

WEEKLY REVIEW

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
November 2, 2021



This document is a weekly review of the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, November 2, 2021. Information related to agenda changes, Consent Agenda, and Public Comment are on the [County website](#).

Scheduled Business

Preliminary Plat of Harvest Ridge, SUB 2021-001 – Michelle Cooke, Assistant Planning Manager

The Benton County Planning Division has received a preliminary plat application and map to subdivide approximately 172.36 acres into 42 residential lots and one 122.30-acre tract. The preliminary plat is known as Harvest Ridge, and the land is zoned Rural Lands One-Acre District. The average lot size of the development is approximately 1.05 acres and the lots are proposed to be served by new public roads, potable water from Badger Mountain Irrigation District, and individual septic systems. The site is located east of Interstate 82 and north of Reata Road. On October 12, 2021 the Planning Commission held an open record hearing and voted to forward a positive recommendation to the Board subject to seven (7) findings of fact and 22 conditions of approval. **The Board moved and seconded to adopt the Planning Commission's Recommendation, Findings of Fact, and Conditions as the Board's own and approve the preliminary plat of Harvest Ridge – SUB 2021-001 with the seven (7) findings of fact and 22 conditions of approval as recommended by the Planning Commission. Motion carried.**

Office of Public Defense Update – Eric Hsu, Public Defense Manager

The Office of Public Defense (OPD) provided the Board an update on operations, challenges, and more. The biggest challenges facing OPD are high attrition rate of staff and burnout, difficulties in recruiting qualified applicants, unpredictability in caseloads, and funding vs. talent availability. The office has lost 10 attorneys between Jan 2020 and Dec 2021 due to burnout and higher salaries in private practice. Of these attorneys, 80% were qualified to take on Class A felonies (including homicide cases). The resulting issue is that many of the replacement attorneys are not qualified to handle these cases, and those that are qualified face even further risk of burnout due to higher caseload distribution. Recruitment of new hires has been increasingly difficult and has resulted in little to no responses. Predicting caseloads has also been increasingly difficult, especially when coupled with the existing attrition and recruitment challenges. There has been a recent shift in shortage of talent rather than budgetary constraints that challenge the operation of OPD. COVID challenges further exacerbated issues facing the department and resulted in backlogged caseloads and challenges in communicating with clients, requiring continued adaptation. **No Board direction or vote.**

Reclassification of Office Support Position – Eric Hsu, Public Defense Manager

The Office Support position in the Office of Public Defense (OPD) was recently vacated, and it was determined that changing the Office Support position from a non-bargaining grade 6 to a Courthouse Union Legal Secretary IV, grade 7 position would help align the department with internal equity and would be budget neutral. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the line-item transfer to change the Office Support, position 1656, to a Legal Secretary IV. Motion carried.**

Reclassification of Administrative Assistant – Kyle Sullivan, Human Services Manager

With the high increase in funding available for our community, it is necessary to change the vacant non-bargaining, grade 9 Administrative Assistant to a Courthouse Union grade 9 Office Assistant IV. The Office Assistant will assist the department with accounts payable, contract and board resolution preparation, and other administrative tasks. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the line-item transfer to change the Administrative Assistant to an Office Assistant IV. Motion carried.**

Maintenance Worker Position Request – Jeff Jones, Facilities Manager

With the addition of the Benton County Administration Building to the County's inventory of facilities, it is recommended that another Maintenance Worker position be added within the Facilities Department to ensure proper maintenance coverage of all County facilities. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the line-item transfer to fund an additional Facilities Maintenance Worker. Motion carried.**

Records Clerks (2) Position Requests – Sheriff Croskrey & Katie Gillies, Sheriff's Office CFO

The Sheriff's Office currently has a funded and vacant Deputy position that, due to current needs of the department, would be better utilized to fund two (2) Records Clerk positions. These Clerks would help alleviate the high demands from public records requests within the Sheriff's Office and would assist with general office coverage to assist the public. The Deputy position will remain and be unfilled and unfunded. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the line-item transfer to fund two (2) Records Clerk positions in the Sheriff's Office. Motion carried.**

Interagency Agreement Between Benton County Sheriff's Office & WA Traffic Safety Commission for Traffic Safety Project – Commander Clarke & Katie Gillies, Sheriff's Office CFO

The Benton County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) received the attached Interagency Agreement between Benton County Sheriff's Office and Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) outlining grant funding for traffic safety grant project 2022-HVE-4455-Region 14 Target Zero Task Force, to conduct overtime high-visibility enforcement traffic safety emphasis with the goal of reducing traffic crashes. This patrol emphasis will be conducted Oct 1, 2021 through Sept 30, 2022. BCSO's estimated grant funding is \$6,500 for the following emphasis patrols: 1) Holiday DUI - \$3,000; 2) U Drive. U Text. U Pay - \$500; 3) Click it or Ticket - \$1,500; and 4) DUI Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over - \$1,500. WTSC has requested that the County approve the grant document first and will return a fully executed copy for our records. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the Interlocal Agreement between Benton County Sheriff's Office and Washington Traffic Safety Commission and authorizes the Benton County Sheriff to sign said agreement. Motion carried.**

Current Expense & Public Safety Sales Tax Finance Presentation – Linda Ivey, Finance Manager & Matt Rasmussen, Deputy County Administrator

The County is 37.5% through its biennial budget cycle (2021-2022) with revenues at 33% and expenditures at 35% of projections (excluding the American Rescue Plan Act funds, which were adjusted out). The Public Safety Sales Tax fund has revenues that are slightly above the original budget estimation, after adjusting for the two-month delay in receipt of sales tax revenues. Expenditures in Public Safety Sales Tax are below budget estimation, with a large capital project (Radio Tower) still outstanding and ongoing expenditures such as wages, benefits, supplies, and services coming in slightly below budget. Currently, there is additional funding available in the Public Safety Sales Tax that was not anticipated, and staff presented two (2) potential outlets for said funding. The Prosecuting Attorney's Office is in need of a Legal Secretary VI position to assist with the volume of public records requests being received by their office. The second use of funds would be to upgrade the secured entrance to the main Justice Center building to improve security for staff and the public. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the line-item transfer of available non-departmental Public Safety Sales Tax funding to the Prosecutor's Office budget to fund a Legal Secretary VI and gave staff direction to proceed with the security project as necessary. Motion carried.**

Other Business

Sheriff's Office Public Safety Sales Tax 2021-2022 Update – Commander Clarke & Sergeant Trevino

The Sheriff's Office provided an update to the Board regarding recently-approved and purchased equipment and projects funded by the Public Safety Sales Tax including: Interview recording system equipment (JAVS iRecord), hardware used to extract forensic cell phone data for investigations (Cellebrite Cloud Analyzer), forensic software used to extract vehicular infotainment information (Berla iVe), investigations forensic software for Apple mobile devices that cannot have information extracted using Cellebrite (GrayKey), a new portable radar speed trailer, thermal imagers for fleeing subjects and rescue operations, Safeboat refurbishment for waterways safety, AFIS mobile fingerprint scanner. **No Board direction or vote.**

Special Meeting @ 1:30 PM

Interview & Possible Appointment of Benton County District Court Judge – Commissioners

The Board interviewed two (2) candidates, Jennifer Azure and Shelley Ajax, for the vacant Benton County District Court Judge position and held an executive session to evaluate the qualifications of candidates. At the conclusion of the executive session, the Board appointed Jennifer Azure to the vacant Benton County District Court position.

#

Contact: Shyanne Palmus, Communications Coordinator

Shyanne.Palmus@co.benton.wa.us | 509-222-3760