

TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of the County of Fremont, State of Colorado, met in Special Session on November 22, 2005, 615 Macon Avenue, Room LL3, Fremont County Administration Building, Canon City, Colorado. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Commissioner Chairman, Larry Lasha.

Larry Lasha	Commissioner	Present
Edward H. Norden	Commissioner	Present
Michael J. Stiehl	Commissioner	Present
Brenda Jackson	County Attorney	Absent
Norma Hatfield	Clerk and Recorder	Present

Also present Finance Director, Dana Angel.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited by those present.

PUBLIC HEARING 2006 FREMONT COUNTY BUDGET NOVEMBER 22, 2005 6:00 P.M.

Dana Angel, Fremont County Finance Director, stated that the preliminary budget right now as proposed reflects an increase in spending in 2006 of 1.67%, which amounts to approximately \$428,000.00. This increase makes a total proposed budget for 2006 at \$26 million versus the estimated spending of \$25,624,000.00. It is a very small increase percentage wise. Projected within these numbers is implementation of Year 2 of the classification and compensation plan. The proposed budget proposes that increase to happen for employees on April 1st rather than January 1st. The total annual cost for the increase is about \$374,000. By one quarter, they were able to save approximately \$95,000.

Mr. Angel further reported that total revenues for 2006 are projected to increase 1.13% to a total of \$26,595,451. This number does include a 5% increase in sales tax revenues, and amounts to \$251,519 to make a total revenue projected for 2006 to \$4,735,773.00. Property tax revenues are projected to increase by \$308,386.00. This is giving consideration to recovering lost revenue from refunds and abatements made this year, that they will recover next year, and also the loss of revenue from the reappraisal results performed by the State.

The General Fund expenditures for 2006 include \$141,940.00 as a payback to the State Department of Education as a result of the reappraisal. This payback is for the over expenditure by the State in their student equalization payments to Fremont County in 2004. In addition to this payback, the County is liable to pay back the State the costs of performing the reappraisal which amounted to \$54,751.00. The law allows the County to spend the cost of that reappraisal rather than paying it back to the State to spend it directly on the Assessor's Office. That will be spent to update various equipment needs in the Assessor's Office during 2006.

In order to balance the Road & Bridge budget this year, six vacancies will not be filled. The same thing happened in the proposed budget for the Sheriff's Office. He had two vacancies that will not be filled as well as severe cuts in his operating expenses.

Commissioner Lasha stated they had been working on this for about three months, and he had never had an opportunity to have someone say they had a lot of money to spend.

This year has been an interesting challenge for two new commissioners who have done an outstanding job working with Dana through the process. Commissioner Lasha gave his compliments to everybody who had worked on the budget process.

Commissioner Norden stated that the charts they would be showing are charts they prepared last summer, but were still pertinent. He noted that the voters of Colorado did approve Referendum C. That affected the State of Colorado budget—it did not impact Tabor in relation to local government. In relation to the mill levy and Tabor, Dana noted that the assessed value in Fremont County is going up by about \$36 million. That will get us to an assessed value of just over \$365 million. On the property tax that will be received in January, you will be paying less to Fremont County government in 2006 than in 2005.

Commissioner Stiehl stated that when you get your tax bill in the spring, you do see the total tax bill for your property. Only about 20% of that goes to the County. The overall taxes went up this past year because of the school bond issues. The school district's slice of the existing pie got larger, so our piece of the pie was reduced by about \$250,000 a year starting in 2004. For our budget, we should have somewhere around \$1 million to \$1.5 million in reserves. Even though they are funding the Sheriff more, it is not enough. This budget has no money for chip and seal or asphalt. They have funded more patching.

Commissioner Lasha stated they were partners with the City of Florence, the County and the School District on building a million-gallon water tank at the Airport. It worked out very well and they had some in-kind services. They still have to pay \$250,000, but RE-2 had an opportunity to help by deferring \$125,000 from 2006 to 2007. That will help a lot in getting the reserves and balancing this budget. The three largest budgets are the ones that demand more from the community, and they are Road & Bridge, Sheriff's Office and Human Services.

Fremont County Sheriff, Jim Beicker, stated he wanted to thank this Board and the previous Board for their support of the Sheriff's Office. He also thanked the other Elected Officials and Department Heads. He did drastic cuts to his operational budget, and that will be noticed by the citizens. He had a vacancy at the Detention Center and at the Reception Area, and he eliminated those two positions. He asked that the public be patient, and they would continue to provide the services that they swear by oath to provide.

Norma Hatfield, Fremont County Clerk & Recorder, stated they had four main departments—the Clerk to the Board, Elections, Motor Vehicle and Recording. Except for salaries in Motor Vehicle, the State furnishes the equipment and the programs. Elections have caused the biggest problem this year. The Help America Vote Act was passed three years ago, and it requires a lot of work, time and money. The Federal government is not furnishing very much of that money. Handicap voting machines are to be in every precinct. She stated they thought the State was going to give \$92,000 toward the cost of those. They do not know how much, if any, the State will give Fremont County. To put a handicap machine in every precinct would cost \$310,000.00 total. A mail ballot election was held this year. They save a lot of money by not having to have polling places, and saw a savings this year of about \$20,000 in judges alone. She stated she had been proposing to the Clerk and Recorder state legislative committee that they introduce a Bill allowing them to do mail ballot elections during general elections. Colorado counties could save millions of dollars by being allowed to do mail-ballot elections. The Recording Department will be adding a new system called E-Recording. This will not impact the County financially for the department, except for training time. The Motor Vehicle Department will be facing a new program. The state pays for all equipment and programs, but it will take time to train personnel.

Commissioner Lasha asked for anyone wishing to speak to come forward.

Gregory Shaw stated he was very interested in energy efficiency. He asked about converting vehicles over to propane or electric hybrid vehicles. That would cut down costs considerably. He stated that wind generators and solar is easy to put in and operate, and would pay for itself in five years. On the prisons alone, that would be a big savings.

Commissioner Lasha, in answering a question from the audience, stated that all counties in Colorado were struggling. One county was going to give their citizens a choice of summer maintenance or winter snow removal.

Commissioner Norden stated that they have talked about making the Airport more self-sufficient. He stated commendations go to Airport Manager, Dick Baker, for running an efficient operation

Commissioner Stiehl stated that Dick Baker had been able to reduce the budget for the airport by 61% through fuel sales. We are on the verge of having to give that back to every taxpayer as opposed to gain that as operating capital.

Harry Kitchen stated he did not understand the percentages for inflation. He stated he had heard about the Sheriff's Office being slow in responding, but he had yet to see that. He stated he felt the Sheriff's Office does very well with what they have. He stated he always heard that he would get so much back from the County on his taxes, but he has not seen it.

Commissioner Norden stated that whenever Fremont County was in a Tabor refund situation, it is a temporary tax credit that is adjusted on the County mill levy. The adjustment in the Tabor refund, if you were due one, was made in the tax bill received in January. He stated they have talked about possibly adjusting a couple of County employee holidays to be unpaid holidays.

Commissioner Lasha thanked everyone for coming. He stated they really do care about what the citizens have to say.

Commissioner Lasha adjourned the meeting at 7:15 P.M.

County Clerk