COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS
BUDGET WORKSHOP
JULY 8, 2025

Agenda: 8:30 – Budget Workshop with Lewis, Hooper & Dick, LLC

The Board of Stevens County Commissioners met for the budget workshop with Lisa Axeman and Tiffany O'Rourke from Lewis Hooper and Dick, LLC. County Clerk Amy Jo Tharp was also present. Tron called the meeting to order.

Cammie Heaton, Pat Hall, Jeff Cox, Stacey Wood, Ted Heaton, and TJ Steers were in attendance.

Lisa reviewed the comparison of receipts, comparative revenue and expenditures and audit report. She stated the county has a clean audit and the general fund is high which helped cover abatements and other items that were unexpectedly accrued. The road and bridge department was close to having no unencumbered cash which if that happens, funds may be pulled from the road machinery equipment reserve and/or the special highway fund. The community health department had a cash balance deficit, and it was explained the commissioners could give more budget authority to avoid such situations.

Tiffany went over the management letter and stated there were material weaknesses due to large dollar amounts that were paid in 2026 for the 2025 budget year for airport. Tiffany suggested department heads monitor their cash balances to make sure they are staying within their limits. Inventory from each department should be turned in on time to the county clerk's office. Tiffany also mentioned the airport accepted bids with no actual documentation or followed the purchasing policy. The airport should be maintaining their bids and contracts, and the county clerk's office can be used for checks and balance. The county commissioner minutes had incorrect dates for resolutions which need to stay accurate. The treasurer's office needs to monitor outstanding checks. The ACH bank account for airport, community health, and wellness center need to be recorded on the daily statement for income. Airport needs to be getting project updates to the commissioners in more of a timely and on more of a frequent basis. Someone from the airport board needs to approve and review the time sheet for the airport manager. The wellness center needs to be on time with tax documents to prevent receiving late fees, interest, and penalties, and the amount received needs to match the amount posted. The wellness center was set up to only spend what revenue amount was brought in and it went over that amount in 2025. The commissioners stated they would like this to remain the same, so since they are sticking with that decision, they will need to monitor it more closely.

Lisa discussed the landfill operation and stated the paperwork for KDHE, and other agencies, is in compliance. Lisa and Tiffany discussed the county comparison to other counties with relatively the same population, etc., and showed graphs.

Lisa went over the proposed 2027 budget for Stevens County and informed the commissioners the library fund is held at a two and a half (2.5) mil, services for the elderly is held at one and a half (1.5) mil, the hospital is held at six (6) mil, and the building fund is held at one (1) mil. The auditors kept the budget at 89.135 revenue rate which is below the estimated revenue neutral rate of 89.136. Due to the decline in valuation, it raised the property tax dollars by nineteen percent (19%). The commissioners decided to cut the budget as much as possible to bring down the increase in property taxes. The commissioners cut funding to the contingency and contingency abatement funds along with some others and dropped the rate from 89.135 to 74.882 which would be roughly a two percent (2%) increase in property taxes. The auditors also informed the commissioners that 2027 is the last year the building fund will be held at one (1) mil and stated if they wish to keep one (1) mil they will need to make a new resolution.

Joe asked the auditors if the county would benefit from hiring a grant coordinator to write, search and keep track of grants. The auditors stated some counties have grant writers, but the departments need to be diligent in their grant reports and keep track of the funds. The county clerk helps with the checks and balances of the grants if the departments submit the correct information to the county clerk.

Joe asked about the abatement for Seaboard Energy and how the funds are generated to pay back the abatement. Lisa explained the county can hold funds back from coming out of future distributions to the entities which receive appropriations, ask for money back from entities that receive appropriations, or pay the funds all from the county.

Lisa asked if the county would have any large purchases and Jeff said he will possibly need a new grader in the future but is trying to make repairs in house at this time. Ted asked about the tact channel radio issue to see if the commissioners were interested in all new equipment which is roughly about $33,000.00 or just paying for the upgrade which is about $1,300.00. The commissioners replied they will discuss the tact channel at the next commissioner meeting.

Lisa stated since the county is not exceeding the revenue neutral rate, the budget hearing for 2027 budgets will be held on August 10$^{th}$, 2026, at 8:30 AM.

Tron closed the budget workshop.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

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Tron Stegman, Chairman