

CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

May 6, 2004

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners reconvened their recessed **regular meeting of May 4, 2004** on this date, at the hour of **9:00 a.m.**, in the in the Commission Chamber of the Cleveland County Administrative Offices for the purpose of conducting budget hearings.

PRESENT: Mary S. Accor, Chairwoman
Ronald J. Hawkins, Vice-Chairman
Tom Bridges, Commissioner
Willie B. McIntosh, Commissioner (*entered at 9:15 a.m.*)
Jerry L. Self, Commissioner
R. L. Alexander, County Manager
David Dear, Assistant County Manager/Finance Director
Bob Yelton, County Attorney
Wanda Crotts, CMC, County Clerk
Joy Scott, The Star

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Accor called the meeting to order and led the audience in the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag of the United States of America and provided the invocation for the meeting.

SOCIAL SERVICES

John Wasson, Social Services Director, accompanied by DSS board Chair Rhonda Skorman, reviewed highlights of the Social Service budget requests. The following is a brief summary of some of the items covered:

- * The total proposed DSS budget for 2004-05 (federal, state and county share) is \$169,967,388.
- * Why such a huge budget? The Medicaid Programs. The total Medicaid budget is \$135,260,290.
- * How much is the federal share of the Medicaid budget? \$84,930,411
- * The state share? \$43,053,925
- * The county share? \$7,275,954
- * What is the increase in the county share of Medicaid from last year? \$542,715
- * How many persons are eligible for Medicaid in Cleveland County? Over 17,000
- * This is 17% of the county's population. Why so many? Medicaid programs are geared to the poverty level. Cleveland County's soft economy has resulted in long term unemployment and underemployment for many, resulting in many more people being eligible.
- * Of the various medical providers in the county, such as hospitals and nursing homes, who get the most Medicaid dollars? Pharmacies. In FY 2002-03, Cleveland County pharmacies received \$15.11 million. Nursing homes were second with \$14.12 million.
- * You have requested seven new positions. Why do you need them? Because the local economy has been depressed for the past several years, demand for DSS programs has increased significantly. Staff growth to meet the demand has not kept up. In 2000-01, 191 staff handled an estimated 30,461 cases. In 2003-04, 197 staff - only six more - handled an estimated 37,696 cases. Since 2001-01, the number of clients has increased 35%. Staff has grown by six.
- * What is the county share of these seven requested positions? \$56,262
- * The federal share? \$62,681
- * The state share? \$505
- * Are you willing to work with the County Administration to reduce the budget if necessary? Yes. In a conversation with David Dear this morning, we reduced it by \$23,000 in county dollars. We have budgeted for two vans so Social Workers can safely transport foster children. We are purchasing one this fiscal year and will probably get the other one next year out of an underspent account.
- * What is the bottom line? How many dollars, that you have control over, are you requesting? \$60,937
- * In terms of county dollars, it looks like it is a modest request. How much on the tax rate is it? Less than 1/4 cent.

Mr. Wasson provided Commissioners with charts reflecting the DSS projected revenues; county share of total DSS budget from 1998-99 through 2004-05; comparison of Medicaid budget to total DSS budget; county Medicaid participation rates 2003-04 and 2004-05; Medicaid population rate

comparison indicating Cleveland County has the highest Medicaid client rate of the 11 comparison counties; Medicaid eligibles per Social Services staff; Medicaid providers earnings in Cleveland County 1999-2003; racial diversity of DSS staff and management staff 1998-2004; employee turnover 1995-2003; caseload growth 1998-2004; position growth vs. caseload growth 1998-2004; cases per employee ratio 1998-2004; incoming clients 2000-2003.

When questioned about staff turnover in child protective service workers, Mr. Wasson advised he felt there would always be turnover, that it was not a matter of money, that “they will come for money but will not stay for money.” He said it was the “nature of the job” and that most people don’t want to stay in that job for more than a few years. He said he has come to realize “we need to manage vacancies” and described a new plan whereby two social workers are trained and ready to fill the vacancies temporarily rather than distributing the caseload among the remaining workers.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

_____Denese Stallings, Health Director, accompanied by several Board of Health members, reviewed that the “two critical needs of the Health Department this year are space and the new pay plan.”

Mrs. Stallings said the space needs are for waiting areas, records confidentiality, and storage. The pay plan would enhance their ability to recruit professionals. She said they are in competition with other health care entities for professionals.

She reviewed other budget items as below:

	<u>2003/2004 FY</u>	<u>2004/2005 FY</u>
State/Federal Grants	\$1,295,900	\$1,335,927
Medicaid	2,250,234	2,019,321
Grants/Fees/Medicare	1,474,791	1,687,436
County Funds	3,010,970	3,163,730

County funds increase:

- * Vehicles: Van/car for employee transportation plus insurance.
- * 2% COLA
- * 10% insurance
- * pay plan

Budget changes:

- * State formulas for reimbursement of services has changes.
- * Reduction in reimbursements means reduction in force.

Solid Waste Budget:

Solid Waste Landfill: Operations: \$2,295,317
 Reserve Revenue: \$1,595,575
 Manned Sites Collections: Operations: \$1,566,797

She highlighted the solid waste budget needs as landfill design for the cell to open in three years; capital equipment needs - new pickup truck, low-boy trailer, and the replacement of a van; litter prevention and recycling proposals; increased solid waste collected at manned sites; and, reduced escrow may lead to future increases in household fees.

Mrs. Stallings discussed the cutback in federal and state mandates and the how this impacts the budget, such as the new federal mandate to have an interpreter for Spanish speaking clients; the reduction-in-force of maternal and child health program. She said Commissioners had requested her department address litter prevention and recycling in the county and she advised Sam Lockridge is working with the Cleveland County Chamber to increase public awareness through a media “blitz.”

Mrs. Stallings stated, “If you cut health care you’re cutting quality.” There was discussion regarding other aspects affecting the Health Department, such as the need for additional parking,

prospects of using the Pathways space once it is vacated, bioterrorism issues, and recruiting minority workforce.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Joe Lord, EMS Director, reviewed budget requests, stating that when he came to Cleveland County in 1992 there was a staff of nine, which is now twenty-one. He explained this is not due to population increase, but instead due to the diminished services from volunteer rescue squads. He is requesting six new staff members in this budget and reviewed the current demand of overtime. He discussed the increased education and training requirements.

Mr. Lord advised his budget proposes billing and collections currently done in house be contracted out to a private vendor. The amount of paperwork generated by Medicaid, Medicare and insurance is staggering and there are some claims still outstanding from as far back as 1994.

There was discussion of how the EMS coverage scheduling works, extra coverage required for sporting events, "reasonable" charges for such coverage. He said over the past four years, \$24,000 in grants have come to his department from federal Homeland Security funds and \$15,000 of that was used for training. Discussion also covered such issues as: incident command centers and staff, man-made and natural disaster control; special needs rescue technical training; the fact that the county has an average of two buildings collapse each year; and equipment essentials included in the budget.

Mr. Lord advised he participates in all area career "fairs" in an effort to recruit minority staff and plans to go talk with guidance counselors to start a program to take kids "under our wing" to help with school and training sponsors.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Sheriff Raymond Hamrick reviewed his budget request which includes four new officers and purchasing cars from forfeiture monies. He reported that recently a "large amount of money" was seized, but his department had not yet received their portion. Money has also been raised through inmate phones, commissary sales and reimbursements from the State.

Sheriff Hamrick discussed the connections between robbery and drug related crimes, stating the investigations department had seen no growth "since Buddy's (*McKinney*) term (*as Sheriff*)." He said they are "81 drug complaints behind" and the department had made the "largest single seizure of cocaine and marijuana." He reviewed school resource officers funding and also discussed jail cleanup costs. He noted that his deputies have "accumulated a tremendous amount of overtime" due in part to their assistance with federal investigations.

CLEVELAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dr. Steve Thornburg, CCC President, reviewed that two years ago, the county's allocation to the College was cut by 5%. He stated the current request would put the College back to the level of funding prior to the reduction. Dr. Thornburg advised the College is facing an estimated \$100,000 in capital needs and encouraged Commissioners to assist them in their efforts to address these capital needs.

RECESS TO RECONVENE AT A TIME AND PLACE CERTAIN

Recess to reconvene at the time and place certain of **May 7, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. in this Chamber** to continue budget hearings.

Mary S. Accor, Chairwoman
CLEVELAND COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Wanda Crotts, CMC, Clerk
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