

FINANCE AND RULES COMMITTEE
January 19, 2021

Present: Legislators Tom Osborne, Ron Burns, Greg Kulzer, Ian Gilbert, and Phil Hathway.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Jerry King, Richard Chartrand; Lisa Virkler, and Andrea Moroughan; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chairman Tom Osborne called the meeting at 3:35 p.m.

Legislator Burns made a motion to approve the 12/15/2020 committee meeting minutes as recorded, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried.

Budget Transfer Policy outline – Treasurer Eric Virkler

Eric explained that our current policy only deals with contractual budget transfers of \$5,000 or less. He then clarified that contractual expenses are called .4's; personnel expenses are called .1's; fringe benefits are called .8's; and equipment expenses are called .2's. There have always been questions about raising the amount to make things easier for Departments. Eric has gathered information from 5 or 6 other counties as to what their policies look like. This new policy would be about revising and expanding our old policy to include other budget transfers as well as higher thresholds. There is draft policy in the early stages that will be refined and brought forward at the next Committee meeting in February.

Legislator Hathway questioned what dollar amount was being looked at, Eric responded that it would be \$5,000 and under approved by the Department Head; \$10,000 and under by the Department Head and Budget Officer; and over \$10,000 would be a resolution to the Board of Legislators. Eric clarified that the current limit is \$5,000 and under which is approved by both the Department Head and the Budget Officer. Legislator Kulzer inquired about the personnel and benefit expense lines used in transfers. Eric responded that an example could be if a department needed to transfer from the overtime personnel expense into regular personnel expense line. Eric clarified that before the policy is put forward, he will make sure that everything being suggested is cleared with our auditors.

COVID-19 Pandemic Accrued Benefit Time Policy – Human Resource Director Caitlyn Smith

Caitlyn explained that this policy was created for the county staff that have lost benefit time because they have been helping with the pandemic effort and have been unable to take any time off. This is a one-time policy allowing them to either receive the lost time as a payout or have it rolled into a bank to be used in 2021. Anyone wishing to utilize this would have to submit a request form to their Department Head, Human Resources and County Manager for approval. The policy also addresses the option of turning in one week of accrued benefit time so they can continue to accrue time without hitting their maximum and losing it again. The time frame for lost time begins on March 16, 2020 when the county entered the State of Emergency, and the deadline to participate in this policy is February 21, 2021. After looking at the benefit time for

employees it is estimated this will only affect 15 to 20 people and would result in an estimated \$50,000 total payout for the county. Ryan commented that he feels strongly that employees need to use their benefit time in the way that it was intended by taking vacations, but the past year has been unique, and many people have been needed and unable to miss any time from work. These individuals are not getting any hazard pay or bonuses, so this policy is a way to compensate them for losing out on part of their benefit package. Under normal State of Emergencies, it is a natural disaster like a flood that lasts a month at the most which doesn't really affect anyone's ability to take vacations, but this pandemic has lasted almost a full year and could very well last longer.

Legislator Osborne stated his opinion that the counties most valuable asset has always been its employees. This policy only pertains to individuals who were at their maximum accrued time and were not able to utilize it because they were directly assisting with pandemic efforts through the county. Legislator Osborne questioned if the end date of December 31, 2021 to use any "banked" time (as one of the options in the policy) should be extended because the pandemic could continue throughout 2021. Ryan pointed out that the reason for the deadline was to make sure that going forward people can use their time, there needs to be a balance. Legislator Osborne agreed that it is important for people to have a break and be able to wind down.

Legislator Hathway asked for clarification that this is a one-time deal for employees, Caitlyn explained that it is an there is a deadline on the request forms of February 21, 2020. Legislator King questioned what would be done to avoid people not being able to use benefit time going forward. Caitlyn explained that we are getting more people trained to help out so it doesn't fall on county employees completely.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Resolution to approve and adopt the COVID-19 Pandemic Accrued Benefit Time Policy.
AYE 5 NAY 0
2. Resolution to appropriate funds in the Capital Data Processing Account in the amount of \$50,000.00 and approving a 2021 budget transfer in the Information Technology Department accounts for purchases related to a network server project with an estimated cost of \$128,000.00, with funding to come from Project HAE Capital Equipment.
AYE 5 NAY 0
3. Resolution authorizing 2021 budget transfers in the Department Accounts in the amount of \$308,800.00 for annual Enterprise vehicle lease payments, utilizing Project HAD Capital Equipment.
AYE 5 NAY 0
4. Resolution approving and authorizing a waiver of premium contributions to the Lewis County Health Plan by all participants in the plan for the Month of March, 2021 (two bi-weekly pay periods).
AYE 5 NAY 0

The following motions were made:

1. Legislator Kulzer made a motion, brought forward from the Health & Human Services Committee, to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to re-fill a full-time Caseworker position effective immediately, seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.
2. Legislator Kulzer made a motion, brought forward from the Health & Human Services Committee, to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to re-fill a full-time Fraud Investigator position due to resignation effective immediately, seconded by Legislator Burns and carried.
3. Legislator Hathway made a motion, brought forward from the Health & Human Services Committee, to authorize Social Services Commissioner Jennifer Jones to re-fill a full-time Employment and Training Assistant position due to resignation effective immediately, seconded by Legislator Kulzer and carried.

Legislator Hathway suggested to the Committee that he would like to propose a stand-alone referendum to the public on the November ballot that would term limit legislators. The proposal would be a limit of 5 consecutive elected terms which equates to 10 consecutive elected years. If a legislator steps down for one elected term and then comes back the clock would start all over. He felt that term limits are important and a good thing for legislators to do and tried to keep this proposal uncomplicated. The final decision wouldn't have to be made until July to get it on the November ballot. Ultimately it would be up to the voters to decide. Legislator Chartrand questioned the time frame for making sure the deadline is met for the November ballot, Legislator Hathway responded that the final resolution would have to be adopted by August 2nd, 2021.

County Attorney Joan McNichol suggested that maybe this would also be a good opportunity to stagger the election terms of legislators so not all ten (10) legislators are up for re-election at the same time. Legislator Hathway thought that in the past it was voted down but could have been turned down because of adding it with the longer term of 4 years. Legislator King clarified that there have been two (2) referendums put out to the public voters for longer terms and both times it was defeated. Legislator Hathway feels that it might be wise to just have a stand-alone referendum on term limits to make it clear for the public.

Legislator Dolhof commented that staggering the terms would require lengthening some of the terms to get them on a separate cycle and maybe selling the whole thing, longer terms, term limits, and staggered terms as one package it might be approved. There was further discussion on longer terms and having all legislators having to step down all at once. Legislator Hathway suggested staggering the start of the term limits by a random draw so five (5) legislators would have to step down after 10 consecutive elected years and the other five (5) would step down after 12 consecutive elected years just to get them on a different cycle. Legislator King thought this proposal was good but should be put forward as an individual referendum and then possibly a separate referendum with a longer term so they each stand-alone. He went on to explain that it is hard having a two (2) year term because the first year is spent just getting your bearings straight and learning how the county works.

Legislator Kulzer questioned when it would start and would past terms count, Legislator Hathway explained that it would start in January 2022, unless we started on a random draw to stagger the start times, and past years would not count toward the maximum ten (10) years. Several of the Committee members thought this was a good proposal and Joan said she would work on it. Legislator Hathway offered to send out a couple proposals to everyone to review and then discuss in further detail at the next Committee meeting.

At 4:18 p.m. Legislator Kulzer made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Gilbert and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board