

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

3:00pm, County Business Administration Building, 601 State Street, Hood River, OR

Any item or issue not on the agenda you have a question, comment or statement about please bring up under Items from the Public.

Chair Oates called the meeting to order. Present: Commissioner Joplin, Commissioner McBride, Commissioner Benton, Commissioner Perkins, Administrator Hecksel and Counsel Davies.

CONFLICTS OR POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None

ADDITIONS TO OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA

None

ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

REPORTS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Board of Commissioners

Tax Revenue & Expense Options

RECOMMENDATION: Determine the value of each tax measure being placed on the May 2019 ballot and how the revenue will be used.

FOOD & BEVERAGE TAX –

Joplin suggests breaking the discussion in to sections 1 – being a rate and then the 2nd being what the funds would be used for.

Oates stated he feels it doesn't make sense to go for less than a 5% food & beverage tax.

Benton, Perkins and McBride as well as Joplin feel the 5% tax rate makes sense it is in line with other jurisdictions in the state.

FOR WHAT: Hecksel stated that unless the BOC puts a sunset on this tax it is a forever rate. So, he is trying to initially be broad on what it would go for and then we can narrow it down.

Joplin said that Public Safety might also be addressed in the operating levy. Stated that public health environmental health should be included.

Benton feels the spreadsheet is broader than he would like to see. If you dial it into Environmental Health, it is more tied to visitors and trails. He wants to be more specific with what will be funded with the revenues from the tax.

Discussion of how to balance the words to ensure that it is clear what the funds will be used for without tying hands to fund something that would might not be used or necessary in the future.

Categories: Parks/Buildings& Grounds/Roads

Benton stated the environmental health funding need per the spreadsheet is not that large he doesn't see a problem calling that out specifically.

Oates – said perhaps you open with a statement saying the intent of the funding is to offset the cost of the following services related to visitors: public health, public safety, recreation trails etc., parks

McBride wanted to make sure that we are also including bridges roads, etc., Counsel is going to draft language for the Ordinance that encompasses the BOC discussion.

OPERATIONAL LEVY

How Much:

McBride- feels reality is as we get to May we will have our hands full with 2 measures and thinking more about that and looking at the bigger picture of the dollar figure we need to get to he wants to talk about bouncing back to making it all about public safety and bringing the weight of the Sheriff and his department and take ownership of that operational levy with the Board backing it. We can sell it. Craft it to make it about public safety, some going towards new services and some would go to current services that are provided but not funded adequately. Then pull in items that are in the SO budget that affect the entire county (resource officer, emergency mgmt. etc.) to come up with a number around \$3M and allow Matt to carry forward. Feels it is strong because it is a single topic, it is not confusing. Feels that if we break it out into component pieces we will confuse things even more. McBride said his intent is to put it on the May ballot.

Stated Matt has a lot of confidence public safety is a strong playing card, and McBride feels if worded right it is a strong playing card.

Benton likes the idea of having a single topic, he is a big supporter of that. How it is framed and sold he is struggling a bit but feels that having one area it will be focused on he is all for. He is concerned for the number – his confidence level for the number is not good.

McBride stated that he feels asking for more than \$1 is a stretch but heard from others that it wouldn't be too much.

McBride fees we are going to ask a certain amount in a levy, there are certain things that need to be allocated in this budget cycle such as the \$1M. Beyond that everything else needs to roll through the budget committee. He is not sure if the department can handle that many employees at one time.

If we get the Food & Bev tax that will be another person to administer. He feels that we write the levy as an “up to #” and not take the full amount the first year. Or we could ask for a smaller number to start and as the Sheriff's office gets up to speed when renewal comes around ask for a larger number.

Joplin likes the idea of simplifying it but feels there is strength to adding other county services like Public health to the levy ask. Would hate to miss that opportunity. If we wanted to go with 1 department and push the costs out of the general fund and the levy support the department she would want to get down into more of the other services such as parole and probation, DA, jail costs. But she feels she is still leaning towards a broader range of services such as Bldg. and equipment, capital etc., as well as public safety, and health services should be included in the property tax levy. Parks funding would reside under the Food & Beverage tax funds.

McBride said perhaps that concern could be address in the description of the measure. By funding the Sheriff Office, it will free up funding to be used for health, capital etc as Karen described.

Joplin said only a portion is being freed up for GF usage, but the most sustainable amount is for additional services.

Oates – the full \$1.7M would go into the public safety. McBride said start with \$3.3M which includes \$1.3 for new services and the \$2.3 for current services

McBride SAR, \$1.3M and vehicle replacement money for Sheriff office he is about 80-85% of Matt's maximum ask.

Joplin asked if it includes the Jail (NORCOR), McBride said no it does not include NORCOR.

County's NORCOR whole number is \$1.6M which includes the juvenile facility.

Sheriff English – over the last year he tried to tailor the numbers that is most agreeable to the conversations had with the BOC members. He initially used the NORCOR figures but was told

to not include them so the last figures he provides to the BOC in Dec. does not include NORCOR.

Perkins likes the Public safety levy if we could include the district attorney funding and there are a lot of things that can be included that affect the whole county. English stated he even included number for Juvenile. For him the question is the rate.

McBride feels that if we are successful with both items his hope is that we would not spend the entire ask in the first year and at some point, be able to refund some tax money to the property owners.

Benton likes the simplification of it, feels the number is high but struggling with coming up with a number that we could probably pass. To Karen's point he is not sure if adding public health adds value, perhaps it can be addressed in the statement.

Joplin feels that getting the broadest buy in as we can she is not sure being narrow on the public safety is the way to go. Perkins said we are still talking about an operating levy it is just narrowed to one focus.

Joplin asked about the conversations in the past about city citizens being concerned with paying for the services they are already paying for; how do you work on getting their buy in? Whereas Public Health covers everyone in the community. Joplin said jail costs have increased greatly to a level the county cannot sustain maybe add that.

Benton said Jail is very interesting but knows there are some community members who are not on board with jail contracts, so he has concern about the negative consequences that could lead us.

Benton asked Hecksel on the GF cost center: SO, SO Jail, SO Marine Patrol are those individual cost centers and what is included in the big number.

Hecksel said the number on the left of the spreadsheet are taken right out of the current budget, they are separate cost centers that appear in the GF portion even though marine and Forest and not technically GF since there are special revenue funds attached.

McBride said he took juvenile, P&P, EM, Patrol, DA and you get close to the numbers that he is talking about.

Oates back to what Joplin was saying is that health services effect everyone equally.

Joplin asked what everyone thinks about the rate. Perkins said he feels when you go above \$1 people start getting less inclined and said that he feels \$1.25 is as high as you would want to go, feels a range of \$1-\$1.25.

Oates used the \$1.58 number and add that in to what we current have and we would have been ranked 25 out of 36 counties if his math is current. Right now, we are 35 out of 36. He looked at it to see where we are going and are we in line with the other counties. Feels these numbers are in line, it is just that we are so far below other counties in the state right now.

Oates also looked at property taxes in the Odell area and about 68% goes to schools. Wasco County property tax is 40% to schools, Lincoln county is about 50/50%. We are 32% on general government tax rates, feels we have a long way to go. Not sure if the public will go for it is a different issue.

Oates asked the commissioners what they would support as far as a rate.

Perkins said he would support up to \$1.25.

Benton felt the discussions with the forums in the public were good and feels that he is more in a range of \$.75-\$1.00, feels that would put us in a considerable better place, and as we move past that his comfort level drops off rapidly.

Joplin said her max is \$1.30.

McBride's comfort level is about \$1.43. McBride asked Matt what he thinks about that rate.

English stated he lives in Parkdale and they pay \$1.55/\$1000 assessed to the fire district alone. He understands the reservation of going above \$1.00 but agrees with what Chair Oates said we haven't asked for anything and if we don't ask for what we need we will still not be where we should be in providing services to the community.

Oates said that if everyone said we need to go for \$1.58 he would have been fine but by himself he is more around the rate Karen is at \$1.30. He might also only consider making it a 3-year option to see if it provides what we need and then think about raising the ask after 3 years.

\$1.30 would bring in a bit over \$3M.

Oates asked Jeff where he sits. Hecksel stated he is conservative like Bob and feels \$1.30 is too much. The downside is if this doesn't pass we still have a problem, because we would be short \$1M even if we have the food & beverage tax pass we could still be faced with laying people off.

Even with 5 year tax levy, if you look at the funds the F&B brings in and look at the total amount of adds, there is an admin cost to absorb, he is not sure what the absorption rate is. It would be easier to stair step it in overtime, but you need to ask for it all up front. Also, when you infuse any organization with a funding you have to ask what that is going to do to the culture of the organization.

McBride feels that is where the budget committee weighs in and be the careful stewards of the funds. We need to spend the money carefully and get the most bang.

McBride said \$1.17 raises a little over \$2M. It is under \$1.25 but would still address some of the needs of the Sheriff and other departments.

Joplin leaning towards \$1.30 and express which portions of public safety would be funded and listing the Jail. Dollars would not be inclusive to fund department costs but portions of the services. Feels it puts too much boundary on the cost change in the department. Language would say funds would cover portions of xxx, and the jail should be listed in there. She comes back to what you need, and the community says no it is too much, then you revamp and refigure and ask again. Starting too low you have potential detrimental affects. We should ask for what we need.

Benton struggling still with \$1.3M we are saying it fills the hole and adds \$2M of new funding that can be utilized in some other way by HRC (\$1.30) and we would use the replaced funds, for what though?

McBride – said the ask for Emergency Management, and Corrections = \$870K, then add Juvenile and DA and you get to \$1.5M

Benton – yes put what is the new money going to pay for. McBride referred to the services listed on the information provided the Sheriff in December 2018.

Perkins would rather go with a bit lower rate with a higher chance of success.

Discussion of the benefits of a levy and how things that can change regarding state funding opportunities etc.

Perkins would like to take a number and frame it well. He doesn't want to just pick a number, we need to be specific and clear on why we picked a number.

Counsel – needs to know how many years the levy would be for: Consensus 5 years. First FY imposed following 19/20 and what are we going to use it for. Joplin asked if we need to list the positions that would be added.

Counsel said no- she needs to know what would be encompassed, do you want to include the DA funding, Juvenile etc. They would be listed in the service area

Statement that if both ballot measures are on the May ballot and the F&B Tax doesn't pass but the levy did then you would be in a position of needing some of the levy funds to fill the shortfall.

The discussion regarding the property tax levy will be moved forward to the Jan. 22nd work session.

ADJOURNMENT – Chair Oates adjourned the meeting at 5pm.