

**County of Chittenden
Annual Budget Hearing
January 28, 2021 5pm
Held via virtually Zoom**

Meeting is called to order by Chittenden County Treasurer, John Leddy. In attendance:

***John Leddy, County Treasurer
Assistant Judge Constance Ramsey
Assistant Judge Suzanne Brown
Sheriff Kevin McLaughlin
Probate Judge Gregory Glennon
Anne Williams, County Clerk***

John calls upon the Assistant Judges to make or journalize any comments regarding this year's ensuing budget.

Judge Ramsey requests to make and journalize comments regarding the current and ensuing budget:

We held a preliminary budget meeting on December 18th via Zoom. We had only positive feedback about the budget from the attendees, so we kept the numbers as they were for presentation to you today. The Gore and 17 towns, which comprise Chittenden County, received written notice of this Zoom meeting along with a copy of the budget that we are presenting today. We have received some telephone inquiries about the budget for clarification but have had no complaints. We assume the towns and Gore are in support with the Proposed Budget. The announcement for today's meeting was published in various publications throughout Chittenden County along with a budget summary, as we were seeking local citizen input and attendance. We can only assume in their absence, with the exception of those present here in this Zoom meeting today, the citizens of Chittenden County are in support of the Budget.

Courthouse Building and Grounds This Fiscal year, February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021 We continued to follow the 20-year engineer's report to accomplish level funding of expenses for building upkeep and maintenance.

- There were no major Improvements done as planned this year because of the uncertainty of income and/or the inflated expense due to lack of supplies.
- The Matthew Katz Courtroom on the Second floor got new oak trim edging around the carpeting.
- We had one Jury use the fourteen new ergonomic chairs that were purchased for the jury deliberation room. All other Jury cases were cancelled due to the Pandemic.
- The second-floor conference/witness rooms were made more sterile by removing the magazines and pens.
 - New County stationary was designed and printed.
- The Vermont Supreme Court declared a Judicial Emergency on March 16, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A new air combustion unit was installed. This enables outside air to be brought in the building while the boilers are running.
 - The County established COVID Cleaning Protocols consistent with CDC Guidelines, the Governor's, and Supreme Court's guidelines.
 - Extended hours were spent on cleaning surfaces 3 times a day at the Courthouse, and, due to social distancing protocols, after hours at the Sheriff's Department. The cleaning protocols have since been reduced to 2 times a day at each building.
- Replaced two bad exhaust fan motors in two bathrooms.
- Replaced the security phone lines in the security panel
- Replaced two reheat valves in the HVAC system.
- A failed controller causing airflow issues by the stairway was repaired.
- Replaced a 3-way valve to the air handling unit in the attic to the Chill water coil in the HVAC system.
- Batteries were replaced in the Fire Alarm Call box.
- The outside handicapped cement entrance was repaired at no cost to the County.
- A new COVID-compliant passport office with new protocols was created, as demand for Passports was non-existent when COVID hit. Now we have enough demand to fill one day a week (Monday). Citizens are no longer allowed to enter the courthouse as all hearings, except for jury trials are held remotely. This is scheduled to end on March 31, 2021. So, all passports will be on hold until that date.
- A close election for the State Senate seat resulted in a recount. The recount was led by County Clerk Anne Williams under very challenging circumstances. The recount was held at Contois Auditorium with various valuable volunteers helping, and the Sheriff's office was responsible for Securing the ballots.

- The County applied for Federal and State Grants, for costs incurred by the COVID pandemic-fighting protocols and materials. These expense reimbursements have been applied for, but not yet received, so are not reflected in this year's budget.

- The contract we researched and negotiated with Unified Parking Partners continues to be beneficial to the County. This enables us to offer parking in the county parking lot to the public during non-working hours. This year parking demand was down due to the Pandemic, but we still received 1500 – 2000 a month. This is about half of what we were expecting.

- The parking lot contract is especially timely because we no longer are getting revenue from Notaries. The Secretary of State's office has taken over these duties, and the income.

- Before the pandemic hit, three antique chairs were brought up from the basement, structurally and aesthetically restored, with the historically appropriate materials.

- New Heppa-13 filters were ordered as part of the COVID-recommended protocols for the HVAC system, and will installed by the end of the month.

- Shelving was purchased and assembled for storing State's files.

- A leaf blower was purchased.

- Added compost pickup.

- 65 fabric-covered, foldable, portable chairs were purchased at \$10 each.

- One-time, annual maintenance duties were performed. These include outside window washing, jetting of water and sewer lines and flag replacement. Slate floor protective sealant application and steam cleaning of carpets was not done this year, as there was not much pedestrian traffic as usual.

- The two windows uncovered continue to bring sunlight into the courtroom, with bi-directional, horizontal blinds to cover the sunlight when needed for evidentiary slideshows and the like.

- The Grounds Project was very successful. The grass, trees and plantings took root, the new granite walkways are working well, the county and state flag are flying on the once bare flag poles, and the storm water goes away from the building as planned.

- Probate Clerks' area is working well with a new glassed-in area which is an upgrade to security, and an area for the public to sit and fill out paperwork.

The following projects were not done as planned because of the uncertainty of income and/or the inflated expense due to lack of supplies. Although the design work and preliminary planning has been done for these projects:

- Purchase 14 new chairs for the third-floor jury box.
- Purchase and install new carpeting in the third-floor courtroom.
- Rebuild the probate balcony area.
- Replace granite courthouse steps on the north and west sides of the building.
- Obtain permit to install new lights between the Courthouse and the Courthouse Plaza for security purposes.
- Obtain permit to install decorative light wash on the front of the courthouse to emphasize its distinctive architecture.
- Obtain a permit to replace the gravel by the Democracy sculpture with grass for safety purposes.
- Obtain a permit for a new granite sign to replace the wooden, slat sign that is currently in front of the Courthouse. Courthouse Building and Grounds Next Fiscal year, ending January 31, 2022 Continue to follow the 20-year Engineer's report...
- Continue to work on the afore-mentioned projects planned, but not accomplished because of the pandemic.

Being conservative due to uncertainty of the future, have chosen the projects that concern safety. Which are:

- Obtain permit to install new lights between the Courthouse and the Courthouse Plaza for security purposes.
- Design and obtain a permit to replace the gravel by the Democracy sculpture with grass for safety purposes.

The rest of the projects are on hold until further notice, hopefully we will put these in next year's budget.

Other things we plan on accomplishing this fiscal year include: • Increase airflow throughout the courthouse.

- Follow CDC, Governor's, and Supreme Court's guidelines to help stop the spread of COVID-19
- Identify and remove any remaining obtrusively hazardous light fixtures.
- Identify and remove any remaining sagging arches in the building.
- Replace vertical blinds where needed • Recessed lighting will be replaced where needed.

- Continue to financially prepare for the cost of security upgrades.
- One-time, annual maintenance duties will be performed. These include outside window washing, slate floor protective sealant application, jetting out water and sewer lines, replacing flags and carpet steam-cleaning.
- If there are leftover funds, we will archive (box, index, and label) historic records and pay for them to be safely stored at the Vermont Historical Society.

Chittenden County Sheriff's Building This Fiscal year, ending January 31, 2021.

- No major improvements were done this year.
- New Heppa-13 filters were ordered as part of the COVID protocols, for the HVAC system and will installed by the end of the month.
- A Reznor heater's heat exchanger had a hole in it and needed to be replaced
- Two new computers were purchased.
- Added compost pickup.
- Performed window maintenance.
- Waxing and coating the floors, and steam cleaning the carpets was put on hold this year.
- Plowing and salting were done.
- The new kitchen installed last year is working well.

County Sheriff's Building Next Fiscal year, ending January 31, 2022

- Increase Law Equipment budget to \$10,000.
- Add new plants to our perennial gardens on grounds where needed.
- Seal and restripe the parking lot.
- Remove brush around grounds for security reasons.
- Jet out water and sewage lines.
- Strip and refinish training room floors.
- Touch up painting interior walls.
- Wax and coat the floors.
- Steam cleans the carpets in the spring and fall.

Respectfully Submitted, Connie Ramsey & Suzanne Brown Assistant Judges,
Chittenden County

Anne Williams, Clerk noted that the funds for the LGER/FEMA grant were received and 100% of the Sheriff's portion was forwarded to the Sheriff

Department this week, Judge Ramsey confirmed that the income was included in next year's budget.

Anne also confirmed the Merv 13 filters were delivered and in process of installation.

Judge Brown concurred on the stewardship report as presented by Judge Ramsey and made further note that due to the Supreme Court closing the building to the public until March 31, 2021 an impact would be seen in the passport income that had been budgeted.

John Leddy calls upon Anne Williams to discuss any areas of change for the current and ensuing budget.

Anne Williams, As Judge Ramsey noted due to the current pandemic there was a decrease in the incomes for parking, and Judge Brown discussed the Passport income decline due to the closure of the building. I have had many inquiries for service, some people are waiting to apply here for when the office reopens in April and others have gone elsewhere. There may be a huge upswing in spring depending on the status of the vaccine.

The County applied for and received LGER and FEMA grants as noted by Judge Ramsey. Small Claims and Wills for Safekeeping came in as expected.

To offset the revenue deficiency the Asst Judges have been very conservative in spending and budgeting to attempt to level fund and have little impact on the tax levies of the towns. The levy increase amounts to 1.6%.

Many projects were put on hold. The front steps which will be a costly repair although in need of aesthetic improvements in terms of safety the repair can be delayed a few years.

Employees were given a 2.5% COLA this is the same amount awarded to State Employees this year.

There was a decrease in the amount of Assistant Judge salary due to the lack of Court hours available during the pandemic. There is Unemployment charges

regarding the loss of those hours. There was a CARES grant that reimbursed the County 50% of the first quarter unemployment charges.

There was a 9.6% increase in health insurance premiums.

Retirement came in under budget again due to the loss of Assistant Judge Court hours available.

Trash increased due to Compost pick up and the new composting law that went into effect.

This year a Biannual Audit will be performed, an architect was hired for East side lighting improvement project.

VAJC dues was reinstated mid-year, with the annual payment being made on February 1, 2021.

Supplies are over budget due to COVID-19 and the LGER grant reimbursed for unexpected/unbudgeted emergency expenses.

Utilities increased due to COVID-19, with the recommendation of pulling in outside air 2 hours in morning and 2 hours in evening, to maximize building air flow.

Sheriff Department received a 2.5% salary increase and benefits increased the same.

Maintenance Contracts increased so that was increased accordingly. \$10,000 was added for LE Equipment. Insurance increased 14% and budget was increased accordingly. Tuition was removed from the budget.

Electric came in on budget and other utilities were increased according to spending.

Did not complete parking lot repair or other projects due to COVID-19.

Maintenance and Repairs are over budget due to COVID-19 response and the County is expecting the LGER/FEMA grant to offset the expense.

Probate was kept level funded at the request of the Probate Judge.

This concludes Anne's remarks.

Judge Glennon – Thanked for the opportunity to be present and everyone for all their hard work on the Budget.

John Leddy – Asks if there are any other remarks by anyone present and if no entertains a motion to adjourn.

Anne moves to adjourn, seconded by Judge Brown.

Meeting Adjourned.

Attached Report from Judge Ramsey and Judge Brown