

WALWORTH COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING  
OCTOBER 25, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Russell at the Walworth County Government Center, 100 W. Walworth St., Elkhorn, Wisconsin. Roll call was read with all Supervisors present except Supervisors Kuhnke and Morrison. A quorum was established.

County Board Supervisor Kathy Ingersoll, District # 10, delivered the invocation.

**Approval of the Agenda**

On motion by Supervisor Hilbelink, seconded by Supervisor Grant, the agenda was approved as presented.

**Motion to Convene as “Committee of the Whole”**

On motion by Supervisor Polyock, seconded by Supervisor Lightfield, the Board convened as a “Committee of the Whole.”

**Presentation of the Executive Summary**

County Administrator David Bretl began the presentation and welcomed Supervisors and visitors. Bretl said that in looking at other counties around the State, our County is nearly a month ahead in preparing the budget. Bretl gave a brief overview detailing the process followed to prepare this budget. The County Board, early on in the process, set a 4.84% self-imposed levy cap.

Bretl said that this is the seventh budget he has prepared. He said that this year the soaring cost of health care certainly had an impact on this particular budget. One of the biggest features of the 2008 budget is that it does not fully fund the status quo health insurance plan for 2008. He said that we are counting on discussions and negotiations with the County’s seven labor unions to come up with a plan and we will be able to operate within a more reasonable increase in the County appropriation. This budget still adds \$2.7 million to the budget for health insurance for employees and retirees.

Bretl said that although there were some difficult choices for this budget, there was also some good news in that this is the first budget that we have achieved the stability we were looking for at the Lakeland Health Care Center. This goes back to 2003 when the decision was made to proceed with a downsized facility. We were hoping to run that facility with a tax levy of \$3.5 million and this is the first year we were able to do so; and based on that, some of the reserves the health care center had were used to pay debt service. Bretl said that this is something that the County can be proud of, and that this facility can operate and perform its important mission for many years.

Bretl said that this budget also makes a significant contribution to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability and that is a \$23,000,000 liability to provide health insurance benefits to its retirees. He said we are actually fairly close to where we are supposed to be on the 30-year amortization of OPEB.

Bretl said that the rest of the budget is going to be explained in the overview that will be presented. There are a couple of features in the budget that try to plan for the future. Bretl said each year it gets more difficult, we eliminate positions and that is tough, and the decisions are not taken lightly. He said that we have tried to plan proactively to minimize eliminating positions. It is hard to please everyone because on one hand there is a demand for services and on the other hand for low taxes. He said that for the 4.7% that is out there now, and to have essentially changed basically all of the County's infrastructure (the new nursing home, new Lakeland school, expanded jail and HHS department, Judicial Center, and remodeling of the Government Center), and to maintain the high quality programming that the County has, is a credit to the County Board and to the County employees who provide those services. Bretl said that after the 2008 Preliminary Budget presentation by Comptroller Jessica Lanser, the meeting would be opened up for public comment.

Jessica Lanser began the presentation by giving the timeline involved with preparing the preliminary budget. Based on the 2006 taxes the Walworth County portion of the total tax bill is 25%. The library tax will increase approximately 7.42%. The Wisconsin Statutes govern what the County can levy. Lanser outlined the remainder of the presentation explaining history and changes in the budget for 2008. The total tax levy for 2008 is \$54,703,010 with an average mill rate of 3.902808 as compared to \$52,240,266 with an average mill rate 4.104885 for 2007. The Walworth County tax can be calculated as follows: on a \$250,000 house (assuming 100% assessment ratio) divided by 1,000 = \$250, \$250 times the 2008 mill rate of 3.902808 = \$976. Ms. Lanser continued and explained the 2008 preliminary expenditures and revenues.

Ms. Lanser said that the 2008 budget books are available in the Finance Department and County Clerk's Department and also on the County's website.

Chair Russell said she was happy to see that there were so many people in the County interested in the budget.

### **Public Comments and Questions**

Derek D'Auria, 860 Sauganash Drive, Fontana, also Board member on the Walworth County Visitors' Bureau. He thanked the Board for their support of the Walworth County Visitors' Bureau. He said that the Visitors' Bureau had proposed an increase for the 2008 Budget, which the Finance Committee denied. He was asking the Board to reconsider and support the increase to help support a group travel staff person, which would help to bring in revenue to this County.

Allen Anderson, 1375 Edgewood Drive, Lake Geneva, also spoke in support of the group travel staff position with the Walworth County Visitors' Bureau. He said that the State of Illinois is working hard to keep people in Illinois. Walworth County is getting more competition. He thinks that the group travel position will increase the motor coach market. He asked the Board to reconsider funding this position for the 2008 budget.

Bruce Bradshaw, W4780 Potter Road, Elkhorn, President, Walworth County Visitors' Bureau, spoke in support of Visitors' Bureau funding. He thanked the Board for their support of the Visitors' Bureau. He said that tourism is a \$500,000 business in Walworth County. He said that the Board of Director members are all volunteers, so the county gets this expertise at no cost. He said that last year Walworth County was number two in the State for growth in travel expenditures, and he said he likes to think that this is due to the Visitors' Bureau efforts. He said that tourism is extremely competitive and asked that the Board reconsider the funding request so that they could promote organizational and group tour activity in Walworth County.

Melissa Sterken, N5811 County Road P, Delavan, 4-H graduate, said that she was there to tell the Board about her love of 4-H and what this program meant to her. She was a Ridge Prairie 4-H Club member. Ms. Sterken gave the history of her 11 years in 4-H. She asked that the Board reconsider the proposed reduction in support of staff time for 4-H programming.

Laura Vander Veen, W8866 Cemetery Road, Sharon, spoke against the proposed reduction in support staff time for 4-H programming and the impact on the 4-H program. She outlined the responsibilities of this position and she asked the Board to keep the current position as it is today.

Letha Kuecker, W4779 Potter Road, Elkhorn, said she has been involved with the 4-H program for many years as a volunteer leader and at a variety of levels. She spoke about the proposal in the 2008 to downgrade an Account Clerk III position and move 25% of that position from the UW-Extension budget to the County Board budget. She explained that the reduction in time would also reduce support and she asked that the Board restore the .25 FTE position to the UW-Extension department and not to downgrade the position. Ms. Kuecker said that she had a handout explaining her position and asked the Supervisors to see her after the meeting.

Fred D. Burkhardt, Executive Vice-President, Walworth County Economic Development Alliance, addressed the Board regarding the funding of the WCEDA for 2008. Mr. Burkhardt outlined the accomplishments of the Alliance during its first two years. He said that the number one priority of WCEDA is assisting existing businesses in Walworth County. He said that all the projects planned for Walworth County need the funding of Walworth County and asked the Board to reconsider the allocation and increase it to a minimum of \$70,000.

Chuck Dorn, President, Village of Sharon, 125 Plain Street, Sharon, spoke regarding funding the Walworth County Economic Development Alliance. He said businesses have

the same mill rate as residents and industry pays a heavy portion of the support for the services that are provided for everyone. He asked that the Board reconsider the cut that is being planned for 2008 for WCEDA. He said the cut is approximately 50% of WCEDA's budget. He said he thinks this money is an investment and not an expense, as it will pay back many times over future years.

Bryan Albrecht, President, Gateway Technical College, 3520 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Kenosha, addressed the Board regarding funding for WCEDA. He thanked the Board for the support of Gateway Technical College. He said they have found great support and great partnership in the WCEDA. He said the investment in our people is the best way to help the community grow in the future and the investment in our businesses is a way to support our people.

Kevin Brunner, City Manager, City of Whitewater, 312 W. Whitewater Street, Whitewater, asked that the Board not cut the funding for the WCEDA. He said he knows that what the Board has before them, the task of balancing the budget, is very difficult. He said he has seen significant changes in the organization since inception. He thinks that it is premature to cut the funding for this organization. Five years ago Jefferson County formed a similar organization and the City of Whitewater made a 5-year commitment to that organization and have maintained it through the five years. He said that the Walworth County organization has been better for the City of Whitewater and the City has now terminated its affiliation with the Jefferson County organization. Mr. Brunner urged the Board to maintain the level of \$80,000 for the 2008 budget.

Jim Simons, N6292 Paradise Drive, Chairman, Town of Spring Prairie. He congratulated the Board that the mill rate is going down this year. Mr. Simons said he would probably pay just about the same amount as last year. He thinks the money should be put back into the budget for WCDEA and the Visitors' Bureau. He said we cannot continue to have the tax increases in the County because retired people cannot afford it. He said he believes that there are places in the budget where things could still be cut. He challenged the Board to go back and do what the State wants and that is to put a cap on our growth on our budgets of 2% of the rate of growth and he would like \$40,000 returned to Walworth County Visitors' Bureau and \$30,000, not \$40,000, to WCEDA.

Paula McGowen addressed the Board regarding the 2008 budget. She spoke about the study conducted by North Star Economics. She said that we must ask if we want the growth, since this growth would require more law enforcement, fire fighters, schools, etc. to support it. Should we be using tax dollars to fund the Walworth County Economic Development Alliance? Government must be run efficiently to attract growth in business.

Joseph Leedle, 8754 378<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Burlington, addressed the Board regarding the sub-contracting of food service for the Sheriff's Department. He said he has been a food service professional for 27 years. The preliminary budget proposes to outsource the food support services group at the Law Enforcement Center. He said that if outsourced, five full-time employees will be relocated to other positions in the County, and an outside

