

WEEKLY REVIEW

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
April 19, 2022



This document is a weekly review of the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, April 19, 2022. Information related to agenda changes, Consent Agenda, and Public Comment are on the [County website](#).

Public Hearing

Continued: Commissioner District Redistricting – Adam Fyall, Sustainable Development Manager

This public hearing is continued from last week, April 12. The redistricting process resulted in three (3) alternative maps for the 2022-2031 electoral cycle, which were presented at the April 12, 2022, Board of Commissioners' meeting. No additional presentations or documents were provided by staff for the hearing. The Redistricting Committee recommends adoption of the Redistricting Plan (Alternative 1) as presented. **The Board moved and seconded to adopt Alternative 1 as the Redistricting Plan for Benton County Commissioner Districts for the 2022-2031 electoral cycle, as presented. Motion carried.**

Scheduled Business

Information Technology Position Change – Robert Heard, IT Manager

The IT Department has a position that was originally budgeted as an Information Systems Analyst III, Courthouse union grade 16 step A, and was changed to an Information Systems Analyst II, Courthouse union grade 14. It is the desire of the IT Manager to move the position back to the original grade 16 Information Systems Analyst III. The position is currently vacant, and the change will not result in any additional staffing or funding. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the transfer of funds within Central Services Fund 0502101, Department 000 for Information Systems Analyst position change.**

Human Services Position Requests – Kyle Sullivan, Human Services Manager

The Human Services Manager has identified a need to create a classification description for an Outreach Coordinator and he has worked with the HR Department to create the presented classification description. It is recommended that the Outreach Coordinator be a grade 11 on the non-bargaining salary schedule. Also presented is a line-item transfer to create the Outreach Coordinator position and an additional Housing Program navigator. The Outreach Coordinator has a permanent funding source from the increased document recording fee with a contract through the Washington State Department of Commerce. The Housing Program Navigator has permanent funding from a contract with Greater Columbia Behavioral Health (GCBH) for the new Community Behavioral Health Rental Assistance (CBRA) program. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the resolution to establish the Outreach Coordinator classification description as presented, to approve the resolution to establish the Outreach Coordinator position as a grade 11 on the Benton County Non-Bargaining salary schedule, and to approve the resolution and line-item transfer to create an Outreach Coordinator and an additional Housing Program Navigator. Motion carried.**

BNSF Grant Application for Sheriff's Office – Commander Cantu & Sergeant Trevino

The Benton County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) responded with a submittal for the grant application to the solicitation from BNSF for the Detective Training Program. The BNSF railroad passes by heavily populated and rural areas within Benton County. According to local BNSF police, 35 trains a day travel through Benton County. Amtrak passenger trains travel twice daily through Benton County. BCSO is responsible for investigation of train collisions and death investigations that occur on trains and railroad property in Benton County. This includes assisting federal agencies with mass casualty investigations involving passenger trains or active shooter. When a death investigation or train collision occurs involving BNSF railroads, BCSO works cooperatively and in conjunction with BNSF police and have a positive working relationship. Any awarded grant funds will be used to send detectives to be trained on using contemporary and advanced technology, processes, resources, and skill sets to solve complex crimes efficiently and successfully in Benton County, to include BNSF tracks and property. Most of the training requires travel around the country to where the training is offered. Supplies to assist with processing crime scenes will also be considered for purchase with BNSF funds. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the submittal of the BNSF Grant Applications for an amount of \$5,000 to assist with the Detective Training Program. Motion carried.**

Opioid Settlement Memorandum of Understanding – Matt Rasmussen, Deputy County Administrator & Ryan Brown, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

Certain local governments in the State of Washington engaged in litigation with pharmaceutical companies over the adverse impacts of opioids in their communities. Benton County was not party to the original litigation. It appears that those local governments may have reached a settlement with the pharmaceutical companies that would extend to all eligible local governments in the state. The original parties have prepared an MOU that would allow interested agencies to sign on to the settlement and receive a proportional share of the settlement funds. There are certain commitments that the County would have to make to be eligible to receive funds. Most of the work can be completed after agreeing to the MOU. If the County does not sign on to the MOU it would be on its own to pursue litigation against the pharmaceutical companies if it believed there should be payment for the harm caused by opioids. Staff and the Civil Deputy Prosecutor discussed with the Board the pros and cons of signing on to the MOU. This has a very short decision window, and we must agree to the MOU by the end of April should we be interested in receiving settlement funds. The exact settlement amount is still unknown at this time, but Benton County will receive 1.48% of the total settlement. Current estimates are that the settlement may be approximately \$150 - \$200 million. That would put the County at receiving approximately \$2 - \$3 million. **The Board gave staff direction to proceed with the Memorandum of Understanding, for placement on the Board's consent agenda for April 26, 2022.**

Setting Salaries for Elected Officials for 2025 & 2026 – Matt Rasmussen, Deputy County Administrator

Approximately every other year the Board of County Commissioners sets the salaries of elected officials. The salaries set generally are for 3 and 4 years in advance of the current year. This is to avoid changes to the salary of any elected official during their current term. Since 2016 salaries for elected officials have increased each year ranging from a 1.5% increase to a 2.25% increase. The salaries of the County Commissioners, Clerk, Coroner, Treasurer, Assessor and Auditor are set at the same level. The salary of the County Sheriff was set at a higher level because of that position used to have oversight of the jail in addition to their regular functions. That salary was reduced to be in line with the other elected officials (effective 2023) when the jail was split to its own department in 2019. Salaries under consideration are for years 2025 and 2026 for the commissioners. Salaries for 2023 and 2024 were set with Resolution 2020-511 but can still be changed for all other elected officials. These salaries take effect at the beginning of the next term of office for each elected official. On March 29, 2022, the Board had a discussion on this topic and asked staff to explore several options including freezing or reducing the Commissioners salaries and increasing the salary for the Sheriff. Staff explored these options, collected data from comparable counties and has prepared four alternatives for the Board to consider. Alternative 1 maintains the status quo and proposes an increase of 2.25% in 2025 and 2026 for all elected officials. All salaries are equal. Alternative 2 proposes a 2.25% increase in 2025 and 2026 for all elected officials except the Commissioners which would have no increase for those two years. Alternative 3 proposes placing the Sheriff at 5% above all the other elected officials starting in 2023 and adds a 2.25% increase in 2025 and 2026 for all elected officials. Alternative 4 proposes placing the Sheriff at 5% above all the other elected officials starting in 2023 and adds a 2.25% increase for all elected officials except the Commissioners which would receive no increase in those two years. **The Board gave direction to staff to proceed with Alternative 4, but with the Sheriff placed at 7% above all other elected officials starting in 2023 and adding a 2.25% increase for all elected officials for 2025-2026 except the Commissioners, which would receive no increase during that time. A final salary schedule will be drafted and included in the Board's consent agenda on April 26, 2022.**

Finance Presentation – Linda Ivey, Finance Manager

The Finance Manager presented to the Board an update on Current Expense and Public Safety Sales Tax for January-March 2022 Budget vs. Actuals. Staff had no major concerns regarding the Current Expense revenues or expenditures and mentioned that the only department currently at an expenditure rate higher than expected is the Clerk's Office, which is dealing with financial impacts from the *Blake* decision. The Public Safety Sales Tax is experiencing revenues higher than anticipated but are on-track with expenditures and spending down the fund balance as intended. **No Board direction or vote.**

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Contact: Shyanne Palmus, Communications Coordinator
Shyanne.Palmus@co.benton.wa.us | 509-222-3760