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\$229 million 2023-24 Linn County budget approved

ALBANY — After four daily meetings, the Linn County Budget Committee approved a proposed 2023-24 budget of \$229,270,552 Thursday morning at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center.

Budget Committee members include community volunteers Jennifer Stanaway, chair; Kerry Johnson, vice-chair; and Mellissa Barnard and Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker.

Stanaway, who has chaired the committee for many years, said that although the work is time-consuming, “I really enjoy the process every year, largely because everyone works together so well.”

Commissioner Nyquist thanked county staff and elected officials for working together year-round and being fiscally conservative with Linn County residents in mind.

Although approved by the Budget Committee, the budget will still need to be adopted by the Board of Commissioners before July 1 to be official.

The following fund levels were approved:

General Fund, \$52,054,069; **Road Fund**, \$31,814,204; **Fair Fund**, \$686,600; **Law Library**, \$360,651; **General Grants Fund**, \$31,515,265; **Bicycle and Pedestrian Fund**, \$408,468; **Corner Preservation Fund**, \$413,645; **Law Enforcement Levy**, \$44,140,211; **Historical Fund**, \$37,497; **County Forest Park Fund**, \$923,500; **Health Fund**, \$62,315,292; **County School Fund**, \$1,966,100; **Federal Forest Title III/Restricted Fund**, \$420,000; **Internal Service Fund**, \$2,215,050. **Total**: \$229,270,552.

The permanent tax rate was set at \$1.2736 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

The Law Enforcement Levy will be \$2.98 per \$1,000 of property valuation.

Will Summers brought three proposals from the Board of Compensation, that were approved by the committee.

They include adjusting the salaries of the Elected Officials based on the same Cost of Living Adjustments as the management staff adjustments; increasing the salary schedule of the Treasurer/Budget Officer to that of other elected officials, such as the County Clerk and Commissioners; adjusting the Sheriff’s salary to include all incentive pay for which she is qualified. State statute requires that the sheriff be the highest paid member of the office.

A major capital project approved by the committee will be \$500,000 to purchase and install a new HVAC system for the courthouse.

Another capital improvement will include purchasing 3,000 plastic chairs and 400 cloth-covered chairs to replace 25-year-old units at the Fair & Expo Center. Total cost: \$265,000.

Other information gleaned gathered during the meetings included:

- New Parks Director Stacy Whaley said the drawdown of the water level at Green Peter Reservoir this summer and in ensuing summers will affect parks revenue, but the Parks Department is going to bid on managing all of the U.S. Forest Service campgrounds in the Willamette National Forest as a possible revenue source replacement. Linn County already manages several Forest Service campgrounds near Cascadia.



Chief Deputy Clerk Marcie Richey presents the Clerk’s Office proposed budget to the Linn County Budget Committee Wednesday afternoon.

- The Linn County Sheriff’s Office handled 4,341 cases last year and dispatchers fielded more than 62,000 calls. More than 2,900 inmates were booked and processed. The LCSO hired 29 new staff members, but there are still 18 vacancies. Total employment is 193.
- The Sheriff’s Office has reinitiated a GED program that was put on hold during COVID-19 pandemic, increased the Chaplain’s Service and is working closely with the Alcohol & Drug Department to assist inmates.
- The cost of new service vehicles is up about \$10,000 each, which adds up when 10 or more are needed at a time.
- The Clerk’s Office is seeing a decrease in revenue for property recordings as interest rates have gone up and home sales have slowed.
- Due to the type of winter weather the mid-valley experienced the Road Department used far more anti-icing materials than planned.
- The Health Department has seen a major increase in behavioral issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in addition to the Crisis Team, a new Mobile Crisis Team is being put together. Mental Health assistance will be available 24/7. More than 3,027 peo-

ple are enrolled in the county’s Mental Health program. Public Health assisted more than 19,000 people last year.

- All but one Deputy District Attorney is responsible for a homicide case and the number of drug overdoses are escalating.

Also on Thursday, the 4-H/Extension Service District Budget Committee approved a 2023-24 budget of \$1,006,097 and a tax rate of 7 cents per \$1,000 of property valuation.

Although Linn County owns the building in Tangent in which the Extension Service is housed, Oregon State has leased space for \$83,000 per year, which the county used to pay for the building. Now, that money may be used in part for continuing maintenance and/or boosting 4-H/Extension programs.

Several months ago, a vehicle smashed into the Extension Service side of the building (the Sheriff’s Office shares space in the building) and repairs are estimated to cost about \$60,000. Insurance is expected to cover that expense.

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Surveyor Tom Casey presents his office’s proposed budget to the Budget Committee.