WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

October 2, 2024

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 October 2, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 5:36PM by Comm. Somerville, Chair of the Working Session.

Members Present:	Comms. Shannon Beeman, Justin Hodge, Andy LaBarre, Crystal Lyte (7:14), Jason Maciejewski, Yousef Rabhi, Caroline Sanders, Katie Scott, Annie Somerville
Members Absent:	Comms.
Others Present	Greg Dill, County Administrator; Andrew DeLeeuw, Deputy County Administrator; Michelle Billard, Corporation Counsel; Tina Gavalier & Catherine Jones-Alther, Finance; Brady Peck, Director of Operations; Terrence Williams, Administration; Guillermo Hernandez, Director of Human Resources; Jeff Rose, ITS; Ashley Hall, BOC Communications and Operations Manager; Ashlyn Poole, Clerk's Office; and members of the public.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
None.

III. REPORT FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
None.

IV. REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LIAISON
None.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Deputy Finance Officer Catherine Jones-Alther brought the proposed budget forward so that the Board could have a preliminary conversation as a way for finance to hear the Board of Commissioner's desired focus areas and ideas for budget allocation before it is finalized.
The presentation provided budget context, structural revenues and options, general fund commitments, and non-structural revenues and options.

Comm. Scott stated that nothing in the proposed budget for the Health General Fund Appropriation was new. She stated this to clarify that the Health Department was not receiving any new funds from the Board.

Comm. Scott asked about creating 1 FTE to support renters with legal rights and asked if any analysis was done to determine if there would be a full FTE.

Jones-Alther clarified that there has not been any analysis but the budget ask is to determine if a FTE is needed.

Comm. LaBarre asked about the existing policy or practice as it relates to programming year-over-year increases and operational increases.

Comm. Somerville asked if the renter support also communicated with legal services.

Administrator Dill stated that the goal for today was to have a conversation at the meeting and work on the budget with the board and bring a resolution at a later date.

Comm. Somerville stated that she liked the idea of homelessness and housing support but also stated that there needed to be funding and communication between every agency and department who works on the issue.

Comm. LaBarre asked for clarification on the budget process and how finance would adjust to changing costs. He expressed his desire for a more structural change in the way that the budget is adjusted for changing costs.

Jones-Alther stated that Finance tried to be conservative with their revenue estimates in order to not overestimate the funds that would come in.

Administrator Dill reiterated that the Administration has been traditionally conservative and stated that they wanted to avoid cuts in the year.

Comm. LaBarre stated that he understood where Administrator Dill was coming from but that he and the administration should ask the Board for latitude to be less prudent with the budget.

Comm. Scott stated that the Board would like services to be covered and talked about the Maintenance of Effort budget and how conservation causes certain departments to fall behind. She also said that she was not seeing many cuts in the budget where departments are cutting to make room for essentials. Comm. Scott was concerned that the County had not been keeping up with the essentials.

Jones-Alther expressed her agreement with Comm. Scott's concerns and explained that she wanted a balance and stated that they could come back and talk about setting funds aside for the basic essentials.

Comm. Scott reiterated Comm. LaBarre's comments about the Board designating the funds for essentials. She also stated that she did not want to be in a position again where the county is falling behind on something essential like the Maintenance of Effort.

Jones-Alther stated her opinion that some of the problems were due to the constraints of funds being tied to property tax dollars and stated that these funds do not keep up with inflation or labor costs.

Comm. Scott stated her desire to emphasize to departments to cut areas where there is redundancy.

Jones-Alther stated that there will be a review for areas where they are not achieving their aims and adjusting them.

Administrator Dill stated that when property tax and employee pay are the same, the administration programming will erode. He stated innovation needed to be rewarded.

Comm. Sanders expressed her idea for a weighted system where departments submit requests for their metrics related to requests from the departments.

Comm. Rabhi asked if the Talent Management Generalist position was approved and asked the goal of the position.

Jones-Alther stated that it would be coming to the Board in the future for approval and that the position was currently being funded through admin and that they were looking for a more permanent funding source. She stated the goal of the position was to do professional development for the entire organization.

Comm. Rabhi asked for clarification on the funding source for a position which Jones-Alther provided.

Comm. Rabhi asked for the math on parking costs and stated his belief that the county should be developing existing parking sites for employee parking.

Administrator Dill stated that he and the city administrator had been discussing parking, and he felt like the agreement needed to be updated.

Comm. Somerville asked for some clarification on ARPA interest earnings and the Eastside Rec Center which Jones-Alther provided.

Comm. Rabhi reiterated that the recommendation for the Continuum of Care should come from OCED because the County is funding it.

Administrator Dill stated that the administration would bring everything back to the Board for review.

Comm. Rabhi asked about increased funding for the Saline Court House.

Comm. Dill stated that the county had funding for the base project but wanted to add some energy efficiency items.

Comm. Rabhi asked for a projection of cost savings from the Saline energy efficiency project. He also thanked Jones-Alther for adding the Historic District Commission additional funding but stated that he wanted to see more in the future.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the recent power failure and about generators.

Jason Fee, Director of Facilities Management, provided more information about the generators.

Comm. Rabhi asked if there were other generator options and if it would be more cost-effective to just buy the batteries, to which Fee answered that they were doing a large solar project to be battery ready and that they were exploring all the options and that the battery costs were prohibitive at the moment.

Comm. Rabhi asked how cost prohibitive the project was. Fee said that he would get back to Comm. Rabhi.

Comm. Sanders asked about cybersecurity and if dot GOV email addresses would be more secure.

Administrator Dill stated that he would do more research on the issue.

Comm. Sanders expressed her dissatisfaction with providing additional funding for Saline Court renovations as issues have not been addressed at the other courts.

Comm. Scott asked for clarifications on the Saline project.

Administrator Dill clarified that what Saline asked for in leadership meetings, was funding options for additional funds, which is all the county administration is proposing.

Comm. Sanders stated that she could not think about providing these funds while there are other areas that need funding.

Comm. Hodge provided some clarifications on the funding request and stated that this was only one of the recommended funding options.

Comm. Scott expressed her dismay with the funding and stated that the Board should think about all areas in the county. She stated her opinion that housing is more appealing than working on the courthouse.

Comm. Beeman said that she appreciated the discussion around the issue and asked the administration to come forward with the proposal and stated that the proposed project was the only County presence in Saline.

Comm. Maciejewski stated that he would find it difficult to support any facility requests until there is a strategy on space usage.

Comm. Somerville stated that they should explore other resources to provide funding for the solar project as there are many resources coming to the state for climate justice funding.

Comm. Scott agreed with Comm. Maciejewski. She also asked if the Administration has thought about the extra funds that the county will have after the jail bond payments end. Comm. Scott asked about building new buildings.

Comm. Dill stated that Deputy Administrator DeLeeuw is spearheading the space plan. He also clarified that the Board would still have to say yes or no to the item, Comm. Rabhi stated that he agreed with part of what Comm. Scott said and said that the county should build their buildings to last longer than 50 years. He also suggested that a housing commission should address building housing. He asked about the funds for the Saline Court house and how much additional funding that they wanted to receive. He also asked what the 1.3 million additional funds that they were asking for.

Comm. LaBarre stated that the Space Plan Committee still needed to be seated.

Comm. Rabhi asked about Corp. Counsel and the addition of a Labor Relations Director position which Jones-Alther stated was approved 2 years ago.

Comm. Rabhi also asked about ARPA funding and the Racial Equity Office Position.

Comm. Rabhi asked about the OCED. Jones-Alther stated that she would look into it.

Comm. Rabhi asked about Marijuana funding and requested a resolution of how marijuana dollars were allocated regarding the racial equity office.

Comm. Rabhi emphasized the need for the Board to hire someone to manage the county ID program and a position to support the board. He also spoke about the need to generate some revenue for the county.

VI. ITEMS FOR CURRENT/FUTURE DISCUSSION

None.

VII. ADJOURN TO NEXT SESSION

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM

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

By: Ashlyn Poole, Deputy Clerk
Board Approved: October 16, 2024