything it just came in quickly. It was explained that notice came in the night before. Chief Vetter didn't have time to provide notification. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt clarified that the paperwork was received and not signed yet and that this grant is not costing the department any money, it is free money to hire to protect. Board Member Bill Ertel stated he is only speaking for himself and not the rest of the board and explained that he was caught by surprise that the department received the grant award. Board Member David Applegate asked if we were done with the topic so we could move on.

Board Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano expressed that if she knows of school events that she could help promote those as well for the fire service. She also would like to see statistics or a graph of information presented.

Board Member Bill Ertel introduced Wendy as his daughter. He had a copy of Illinois Valley Fire's Call Volume statistics. He would like to see something similar for Williams. He reflects that he is nervous if we are staffed adequately for our medical calls. Board Secretary Heather Glass mentioned that the staff and volunteers are moving in the direction of educating themselves to higher levels of medical training.

Budget Committee Meeting Chairperson Mike Connor asked if the book information is available to the public. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter stated that she will have this information put up on the website.

Board Vice Chairperson Brian Barton stated that the museum electrical will possibly be done by next month. There is an idea of bricks for purchase as a fundraiser. The idea is to take the old fire station and rehabilitate it and turn it into a museum with a workout room in the back. The upstairs will possibly become the Support Group room. All posters that are going into the Museum were done by the Support Group. The building also houses the old No 1 Fire Truck.

Budget Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano wanted to know how the district practices sound financial practices. Chief Vetter stated that the department maintains transparency with the Board during the meetings and appropriate filings. She also asked if the website could be updated so meetings can be on the first opening web page instead and recognized a typo with the meeting date on the website. Chief Vetter explained that we use avenues as best as we can but cannot make people attend the meetings. She advised on new ideas to help awareness. Budget Committee Member Lyndsey Hayes stated that there are the community boards as well.

## Line Budget Sheets Discussions:

### LB-10

Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter explained how the sheet is laid out and what the numbers mean, questions were asked to clarify the entered numbers' meaning for the slot it sat in on each sheet. Grants were broken down to what was estimated to be received if grants were awarded.

### LB-30

This sheet was not reviewed in depth as the requirement summaries would generating questions that could be resolved by referring directly to the LB-31.

### LB-31

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano inquired what the Legal and Accounting line item is. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter explained that line is meant for the Accountant's Review that takes place every year. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the accountant's office takes our numbers and makes them into a statutory format. He states that the accountant's office does not scan for fraud or audit the books.

Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano inquired about office supplies and the answer was that the amount budgeted is for the office needs. She then inquired about the training budget and Captain Holt answered with how the training funds are spent and the intention of the line-item usage. She asked if the utilities include the mobile home and Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered that yes, it does. The mobile home has its own meter that they are billed for the usage after the district pays the combined electric bill. This line item was increased for the next fiscal year.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired what is in the fuel line item. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter stated that was raised from the prior year and it includes gas, diesel, and propane. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired on how the main building is heated. It is heated with electric and propane.

Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt wanted Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter to elaborate on why the EMS line item is lowered. It was explained that the district is not utilizing the line item to the extent due to EMS stock being supplemented by the ambulance company.

Fire Prevention line item was discussed as what is done educationally for the public.

Miscellaneous is kitchen supplies, toilet paper, food, and other items. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that he doesn't have a problem but stated that some of the staff come in and have breakfast in the morning. Chief Vetter stated that this is not an issue and worth expending on. Many times, the volunteers bring their own food. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired if the unpaid volunteers depend on department food. Chief Vetter stated, "no". We also store food for a large event or fire so that at 2am after a fire we aren't looking to feed the firefighters when no stores are open. There is no abuse or freeloading of department food per Chief Vetter.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about the Training Officer and SAFER Recruitment and Retention Officer position (held by the same person). He compared the compensation amounts for this current fiscal year with the projected fiscal year's amounts. Captain Holt is okay with his paid hours going down and stated his anticipation that at the time the grant runs out that he might take a cut in pay. Board Member

Bill Ertel recognizes Captain Holt's departmental contributions are valuable. Budget Committee Chairperson Mike Connor asked Board Member Bill Ertel if he is proposing to raise the Training Officer's line item up to make it comparable to this year. Board Member Bill Ertel responded with "not right now...maybe at the end".

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the Deputy Clerk is making \$37,000 plus costs the district another \$15,000 in benefits. He reflected on the bio in the book that states the word "Manager" for human resources. He doesn't recall the board ever giving her the title of "Manager". Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt inquired what that title means to Board Member Bill Ertel. He stated that a manager would have had 500 employees. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt is asking what is his concept of manager no matter what size. He stated that it falls under the umbrella of risk management in that this employee may be successful in a lawsuit saying that the Board knew she was a manager and that as a manager knew that she should be making more money and is underpaid. He states that since we are budgeting that the Deputy Clerk's job needs to be broken down as follows: Bookkeeping and accounting, Board Services...etc

Board Secretary Heather Glass asked Board Member Bill Ertel why would we want the Deputy Clerk to do that and does he think that because she used the word "Manager" that she is going to ask for more money? He responded, "I think that is a possibility." Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt reinforced that raises were not going to be given this year. Budget Committee Member Dorothy Butz stated that to ask the Deputy Clerk to do that would be a "pain in the a\*\*". Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that if and when Jennifer Vetter moves on that the Board can address that and make those adjustments then. Board Member Bill Ertel stated he wants to know now what it is costing now. Chief Vetter asked if we are paying her too much/not enough? Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt stated that to break down each job that Jennifer Vetter is doing now is not cost effective. Budget Committee Member John Kester stated that asking Jennifer Vetter to spend the time breaking each task down is going to make her work twice as hard. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that he has no idea what the value of the bookkeeping service is. Chief Vetter stated that Medford Fire is looking for someone now for \$47,000 - \$64,000. Jennifer Vetter stated 10 years ago she worked a similar job for a national syndicator in Grants Pass for \$50,000 plus benefits and working half the workload she is currently carrying at the fire district. Board Member David Applegate states that what Board Member Bill Ertel is asking for is a breakdown of the different jobs Jennifer Vetter does and the cost of each job. Board Member David Applegate stated that we are such a small group and it is working, why fix it. Board Secretary Heather Glass stated that if we break it down that it will be realized she is very underpaid. Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano stated that perhaps Jennifer Vetter could break down her time by percentage. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter recounted when over a year ago this was broken down by time sheets to prove time involved which is how she received approval to be paid for 35 hours per week. Board Member Bill Ertel stated we should do that again and we should understand what bookkeeping and payroll costs. Budget Committee Chairperson Mike Connor questioned... "how much would it cost if you ask her to micromanage every hour?" Budget Committee Vice Chairperson Wendy Giordano stated that she has experience as a full charge bookkeeper when she was self-employed. Wendy states that she knows that x amount of time is spent doing x activities. Jennifer Vetter asked if you have a fast competent person are you going to pay that person less because that person is good at their service or skill? Budget Chairperson Mike Connor suggested that the Board take up this discussion instead of during the Budget Meeting.

- A motion was made by Bill Ertel for line item 3, titled Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant, be broken down and budgeted in categories for bookkeeping and accounting, payroll administration, board minutes, and board activities. There was no 2nd – **MOTION DEAD**

Budget Committee Chairperson Mike Connor asked if \$37,000 is enough budgeted. Board Member Bill Ertel suggested the Board Members research what a fair pay is for the different functions of the Deputy Clerk's job. Mike Connor stated that this would be a function of the Board and Board Member Bill Ertel disagrees since the Board will pick an imaginary number. Mike stated that the levy was purposed for operations of the fire district. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that last year we expended more money than what was taken it. Jennifer Vetter stated that this was untrue. It was explained that it was allocated inappropriately and corrected by the accountant. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt would like all budget committee members to know when the accountant's review will take place so they can be here for the meeting.

Board Secretary Heather Glass inquired if monies can be moved from the Conflag/Deployment line if needed. The district had just received a \$35,000 grant for seasonal hire so money would be available to move towards the Training Officer's or Deputy Clerk's positions.

Board Member Bill Ertel would like to put a line item in the budget for federal and state lands. Chief Vetter stated that we investigate the fires that we are dispatched to and if they are ODF protected that ODF or BLM are notified. Board Member Bill Ertel would like to know how much we spend responding to federal land dispatches. Board Chairperson Claudia Pratt explained that if a property backing BLM is on fire, the department will respond to protect district properties and constituents. Chief Vetter expressed the mutual aid aspect. ODF does respond but may not always be initial attack.

- A motion to accept the 2023-2024 budget as presented was made by John Kester and seconded by Claudia Pratt. The motion passed with ayes from each member of the Budget Committee and ayes from 4 members of the Board of Directors with one abstain.

- ✚ John Kester – Aye
- ✚ Dorothy Butz – Aye
- ✚ Mike Connor – Aye
- ✚ Wendy Giordano – Aye
- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Abstain
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye

**Announcement:**

Next regular board meeting will be May 9, 2023 at 10am with a workshop at 9:00am

**Motion to Adjourn:**

The meeting adjourned at 17:18.

Attachments: Budget Committee Meeting Agenda, Chief's Budget Letter and Budget Message, Budget Sheets.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Claudia Pratt, Board Chairperson