JOINT FINANCE & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES
Minutes - September 8, 2025

Call to Order: Chair ~~Towns~~ Woodman called the hybrid joint Finance & Public Works Committee meeting to order at 6:00 pm in Conference Room N1/N2.

Committee Members Present: Supervisors Mawhinney, Ringhand, Wilson, Schwarz, Towns, Mawhinney, Pennycook, Sutter and Woodman

Committee Members Absent: Supervisor Homan

Staff Members Present: John Light, County Administrator; Randy Terronez, Assistant to County Administrator; Duane Jorgenson, Public Works Director; Nick Elmer, Assistant Director Public Works; Kristin Vander Kooi, Finance Director

Others Present: Supervisor Tillman, Bostwick, Whitledge, Gorman. Youth in Governance Member Max Olson. Michael Zoril, Lori Marshall

Approve Agenda: Supervisor Towns moved approval of the agenda as presented, second by Supervisor Schwarz. ADOPTED.

Citizen Participation, Communications and Announcements: Laura Jones read a submitted public comment from Mike Zoril in relation to the Highway Fund Balance.

Review, Discussion and Possible Action:

Review, discussion, and possible action regarding the Highway Fund Balance: The committee discussed the need for a comprehensive plan to address the current financial situation. Duane Jorgenson discussed the financial implications of postponing construction projects on County J and County O, highlighting that County J requires a full reconstruction and would cost around $400,000 in wages, while County O would involve a partial reconstruction with an overlay at a lower cost. He emphasized the need to ensure adequate staffing and wage coverage if County J is postponed, as well as the importance of maintaining equipment to avoid further costs. Duane also mentioned that the department could reduce equipment purchases to save money, but he expressed concern about the long-term impact of deferring major purchases.

Kristin Vander Kooi discussed the Rock Haven surplus, explaining that while it cannot be easily transferred due to its enterprise fund status and mixed funding sources, it might be usable in 2025 after further audit work. She noted that other funds are already accounted for in financial statements and are restricted, committed, or assigned based on their revenue sources. Duane Jorgenson, shared insights from a retired Jefferson County commissioner about their equipment financing approach, which involves using depreciation values and potentially pulling funds from various rates to subsidize costs, and mentioned plans to gather more information from Walworth County about their hybrid levy and sales tax funding method.

The committee further discussed the need to explore alternative options for budget adjustments beyond just cutting expenses, emphasizing the importance of finding a middle ground. They highlighted potential areas for cuts, such as the Newville Fleet Fuel Central Station and stormwater utility projects, but warned against creating problems in one area by shifting them to another. Kristin Vander Kooi also addressed the role of auditors, explaining that while Baker Tilly prepares the financial statement templates, management is responsible for ensuring accuracy, with auditors estimating they complete about 90% of governmental financial statements due to limited staff resources.

The committee emphasized the need for a long-term plan to address the county's financial situation over the next four years, rather than making impulsive budget cuts. They highlighted that the problem is not isolated to DPW but is a broader budget issue that requires considering all departments. The committee suggested exploring statutorily required activities and funding sources to address the problem. Proposed solutions were discussed, such as borrowing for road projects to alleviate the strain on sales tax, which could be used for equipment replacement and other needs, and suggested diverting a portion of sales tax to the highway fund as part of the payback plan.

The committee discussed the need for a comprehensive plan to address the current financial situation, which involves being below their approved fund balance policy. Kristin Vander Kooi, emphasized the importance of creating a 5-year plan to return to policy compliance, rather than changing the policy itself. The group discussed concerns about the county's financial statements prepared by Baker Tilley, noting that negative fund balances had been present for several years without being addressed.

The committee directed John Light and Kristin Vander Kooi to develop a 4-5 year plan to address the highway fund balance deficit.

Next meeting date and time: To be determined.

Adjournment: Supervisor Pennycook moved adjournment at 7:02 pm, second by Supervisor Sutter. ADOPTED.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Jones
Administrative Professional III

NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.