

MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE WILCOX COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HELD ON AUGUST 4TH, 2022 AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM IN THE
WILCOX COUNTY COURTHOUSE.

Those present for the meeting were as follows:

Mel Powell	Chairman
Jowan Johnson	Vice Chairman
Alfonza Hall	Commissioner
Lanier Keene	Commissioner
Michael Pomirko	County Manager
Charles Futch	EMS Director
Robert Rodgers	Sheriff
Christy Welch	Sheriff Dept.
Jamie Handley	Upcoming Commissioner

Chairman Mel Powell called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Keene gave the invocation.

All gave the pledge.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss Sheriff Department Raises.

County Manager Pomirko presented the Board with a document from the Sheriff's Department requesting a raise of \$2.00 for every deputy/office staff in the Sheriff's Department and a \$1.00 increase for every jailor/office staff in the Jail. County Manager stated he received this document at 11:18 a.m. this morning, and he would rather let the Sheriff explain the document since he prepared it.

Sheriff Rodgers stated that he has 2 budgets, the Sheriff and the Jail. The document broke down, by department, each employee's current rate and salary and their proposed new hourly rate and salary. There were also some employees that received benefits that had a total of \$609.17 added into their current and proposed salary. He stated that to his knowledge, the State is to pay the first year of the \$5,000.00 State-mandated increase to his salary. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, informed him that this was not correct and that the County would be responsible for the increase. The Sheriff stated that is not what he was told.

The Sheriff then stated that he included every employee that he is responsible for on the spreadsheet, even Deputy Lawson and Deputy Hendley. Sheriff stated that he knows that Deputy Hendley is paid for out of Building and Plants. However, Deputy Lawson's salary is still coming out of his budget even though Wilcox County Schools reimburses the County for her salary. He stated that his budget does not reflect this reimbursement, and there has never been a reimbursement to his salary budget for Deputy Lawson's pay. Further, the sheriff stated that out of the Jail budget, only the Nurse receives insurance. He also stated that even with the raise, the jailors would only be making roughly \$26,000 per year.

Chairman, Mel Powell, stated that he sees a \$73,000.00 increase between the totals. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that he cannot understand the figures the Sheriff calculated as the totals do not add up to the same figures that he calculated. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, also stated that he understands that Deputy Lawson's salary is still coming from the Sheriff's budget, and he intends to make a separate line item for the School Resource Officer.

Sheriff Rodgers said that he wants to make sure that the check comes from the County regardless because other counties are having difficulty with School Resource Officers thinking they work for the School. He states that making sure the County writes the check would insure that there was no confusion.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that per the auditor we cannot reimburse salaries. He also said that there are two options to fix Deputy Lawson's salary in the upcoming budget year. The first option would be to make a separate department in the budget that would be only be for the School Resource Officer's pay, or have the School pay Deputy Lawson directly. With the Sheriff wanting checks to be

written by the County, the only option would be to create a separate budget and line item to resolve the issue.

Sheriff Rodgers stated that he does not have a true and accurate budget because of the many discrepancies in both of his budgets. He stated that he will be charged for an item, reimbursed, and charged a second time. He states that he cannot follow the budget because of the many changes.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that we must follow what the auditors advise to keep protocols within the law.

The Sheriff said that the auditors work for us, we don't work for them.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that the auditors keep us within the laws and we follow their advice. He states that there are corrections to his budgets and the charges are "washed out" through budget amendments.

The Sheriff needs to see where the money comes back into the budget because his budget printouts do not reflect any reimbursements.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked when the budget printout was printed, and the Sheriff stated it was printed on 7/28/22. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated he would need to review the budget printout to be able to answer questions.

The Sheriff states that there are ridiculous items in his budget that have not been fixed including an \$8500.00 charge to Cooks Paint and Body. He stated these were insurance claims and should have been reimbursed since insurance paid.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, was unaware this had taken place and was informed that the check was cut on 5/19/22. County Manager stated that he was unaware that these were wrecks and was not informed of insurance claims. He informed the Sheriff that he would look into the matter further.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, stated that the insurance should have written a check to the county. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, informed the Sheriff that there would need to be a budget amendment to correct the incident.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that the figures don't add up. His figures do not match the figures of the Sheriff, and the increase would be much higher than the Sheriff's proposed total increase. He explained to the Board and Sheriff that it would roughly be \$131,000.00 increase in the Sheriff Department alone.

Chairman, Mel Powell, says that Deputy Hendley and Deputy Lawson should have never been included in the document since they do not come from the Sheriff or Jail budget. This would make the budget increase less than what is calculated.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, cannot match the Sheriff's increase amount with the figure that he calculated. However, County Manager, Michael Pomirko, was only able to review the documents for a couple of hours before the meeting, and he could not present his figures without more in-depth research and more time to calculate total costs such as FICA, health insurance, worker's comp., retirement, etc. He did state that by his calculations it would be a substantially bigger increase.

The Sheriff informed the Board that only 5 of his employees receive benefits.

There was much discussion and calculations.

County Manager Pomirko also informed the Board and Sheriff that if an employee makes more than \$16.66/hr. their health insurance changes. The employee would be paying 25% rather than the 15%, which may actually hurt the employees. Commissioner Clay Reid would like to see how much the increase would be in dollar amount. County Manager stated that he would need to sit down with HR to get a more accurate number.

Chairman Powell stated that with the increase, the salaries would eat up the majority of the Sheriff's budget.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, asked if the gas for both departments comes from the Sheriff's budget because of how far over budget the gas/fuel line item is. County Manager Pomirko informed him that both the Sheriff and Jail uses fuel and it is charged to the Sheriff budget. Commissioner Keene also stated that salaries with the raise would take up the current budget as well.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, presented the Board with a DCA document comparing our current Sheriff/Deputy/Jailor salaries to other counties with our populations and size. The document included starting and max pay for each position from counties such as Clinch, Jenkins, Taylor, etc. In comparison to these counties, the current salaries are either in-line with other counties or slightly above/below.

Upcoming Commissioner, Jamie Handley, stated that similarly to the medical field, you cannot compare the county to places that are the same size. You must compare yourself to the place you are losing your people to. The Sheriff informed the Board and Handley that he has lost deputies to Centerville and surrounding areas, and that some may even leave for \$6.00/hr. more than what we are currently offering.

Mr. Handley also wanted to know how many positions that are filled compared to how many we have budgeted. Sheriff informs that there are currently 4 deputy positions open but budgeted for 13 employees.

Mr. Handley stated that if you give a \$2.00 increase to 11 people then it should equal a \$46,200.00 increase. Adding in FICA, insurance, and other benefits, it may equal up to a maximum of \$80,000.00 increase.

Commissioner, Clay Reid, stated that the Board would only be "chasing the rabbit" with a \$2.00 raise because there would always be another entity offering more money. If a deputy wanted more money, then they would find a county or department that could give them more.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, stated that we cannot afford to lose all deputy employees. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that we were already facing an overage in several areas because of inflation and unforeseen circumstances, and with the state-mandated increase we were already struggling to keep this budget balanced. Commissioner Johnson asked if we were worried about next year or if we were worried about current issues? He also asked about the county's contingencies fund.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that the contingency fund is our "rainy day" fund and should only be used in the event of an emergency because once those funds are used; we would have to have a perfect budget to avoid borrowing money.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, asked how the raise would impact USDA grants for the future. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated that we have already had to cut back on projects, and we would have to cut down tremendously with the budget increases. County Manager also stated that he would like to avoid taking funds out of contingency.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, also presented that he was working on a plan to utilize ARP and SPLOST funds to purchase new vehicles for the Sheriff's fleet. He also states that several projects have been halted and he has been trying to cut corners and save money wherever possible, but it has been hard already to keep up with current expenses. He further stated that he could sit down and review the budget, but he does not know where the cuts could come from. Other issues would be other departments wanting a raise as well.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked the Sheriff if he could cut down one deputy position in order to make the increase for the rest of the positions. The Sheriff stated that there are currently 3 positions open, soon to be 4, and if he cannot get those four filled then the overtime would be just as bad as the increase.

Chairman, Mel Powell, stated that since one of the deputies left in January, there is an extra \$33,240.56 to cover the increase.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, asked the Sheriff how many positions they need to run the department. The Sheriff responded that if he can hire two people with the \$2.00 raise that he could leave the other positions open.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, presented the Board with a current budget printout to show that the department is already over budget with 2 more months left in the fiscal year, and he is unsure of where the money could come from.

A discussion on the mill rate occurred. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, stated he wanted to avoid raising the mill rate regardless.

Upcoming Commissioner, Jamie Handley, wanted to see a breakdown of the budget instead of looking at the raises as a whole. He stated that since one of the deputies left in January, there should be an extra \$33,000.00 in salaries. If their workforce has decreased, how is he over budget on salaries? He stated that even with one more deputy, the overtime would not go away. If the Sheriff budgeted for 8 deputies, and only has 5 on current payroll, then there should be extra funds.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, reminded the Board and the Sheriff that he, former county manager Paula Ball, and the Sheriff sat down in last year's budget process and got their salaries up to \$15.00/hr. However, they did not budget for as much overtime that has occurred. The Sheriff has also sent letters to the Commissioners office increasing the salaries past \$15.00/hr., and they had not budgeted for the extra increases. Between the increases and overtime, the Sheriff's department is over on salaries.

Mr. Handley stated that they cannot be over budget with only 5 out of 8 deputies working. The Sheriff informed the Board and Mr. Handley that he was fully staffed for 8 months and only recently lost deputies, creating the open positions. The Sheriff also informs the Board of the extreme fuel costs and expensive trips he has had to make recently, including three trips to the mental health facility in Valdosta.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, stated we should call the senators and explain the issues with transport that we are facing.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asked the Sheriff if we could only focus on the problem areas such as the deputies instead of giving the raise across the board. The Sheriff stated that he is at risk of losing all deputies and all jailors.

Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, asked if we could use contingencies to fund the raises. County Manager stated that he wanted to avoid pulling money from contingencies in case there was another unforeseen incident like we have faced in the past.

Chairman, Mel Powell, asked how we could fund the raises for the last two months of the fiscal year. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, informed him that we would be lucky to keep this year's budget balanced, but told Chairman Powell that he will sit down with the budget and try to find a way. He stated that he only sees one option, and that is to cut other departments budgets. However, he wants the Board to be aware of unintended consequences such as losing people from other departments.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, stated we needed to be aware of other departments that would want a raise as well.

Chairman, Mel Powell, states that we need to save the Sheriff's department before we can focus on anything else.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asks the Board if he is finding solutions to giving the raises across the board.

Chairman, Mel Powell, states that we need to give the raises now if we are going to keep the department running. County Manager, Michael Pomirko, reminded the Chairman that the Sheriff was already over budget for this fiscal year, and it would be smarter to enforce the raises in the new fiscal year in October.

Commissioner, Lanier Keene, asks County Manager how long it will take to do the math. The County Manager stated that to find the funds for all raises it would take a while.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, asks if we utilize his plan to purchase 3 more vehicles, would this cut down on his repairs and maintenance. Sheriff states that it would cut it down tremendously because he could retire the three worst vehicles in the fleet.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, states this may be where costs could be cut because there have been \$50,000.00 costs in repairs/maintenance but had only budgeted for \$30,000.00.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, states he needs time to look at the numbers and requests to meet next Tuesday, August 9th at 5:00 p.m. due to the Board's LOST meeting on Monday.

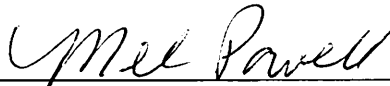
Vice Chairman, Jowan Johnson, asked if we are looking for raises across the board or just looking for raises for the deputies.

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, said that if we do raises across the board, we would have to cut other departments, but he would do his best to find the funds.

Upcoming Commissioner, Jamie Handley, said that even though the auditors said salaries cannot be reimbursed, you could reimburse in other areas instead. He asked if the Sheriff would still be over if they reimbursed for the SCO salary?

County Manager, Michael Pomirko, states that the Sheriff would still be over budget regardless. He stated that he would look at all the budgets, and see what one payroll would cost the county. He would present his findings at the meeting on August 9th, at 5:00p.m.

With no further business, Commissioner Clay Reid made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lanier Keene seconded the motion that carried unanimously.



Chairman, Mel Powell



County Manager, Michael Pomirko