

HARTSVILLE/TROUSDALE COUNTY METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE

BUDGET HEARINGS FY2026

JUNE 3, 2025 | 6:00 PM | TC COURTHOUSE

MINUTES

Members Present: 5/7

Landon Gulley, Chair

Beverly Atwood

Will Dennis

Jerry Ford

Lesley Overman

Amy Thomas (*nvm*)

Members Absent: T Bubba Gregory, Chris Gregory

Others in attendance: Sheriff Ray Russell, Commissioner Linda Bruce

Meeting was called to order at 6pm by Commissioner Gulley.

Gulley gave an overview of the Budget process thus far. The Committee has gone through all budgets. Salary numbers are status quo with the few exceptions of adjustments and anticipated per diems for the volunteer groups. Tonight's discussion will focus on salaries.

A report of updated fund balances was given to the Committee to show where each proposed ending fund balance may be.

Gulley added that salaries have not gone beyond a 3% increase in the last 5 years, but have been able to offer CoLA increases.

Discussion turned to the volunteer groups. A resolution is in front of the Commission this month to recommend the per diem increase. Ford stated that the groups should consider tier pay where there is a different rate for a call vs training or maintenance. Gulley asked if there were different codes when a call comes across the radios. Sheriff answered that the person first on scene assess the incident and can send back to dispatch what teams are needed.

Via phone call, Beeler stated that Fire trains twice a month and has an average of 20 members show; Rescue is once a month with around 22 members. Between December 2024 and April 2025, there have been 49 calls that were not training. Number of volunteers that responded was not know at this time. Overman pointed out that it was around \$20,000 on an \$11 million budget.

Gulley brought the discussion back to employees. There are currently 151 positions with 134 filled as of this meeting. Gulley asked the Committee if there are departments that deserve a larger increase than others. There are three full time employees that are making less than \$13/hr.

Ford stated that the County has increased salaries five years in a row and gave a bonus from ARPA funds on top of a cost of living adjustment (COLA).

Gulley continued that schools were raising their certified staff to a minimum of \$50,000. This move was mandated by the state. Two cents of property taxes need to be added to Fund 141 Schools to assist in the coaches' supplements as presented at a previous budget hearing.

Motion by Atwood to move 2¢ from Fund 118 Ambulance property tax portion to Fund 141 General Purpose School; seconded by Ford

MOTION APPROVED

Ford stated that Insurances are going up each year and the Commission is giving cost of living adjustments.

The Sheriff has asked for a 10% increase for his department. Should the Commission approved this request, he will give up two patrol positions to help fund the request. Ford asked if he would come back in time to ask for those positions back. Russell said he wouldn't come back in months, but maybe in a year or two, those positions would be needed again. Gulley asked if all of the Sheriff's employees

deserved the same increase. Sheriff said that a cook/guard in the jail does just as much as a patrol officer. Guards assist in transports between hospitals and inmate care. Previously employees have received cost adjustments, but insurance premiums continue to increase above the County's increases.

Gulley restated that wage study and salary schedule was not included in the current budget. In 2019, there was a 50¢ per hour across all employees. This year, schools had to increase to meet the mandated 50,000 minimum for teachers. He asked what the will of the Committee was - \$ increase or % based?

Starting salaries have changed over the years. A \$ increase would aid the starting number and assist the lower paid employees, but a % increase would distribute funding more evenly across employees.

Comments from the members included possible \$1/hr for all, funding increases with a wheel tax, and bringing the discussion back to the sales tax increase.

The wheel tax is considered the most "fair tax" since it would affect most of the community. However, Gulley felt this would be better suited for capitol outlay; but agrees the revenue does need to be brought back.

Overman made a motion to adjourn adding that she would like the members to consider a 10¢ increase and what they would like to increase employees; second by Atwood.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm. Next meeting scheduled for June 10 at 6pm.