

**IN A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WHITE PINE COUNTY COMMISSION HELD ON MAY 21, 2020 IN THE COUNTY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM IN ELY, NEVADA**

The Following Were Present:

County Commission

- Richard Howe, Chairman
- Travis Godon, Vice-Chairman
- Ian Bullis, Commissioner
- Shane Bybee, Commissioner
- Laurie L. Carson, Commissioner
- Nichole Baldwin, Clerk of the Board

County Officials

- Elizabeth Frances, Finance Director
- Mike Wheable, District Attorney
- Mike Johnson, IT
- Tabatha Hamilton, Finance Dept. (Zoom)
- Maxine Lantz, Victim Witness Svcs. (Zoom)
- Tim Bunch, Human Resources Dir. (Zoom)
- Lori Romero, Library/Sr. Ctr. Dir. (Zoom)
- Kristi Rozich, Aquatic Center Dir. (Zoom)
- Lisa Ashby, Aquatic Center (Zoom)

Also Present

- Geri Wopschall (Zoom)
- Marietta Henry (Zoom)
- Art Olson (Zoom)
- M. Jensen (Zoom)
- Linda Davies (Zoom)
- Don Southworth (Zoom)
- Amy Reed (Zoom)
- Dagney Stapleton, NACO (Zoom)
- Lacey Balch (Zoom)
- Amy Reed (Zoom)

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Chairman Richard Howe called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Finance Director Elizabeth Frances led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE/SILENT INVOCATION**

This was duly observed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Library/Sr. Center Director Lori Romero gave an update on what is going on in the Library and Senior Center; e-Rate was approved to come into the building. She advised that the Library was open by appointment only for 30 days; over 240 appointments were set during that time in order to meet the needs of the public. They also provided space for tutoring for the School District for those who needed additional help to graduate; Director Romero was happy to announce they can all graduate. She is maintaining the 10-person limit rule in the Library. A Virtual Poetry Contest was held successfully, with 33 participants. Construction at the Senior Center will be starting in 2 weeks, and they are preparing for that. They are continuing drive-in service for lunches at the Senior Center, and have used 3 volunteers in addition to their staff; she noted that's working out.

Ms. Lacey Balch acknowledged Commissioner Ian Bullis' derogatory comments on Facebook lately about clear masks for the deaf. Chairman Richard Howe requested that she wouldn't use names in her comments. She continued that she's had people reach out to her

in fear of retaliation from that Commissioner, regarding those comments made, and that “this constitutes removal of this Commissioner.” Chairman Howe requested that she cease making threats. She continued that the Commissioner’s comments are in violation of the Free Speech Act; he blocks constituents that are female; and so she’s calling either for a recall of that Commissioner or his resignation. Chairman Howe used the gavel and stated he will not allow threats; Ms. Balch was muted. Commissioner Laurie Carson read the disclaimer regarding Public Comment that is included on the Commission agendas. District Attorney Mike Wheable also reminded the Board that they’ve all come under attack during Public Comment, but this is a method people use to attack elected officials, since there isn’t the same protection available for them as for appointed officials. However, he advised, when the comments become irrational, inflammatory, and harassing, the Chairman is allowed to cut them off.

### **COUNTY COMMISSION**

**DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION: DIRECTION OR APPROVAL RELATED TO REVENUES AND EXPENSES IN THE FY2021 BUDGET INCLUDING: COMMISSION, CLERK, RECORDER INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE BUDGETS, ASSESSOR INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE BUDGET, TREASURER, ELECTIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, FINANCE, HUMAN RESOURCES, DISTRICT ATTORNEY INCLUDING VICTIM WITNESS SERVICES, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE-ELY INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE BUDGETS, DISTRICT COURT I INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE BUDGETS, DISTRICT COURT II INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE BUDGETS, JUDICIAL RELATED COSTS, JUVENILE PROBATION, JUVENILE DETENTION, BAILIFFS, JUDICIAL COURT SUPPORT, SHERIFF INCLUDING ADMINISTRATION, DETECTIVE, PATROL, JAIL, CORONER, DISPATCH AND TASK FORCE, FIRE, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUILDINGS AND MAINTENANCE, PARKS MAINTENANCE, PUBLIC HEALTH, COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS-ANIMAL CONTROL, COUNTYWIDE EXPENSES, LIBRARY INCLUDING GIFT FUND, AIRPORT OPERATING, NATURAL RESOURCES, TRANSFERS, CONTINGENCY, AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES, AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION, SOCIAL SERVICES INCLUDING DONATIONS FUND, ROAD DEPARTMENT INCLUDING PUBLIC TRANSIT AND RTC, AIRPORT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, SB74 TAX FUND, TOWNS OF LUND, MCGILL & RUTH, SENIOR CENTER, INDUSTRIAL PARK, 911 FUND, TRI-COUNTY WEED, BUILDING & PLANNING, GOLF COURSE, AQUATIC CENTER INCLUDING SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, CHINA SPRINGS, AND CAMP SUCCESS**

Finance Director Elizabeth cited the handouts provided for today and read a portion into the record. At this point, she noted that she has no evidence of what the County would prefer to do over the coming year. She hasn’t received March payments, which could be the first impact. She continued that the news depicts things as starting to rebound, but it’s still uncertain. She encouraged the Board to try to be flexible and not to assume the worst at this point in time. She noted one handout contains Chairman Richard Howe’s comments, and the other handout is from both Commissioners Ian Bullis and Travis Godon.

Commissioner Bullis credited Commissioner Godon for the math on their suggestions. He pointed out that by reducing the Water Attorney cost of \$120,000 and increasing Contingency by \$60,000 we would still be able to handle unforeseen litigation.

Further reductions include Dispatch at \$23,325 and the Main Street donation at \$12,900. District Attorney Mike Wheable recommended to not completely eliminate the Water Attorney budget, however, as more expenses could result. The total estimated reductions proposed would be \$197,478. Commissioners Bullis and Godon further recommend all non-essential Departments create an Emergency Reduction Plan showing both 10% and 20% reductions, in preparation for possible serious shortfalls; they are requesting these plans to be submitted to the Finance Director by the first meeting in July. Commissioner Bullis thinks it's a good idea if the Departments would already be planning on severe reductions, if that should occur. Both Commissioners Shane Bybee and Laurie Carson agree this is a great idea, and that being proactive is the way to go. Director Frances reported on an inquiry regarding Ms. Maxine Lantz, of Victim & Witness Services; she advised that fund has an adequate balance to take care of those services next year. Director Frances will find out more information per today's discussions and bring it back to the Commission. Commissioner Godon explained that the reduction for Dispatch is simply to replace a Supervisor with an entry level position.

Chairman Richard Howe reviewed his suggestions and maintained that he's talked about them with every Department. His suggestions are drastic; to cut \$590,000 from the budget, as a worst case scenario. Commissioner Bullis mentioned the fact that we're all still guessing, but next year will be the time when we'll have to make some drastic cuts. He added we still have time to make thoughtful decisions at this point. Commissioner Godon felt gold would continue to increase in price, and it could be even higher with copper, so our local Mines are looking okay. Chairman Howe just wanted everyone to be prepared. Commissioner Laurie Carson stated she received an email with respect to the drop in Net Proceeds of Minerals, in that Kinross's earnings nearly doubled. She can't understand why we took such a hit. Commissioner Shane Bybee apologized for not being more prepared today, but he thought that if we turned away new vehicle requests and equipment for 6 months, it might help us out in the present. We could always look at them again in the future when we know more. Commissioner Godon agreed that approach was prudent. Chairman Howe recalled a problem years ago when 5 patrol vehicles had to be replaced in one year; he doesn't wish to be in a position to have to repeat that again. Commissioner Bybee wants to put off requests such as these until January 2021 once we see how things are looking.

Director Frances clarified that the mower was removed from the list; vehicle requests were handled by swapping out a Fire District vehicle with Juvenile Probation and the Assessor. She added that other requests have already been removed during prior budget hearings. Commissioner Bybee wants approval of these requests pushed to January 2021; in addition, if we're looking at cutting staff, he felt we may just have to use what we have for one more year.

Commissioners Godon and Bullis clarified which of their suggestions are going forward and which reductions have already been made. Director Frances reported that the Victim Witness Services fund balance is \$8,900, so the Board could draw from that if they elect not to give her the standard amount of \$10,000.

District Attorney Mike Wheable mentioned that Water Attorney Simeon Herskovits may want to address the Board during a future meeting, to update them on what's

happening with the water fight. The Board discussed what they should set aside for Attorney Herskovits.

Finance Director Elizabeth Frances updated the Board with what they would need to vote on today. Commissioner Laurie Carson brought up additional thoughts for reductions as previously presented by Director Frances. She felt we could even drop the contribution for Victim Witness Services to \$3,500. Commissioner Travis Godon wanted to see both his and Commissioner Bullis' suggestions adopted. Commissioner Godon made a motion to give Finance Director Elizabeth Frances direction as indicated on the handout, and that she would get with VWS' Maxine Lantz for information to present the final budget for approval next week; also, that the County Departments would turn in their 10% and 20% reduction plans by July 1, 2020. Commissioner Ian Bullis seconded. Motion carried.

Director Frances will bring back the final budget at the next meeting. She reported the Agricultural Extension Office budget will be changed, and adjustments are also coming in from the Assessor. She will be adjusting wages and benefits as they relate to what happens today. Commissioner Travis Godon reported that the Ag. District 13/Fair & Rodeo Advisory Board voted to fund the Horse Races out of their own budget last night.

Director Frances noted she's still working with the City of Ely regarding revenues and changes for next year. Both she and WPC Sheriff Scott Henriod have held discussions; she will bring back information on those at the next meeting. She's also working to bring the cost of a required study for financial purposes down with the vendor. Chairman Richard Howe thanked her for all her work on this.

**DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION/RATIFICATION TO SEND A REQUEST TO THE GOVERNOR, GAMING CONTROL BOARD, AND THE LEAP COMMITTEE RURAL REPRESENTATIVE I.J. GOICOECHEA, THAT RESTAURANTS IN CASINOS WITHIN WHITE PINE COUNTY BE ALLOWED TO REOPEN UNDER THE SAME PROTOCOLS AS A STANDALONE RESTAURANT**

It was advised that no action is needed on this item; the letter was not needed, and was therefore not sent.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Amy Reed commented that people from the public need to be able to voice their concerns in this meeting; she has a concern about the negative attention our County is receiving when a Commissioner makes a comment about masks for the deaf. The Commissioners are entitled to their opinions, but they hold an office and their comments reflect on the County.

Human Resources Director Tim Bunch stated he doesn't envy the Commission, and commented that in order to create a strategic and sustainable plan, all the key players need to be involved in discussions. He thinks it's in the best interest to meet with the County Department Heads, who have historical data and knowledge on how to best run their Departments when making decisions. He noted we've just reduced our Departments by 14%, and now the Board is asking for plans to reduce by 10% and 20% more. He added there's no more to cut besides Payroll. Finance Director Elizabeth Frances clarified that the Board makes decisions; she provides recommendations and information, but the County Commissioners make the decisions that affect the whole County.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:56 a.m., Commissioner Laurie Carson made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Shane Bybee seconded. Motion carried.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
COUNTY OF WHITE PINE  
STATE OF NEVADA

BY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

  
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WPC CLERK OF THE BOARD