



WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

November 1, 2023

WORKING SESSION

I. ROLL CALL

A Working Session of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners was held at the Administration Building, in the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on November 1, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 05:32 PM by Comm. Somerville, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte, Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville
Members Absent:	None.
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Rachel Rosenberg & Marie Pfeifer, Finance; Terrence Williams, Administration; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Camellia Khorrami, Racial Equity Office; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Bryce Allmacher, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Andrew Comai asked the Board to fulfill the Environmental Council's request to hire full-time staff to implement the Resilient Washtenaw Plan.

Josh McAllister spoke in support of the resolution to allocate resources towards housing and homelessness on tonight's Board of Commissioners agenda.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Catherine Jones-Alther, Deputy Finance Officer, and Ashley Hall, Board of Commissioners Operations and Communications Manager, gave a presentation and answered questions on the recommended 2024-2027 Quadrennial Budget.

Jones-Alther said that the recommendation to hire a Labor Relations Attorney is justified by the fact that projected costs for consultation from outside counsel far exceed what the County would spend on an in-house employee.

Jones-Alther stated that Finance's projections for District Court revenues are more in line with recent data.

Jones-Alther gave an overview of non-structural general fund recommendations.

Hall gave an overview of the budget requests made by Commissioners.

Comm. LaBarre spoke about his request for a Youth Support Services Stabilization Fund, said that such a fund should begin with a direct allocation to community organizations with a more well-defined RFP process to follow.

Comm. Maciejewski asked about the type of services that would be delivered by organizations with this funding.

Comm. LaBarre stated that programs from the named organizations tend to fall under personal development or direct economic assistance, referred the Board to presentations on youth services at past meetings.

Comm. LaBarre spoke about his request for a \$500,000 structural allocation to Food Gatherers; noted that Food Gatherers' services help reduce costs at other organizations.

Comm. Somerville spoke about her request for a \$1,000,000 structural allocation to Housing and Homelessness; stated that this allocation may prove to save the County money in the long term.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the specifics of the request.

Comm. Somerville said that a structural allocation should be used similarly to what is being proposed in the resolution on tonight's Board of Commissioners agenda, spoke about eviction prevention and direct cash assistance, specifically. Comm. Somerville said that this funding could be used to provide a short-term and medium-term safety net for County residents.

Comm. Rabhi asked about a potential process to determine how such funding would be allocated.

Comm. Somerville said she envisioned a deliberative process in which the Board passes a yearly resolution determining how the funding is allocated.

Comm. Hodge spoke about his request for a \$250,000 structural allocation to HAWC Intake and Assessment, spoke about the importance of reducing turnover and stabilizing HAWC in the long-term.

Comm. Rabhi spoke about his request for a structural allocation to the Washtenaw ID Card program, said that the program is cost effective and that the Clerk's office does not currently have the bandwidth to properly operate it.

Comm. Rabhi spoke about his request for a structural allocation for additional Board of Commissioners Staff, noted that additional staff would help Commissioners improve constituent services.

Comm. Lyte and Comm. Rabhi discussed the prospect of bringing on interns or Americorps members to fulfill this type of role.

Comm. Sanders said that internships and Americorps positions could benefit young people in the County, noted concern with bypassing the process that other departments undergo to have FTEs approved.

Comm. Rabhi indicated a desire to explore how other Counties staff their Boards and noted a willingness to work with fellow Commissioners to amend this request to the Board's satisfaction.

Comm. Rabhi spoke about his request to structurally and fully fund a Washtenaw County Resilience Office; stated that the County needs to fulfill its responsibility to meet its goals on climate action.

Comm. Scott stated that the current recommendation to fund a grant-status Resilience Officer is wholly inadequate to meet the County's needs, noted the need for full-time staff to pursue intergovernmental partnerships.

Comm. Sanders spoke about her request for a structural allocation to Youth and Senior Transportation services; stated that this request was informed by constituent requests for transportation to access various services and programs across the County. Comm. Sanders said that such an allocation would have the additional benefit of job creation.

Comm. Beeman asked how the County would employ potential transportation dollars.

Comm. Sanders said that the County should consider disbursing this funding directly to the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority.

Comm. Sanders spoke about her request for a non-structural allocation towards a Consumer Protection Pilot Program; noted that conversations with the Prosecutor's Office regarding this program have been ongoing. Sanders said that there are existing programs in the area for the County to partner with.

Comm. Somerville noted that the County currently administers programs that could be rolled in with a broader consumer protection program.

Comm. Scott asked about the possibility of renaming the program to indicate a more concentrated focus on housing and tenant rights.

Comm. Maciejewski asked if such a program would focus on outreach and resource navigation and not legal aid.

Comm. Sanders said that the County should be open to expanding any consumer protection program to meet the needs of its participants; but that this specific request was not made with legal aid in mind.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the projected increase in costs for outside counsel on labor relations.

Brady Peck, Director of Operations, said that the trend from the previous five years was used to inform the projections through 2027.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the trend in costs for outside counsel prior to the previous five years.

Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel, noted that the County has employed outside counsel for labor negotiations for many years; Billard said that increased activity from bargaining units in recent years has inflated costs.

Jones-Alther noted that the departure of experienced labor relations staff has left the County deprived of institutional knowledge and necessitated additional counsel.

Comm. Sanders noted that the County

Comm. Somerville asked if the County would continue to require outside counsel if a labor relations attorney were hired.

Billard said that the expectation would be for the County to rarely consult with outside counsel.

Comm. Scott asked which firms the County contracts with for outside counsel on labor relations.

Billard said that the County contracts primarily with Miller-Johnson and Miller-Canfield.

Comm. Scott indicated opposition to this recommendation in the budget.

Comm. Scott said that the recommendation to allocate funding towards a labor relations attorney should be augmented to fully fund the Resiliency Office.

Comm. Rabhi said that the Board has not been adequately engaged in the budgeting process, stated his desire to increase the Board's time in public meetings.

Comm. Sanders said that the Board was given opportunities to engage in the budget process through direct interactions with staff which may have been made public at the Commissioners' request.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

Comm. LaBarre, seconded by Comm. Sanders, moved to adjourn. Voice vote - motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 07:02 PM.

Annie Somerville, Chair of the Working Session
Lawrence Kestenbaum, Clerk/Register

By: Bryce Allmacher, Deputy Clerk
Board Approved: November 15, 2023