

Minutes of Meeting
FY22 Public Defender Budget Review
March 29, 2021
1:00 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chairman Chris Fillios, Commissioner Leslie Duncan and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda item. Also present were Public Defender Anne C. Taylor, Client Services/Investigations Administrator Jennifer Jenquine, Finance Director Dena Darrow, BOCC Communications Manager Nancy Jones and Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Also present was Kootenai County Resident Erin Barnard.

- A. Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Fillios called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.
- B. Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. Business (Discussion):**

Review of FY22 Public Defender Budget Request with Public Defender Anne Taylor

Public Defender Anne C. Taylor called the Commissioners' attention to the FY22 Budget Summary Sheet provided by her department. She pointed out the increase in "B" (Operations) Budget, and said it was caused by the additional expense of housing her staff. She stated that there was an approximate wage adjustment included in the "A" (Personnel) Budget that they were still working out. She said she would provide the Board with additional information on that at a later date.

In response to Commissioner Leslie Duncan's question, Ms. Taylor explained that she started new attorneys at the bottom of their pay bands and their wages were not competitive with figures from other entities in this area or across the state. She stated that she had trouble attracting new personnel and retaining her staff because the wages were too low. She confirmed that new people were brought in at 81% of the market rate.

Chairman Fillios cautioned that the Board still needed to see what decisions the Legislature would make before substantial changes could be discussed.

Finance Director Dena Darrow stated that estimates of \$21,000 per month for housing, \$5,000 for moving expenses and \$5,000 for equipment, fixtures and furniture had been included, but would be updated and probably reduced as soon as additional information was received. She also remarked that the cost to install additional internet fiber to the new rental site could be closer to \$60,000 than the original estimate of \$50,000.

Ms. Taylor said that the figures submitted today were for County Budget requests only. She stated that the Public Defense Commission (PDC) grants were covered elsewhere. She reminded the Commissioners that the PDC grant application deadline was in July and that the Workload grant could only be applied to wages. She added that the other grant

they received from the PDC covered some staff positions as well as some other services her department provided.

Ms. Darrow confirmed that the information presented today did not include any grant funded employees.

Chairman Fillios asked if it were possible for her attorneys to work from home.

Ms. Taylor explained that, due to the particular nature of their responsibilities, working from home was not practical for her staff, unlike the Prosecutor's Office staff. She stated that she felt an attorney should be present at all court appearances, even if they were held in video conference, to support and advise their clients.

Commissioner Duncan remarked that the monthly rent would probably be less than the estimated \$21,000 per month. She said she had found a potential facility and was waiting to hear from the owner.

Chairman Fillios noted that Ms. Taylor had reduced the request for travel expenses and that the net change from FY21 was just under \$400,000.

Chairman Fillios agreed and said that he had heard a number of complaints about the disparity between County wages and local housing costs.

- D. Public Comment:** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There were no public comments.

- E. Adjournment (Action):** Chairman Fillios adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

CHRIS FILLIOS, CHAIRMAN

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk
