

**BUDGET COMMITTEE
CARTER COUNTY, TN**

**February 14, 2022
6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Willie Campbell, Aaron Frazier, Ross Garland, Julie Guinn, Travis Hill, Austin Jaynes, Brad Johnson, Robin McKamey

ABSENT: N/A

CALL TO ORDER: Austin Jaynes

ROLL CALL: Quorum Present

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: One change was made to the agenda, to add “Communications Officer Discussion” as Item 7c. Motion was made by Travis Hill, seconded by Ross Garland to approve the revised agenda. By a voice roll call vote, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Ross Garland made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2022 regular meeting. Robin McKamey was second. By a roll call vote, motion carried. The minutes of the January 31, 2022 minutes were also provided. Ross Garland made a motion to approve the minutes with Robin McKamey second. By a roll call vote, the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chairman Jaynes opened the meeting for public comments.

Mr. Roy Livingston came forward to remind the committee to pay attention to procedures as money is being spent. He stated that it is important to know where it is going.

One of the Carter County Sheriff Deputies then stepped forward. He is the Watch Commander for the Patrol Unit and described the situation(s) that occurred last week in Roan Mountain. He detailed that a mentally disturbed man was firing guns in all directions in an area with several homes. Two officers from a patrol unit then arrived and proceeded to draw his fire until the Swat Team could arrive. In yet another incident, a different man was firing his gun while walking down the street. Only two officers could report to the scene since there were only four officers total on duty at the time. The individual was subdued. When the officers went to his residence, they reported it was impossible to take all of his guns and ammos because there were “truckloads.” The Deputy concluded by saying that this is very common and wanted to paint a picture of what they frequently encounter but that while other places pay more, the department has some very dedicated personnel.

OLD BUSINESS: Chairman Jaynes noted that there is no old business carried over from prior meetings.

NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Jaynes stated that the first item of business is to discuss the Sign-on and Retention bonus proposed and outlined in the meeting materials. Director of Finance Carolyn Watson reviewed the spreadsheet, which has been revised to include various amounts, along with current and future fiscal year expensed projections. She noted that the bonuses could be paid quarterly, possibly retroactively, or that an agreement could be signed so that employees receiving the bonus would stay as employees. She concluded that something needs to be done to reduce the turnover rate at the Jail.

Robin McKamey asked if the funds would come out of this year's budget? Director Watson replied yes, that for this year there are sufficient funds in the Jail department. The bonuses could be backdated to quarterly and ended by June 30 to avoid carrying over funds. Various questions were posed, with Director Watson noting that this would be for Retention and Sign-on bonuses to include the Sheriff's office and the Jail. She further confirmed that there are enough funds to cover potentially up to eleven (11) new hires, but that six or seven new hires are more likely by the end of June.

Robin McKamey asked to include Chief James Parrish, which suggestion was supported by other committee members. Sheriff Lunceford then asked, from the audience, where the funds would be taken from and to which line they would be added. Director Watson said the funds had to be taken from existing salary and related expense lines and put into the Bonus line(s). A suggestion was made to pay the bonus monthly.

After reviewing the report, Brad Johnson asked if just the Jailers could receive funds from the current year budget and that the Sheriff Department employees could use ARPA funds. Director Watson stated that this request would have to go through the Health & Wellness Committee and then through the other committees for final approval by the full Commission. Brad Johnson then reiterated that first responders should be receiving the federal money and that by using ARPA funds, it wouldn't cut into the County budget. There was considerable discussion about this process.

Director Watson then reviewed that the estimated amount in the prepared report was at a particular point in time, so the final numbers will differ a little bit based on current staffing but that the total is about \$369,000 in gross bonus amounts.

Julie Guinn made a motion to authorize the Director of Finance to amend the appropriate budget lines in the Jail's budget to fund the bonus and related expense lines to pay all Sheriff and Jail personnel members a bonus of \$3,000 for full-time employees and a bonus of \$1,500 for part-time employees, retroactively to October 1, 2021, with Chief Parrish to be included, payable quarterly and ending on June 30, 2022. Aaron Frazier seconded the motion.

Discussion followed, with Brad Johnson asking about the rest of the employees in the County. He reiterated that ARPA funds can be used specifically for first responders and that not all county employees qualify as first responders. Using ARPA funds would therefore be better. Travis Hill said that ARPA funds are supposed to be used to do the most good for the most number of people. Aaron Frazier also added that doing this now does not prevent future use of ARPA funds, and that use of ARPA funds in the future could take this current action into consideration. He stated that he didn't want to push the bonus further down the road and that something needs to be done now to make things better.

Brad Johnson responded that only the Jail's Correction officers should be considered right now. He then asked if this would be a reoccurring cost, to which the reply was that the bonuses are just for this fiscal year and would end on June 30. Various concerns were expressed by other committee members. Discussion then concluded.

Chairman Jaynes called for a roll call vote. Those voting in favor were Willie Campbell, Aaron Frazier, Ross Garland, Julie Guinn, Travis Hill, Austin Jaynes, Brad Johnson, and Robin McKamey. There were no dissenting votes. Motion passed.

Chief James Parrish thanked the Committee on behalf of the Department, and all the Committee members thanked him and the staff members for their work.

Director Watson was then asked by Chairman Jaynes to review the report detailing different scenarios for a pay increase for all county employees. She reviewed the document and noted that the total amount of funds is very significant. She reminded the committee that what had brought about this about is the need to address the Corrections Officers in the Jail. She recommended that the focus remain on this issue, and that consideration of all employees be given during the regular budget process. This would allow for more complete information about other expenses and revenues to be known and considered in connection with such a decision. Director Watson noted that a tax increase of \$.10 or \$.14 might be necessary in future years to afford this commitment. She is therefore recommending an increase only for the Corrections officers.

Aaron Frazier asked what other members are thinking. Robin McKamey said that (we) know we need to do it, because the County needs all its employees to run efficiently.

Chairman Jaynes called for a 10-minute break at 7:05 pm to give everyone time to think and to review the information.

The committee reconvened at 7:27 pm.

Aaron Frazier asked for a point of clarification on the Sheriff department salaries asking if the 22 vacancies noted in the report had already been budgeted. Director Watson replied that yes, they are budgeted for already. She stated that in the past, the budgets have been conservative in estimating revenue and expenses and she will do the same. The sales tax revenue is a concern because tax refunds will be lower and there will not be stimulus checks for people to spend.

Chief Parrish questioned what is being considered because it is difficult to hear in the Court Room. He appreciates the consideration towards the Corrections officers but reminded the committee members to think about all employees. Robin McKamey asked Director Watson if she is recommending the \$1,000.00 immediate pay raise for the Corrections officers and Ms. Watson replied yes, explaining further that this will help on an immediate basis. Then the Commission can look at all other employees, noting that the turnover rate for these officers is very shocking, with many quitting before they even start or after a week or two.

After some additional discussion, Brad Johnson made a motion to provide an immediate pay raise of \$1,000.00 for full-time Corrections officers (Jailers only), stipulating that the raise is to be certified by the department head for every applicable employee, with funding to come from already budgeted personnel lines. Aaron Frazier seconded the motion.

Various additional comments were made, including by personnel of the Sheriff Department. It was agreed upon by these personnel that the raise dedicated to only the Jailers was acceptable, if a commitment is made to consider all Sheriff Department personnel in the budgeting process, especially given that Patrol Officers starting pay in the City of Elizabethton is higher.

At the conclusion of these comments, Chairman Jaynes called for a roll call vote. Those voting in favor were Willie Campbell, Aaron Frazier, Ross Garland, Julie Guinn, Travis Hill, Austin Jaynes, Brad Johnson, and Robin McKamey. There were no dissenting votes. Motion passed.

Following this motion, Julie Guinn offered a friendly amendment to her motion about the Sign-on and Retention Bonuses. Upon the advice of Attorney Hardin, she offered a new motion. She made a motion to authorize the Director of Finance to amend the appropriate budget lines in the Jail's budget to pay all Sheriff and Jail personnel members a bonus of \$3,000 for full-time employees and a bonus of \$1,500 for part-time employees working 20 or more hours regularly per pay period, retroactively to October 1, 2021, with Chief Parrish to be included, payable quarterly and ending on June 30, 2022. Aaron Frazier seconded the motion. Chairman Jaynes called for a roll call vote. Those voting in favor were Willie Campbell, Aaron Frazier, Ross Garland, Julie Guinn, Travis Hill, Austin Jaynes, Brad Johnson, and Robin McKamey. There were no dissenting votes. Motion passed.

Mayor Patty Woodby then requested to appropriate the previously reserved salary and fringe benefit so that the Communications Officer position could be filled as soon as possible. The Communications Project was already bid out and bids are due back the middle of March. The position will be housed at the EMS office and an office is ready. After some discussion, Robin McKamey made a motion to appropriate the funds in the amount of \$80,000 into the applicable budget lines. Aaron Frazier was second. Chairman Jaynes called for a roll call vote. Those voting in favor were Willie Campbell, Aaron Frazier, Ross Garland, Julie Guinn, Travis Hill, Austin Jaynes, Brad Johnson, and Robin McKamey. There were no dissenting votes. Motion passed.

FINANCE UPDATE: Director of Finance Carolyn Watson updated the Budget Committee and reported that the budget process for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year is well underway. She will follow up with Departments that have not submitted their requests and the Outside Agency information is just about all collected. She is also working on preliminary revenue projections. The audit of Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021 is finished and she will be meeting the state's audit team for the exit interview this coming Thursday, February 17. She then passed out the ARPA Revenue and Expense report to date. She and the department staff are also working on a summary report of County revenues, expenses and fund balances that will be provided at each meeting. This will be historical in nature, as revenues are posted to the accounting system, which is usually not until the middle of the subsequent month.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: None.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS:

Motion was made by Ross Garland to approve General Fund #141 budget amendment #8 (items #1-3) for a total of \$122,902.56, with nothing coming from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Julie Guinn was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Motion was made by Travis Hill to approve County Fund #101 budget amendment #8 (items #1-8) for a total of \$19,980.47, with \$1,825.47 coming from Fund Balance, nothing coming from Unassigned Fund Balance. Aaron Frazier was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Motion was made by Aaron Frazier to approve School Federal Projects Fund #142 budget amendment #8 (items #1-3) for a total of \$150,100.00, with nothing coming from this funds Unassigned Fund Balance. Ross Garland was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Motion was made by Julie Guinn to approve Head Start Fund #145 budget amendment #4 (items #1) for a total of \$12,184.35, with nothing coming from this funds Unassigned Fund Balance. Aaron Frazier was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

At this time, Chief Parrish stepped forward to request an additional, last-minute budget amendment for the purpose of purchasing items to create a Wi-Fi bubble with hotspots and related communications equipment needed while on scenes, as well as night-vision equipment. Ross Garland put the request in the form of a motion to appropriate up to \$70,000 from account number 34625-0034 for the stated purpose. T. Hill was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Motion was made by Aaron Frazier to approve the following monetary donations to the Animal Shelter in the amount of \$8,102.00. Travis Hill was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Motion was made by Travis Hill to approve the non-monetary donation of \$216.31 by Walmart to the Animal Shelter. Julie Guinn was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

Robin McKamey then made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm. Aaron Frazier was second. By a roll call vote of all ayes, motion carried.

A Nominations Committee meeting immediately followed.

Respectfully submitted:

Audra Gerty

Approved for Entry:

Austin Jaynes, Chairman