

March 22, 2022
Reno County Annex
Hutchinson, Kansas

The Board of Reno County Commissioners held a Joint County/City work session at 1:00 p.m. in the Annex Conference Room with Chairman Daniel Friesen, Commissioner Ron Sellers, Commissioner Ron Hirst, County Administrator Randy Partington, County Counselor Patrick Hoffman, and Minutes Clerk Cindy Martin, present. In attendance from the City of Hutchinson were Mayor Jade Piros de Carvalho, City Manager Jeff Cantrell, City Council members Sara Bagwell, Greg Fast, Steve Garza, and Jon Richardson, and Fire Chief Steven Beer.

Chairman Friesen called the meeting to order and said he appreciated how they can work together. Chief Beer spoke about almost losing two firefighters and the loss of a brush truck in the last big fire. He then gave a brief summary of the request for three new type six brush trucks for \$630,000 (\$210,000 each), new wildland personal protective gear for \$100,000, bring existing brush trucks up to current standards and to standardize the fleet for \$100,000, and replace damage loose tools, equipment, and hoses for \$50,000. He indicated the need for resources to better fight fires in Fire District #2 and the surrounding areas. The Reno County Board of Commissioners and the City of Hutchinson governing bodies discussed funding for the Fire Department/Reno County Fire District #2 Capital Request for an estimated cost of \$880,000.

After a brief explanation of the agreement between county and the city on splitting costs, they noted it is generally 79 to 21 percent. In Mr. Friesen's opinion he would start the conversation with a 50-50 split for the cost saying he thought it was in good faith from the county on this one request.

Commissioner Hirst would consider the 50-50 split but had some concerns. After doing his own research on used equipment, he thought the expense was too high and he thought as a steward of the taxpayer's money, the Board should review different options with regards to options on mitigation of fires.

Commissioner Sellers stated it was up to the city to determine how much money is spent on this project and the counties to determine how much percentage they spend on the total project. He asked if the 2023 Capital Equipment fund would be decreased if District #2's requested purchases were approved today by city/county. He said the counties normal

split was 20 to 25 percent however, in this case for mutual aid using the brush truck to fight rural fires, he would support a 50-50 split.

Mayor Jade Piros de Carvalho mentioned this was not a one-time cost but would have replacement costs in future years. Mr. Sellers stated there would be no commitment past today for any equipment.

Councilwoman Bagwell agreed with Mr. Sellers that it should be a discussion the city needed to have with the cost amount they would fund for the equipment. She heard they were discussing one brush truck for the 2023-2024 budget. Chief Beer stated they were not adding more brush trucks to the fleet. The current brush trucks were 25 years old and needing replaced along with the one truck that was damaged in the fire.

Commissioner Hirst questioned where did the \$300,000 go that was paid for the fire trucks going to the wildfires in Colorado. Chief Beer replied that after paying back all the expenses, there is \$200,000 in that account and stated that money is allocated for a type 3 chassis replacement truck. He is trying to eventually fund the wildfire fleet with wildfire funds and not funded by the taxpayers. He explained the military trucks, type 6 trucks with 400 gallons, and noted that everyone in the county runs a type 6 truck.

Commissioner Friesen asked if the county would use the ARPA funds. Mr. Partington said ARPA funds would be the easiest or CIP General fund reserve.

Commissioner Hirst was not ready to make a motion without specs.

Mr. Friesen made a motion to approve the request from Chief Beer for the 50-percent up to \$440,000 to match the city and asking the County Administrator to get back to the Commission as to where the allocated funds would come from. **Mr. Sellers seconded** with additional discussions.

Mr. Sellers felt very strongly that before he supported the approval for the allocation of funds on this purchase using ARPA funds or General CIP funds, he thought the cooperation was needed from the City of Hutchinson. He brought up the January 11th meeting of the County Commission where it was asked that the Commission Chairman, County Administrator, City of Hutchinson Mayor, and City Manager to resolve issues in a fair way for all

concerned with the city/county contracts that were left without being renegotiated or renewed. He said that meeting was held on January 14th however, the City of Hutchinson's City Manager Jeff Cantrell left the hour-long scheduled meeting early without discussing the dates as to when these contracts would be negotiated fairly between both parties. He noted we share 67 percent of the county's population, so we share the same taxpayer's dollars.

Mr. Friesen declared the motion failed after Mr. Sellers explained that in his opinion, the city was not cooperating.

Mayor Piros de Carvalho stated she was strongly committed to having a partnership with the county that was important to the community and she committed to resolve the multiple contract issues.

Councilwoman Sara Bagwell was also committed to working with the county on the contracts and our relationship with the county.

Councilman Steve Garza stated that the city would work out its issues at their meeting tonight. He said they wanted to have that good relationship with the county.

Councilman Greg Fast valued relationships in general and he gave his word they would improve in the city/county relationship.

Councilman Jon Richardson stated they wanted to work with the county even if they had respectful sticking points on contracts.

Mr. Sellers stated the City Council represented the City of Hutchinson and he represents his Commission District #1 noting that it represents over 60 of the county taxpayer funds. He stated that they are the same people, and we need to work closely together because it has not happened in the three years since he was elected to office.

Mr. Friesen explained a couple of examples of when the trust had been degraded to a level that was unacceptable between the city and county. He stated the county was looking for good faith and trust these types of issues should be handled by Administration not the Commission or City Council. There are some failures, and we need to determine where they are and address them.

City Manager Jeff Contrell addressed the Board and said the dialog was constructive, but the meeting had a lot of unknowns. He does not have the exclusive veto power outside the governing body on contracts between the city and county. He stated there were frustrating issues that went back to the gun range. The county has had a change in legal staff and the new counselor indicated the discussions should go on. He said the County Administrator did not reach out to him for contracts.

There was a large discussion on issues including the jail transport and other changes as well as the 9-1-1 dispatch issue. We need to work together and all in the room agreed.

Mr. Friesen motioned to approve Fire Chief Beer's request up to 50 percent with a maximum of \$440,000 to match the city. **Mr. Sellers seconded.** The motion was approved with a 2 to 1 vote with Mr. Hirst opposed to the high cost.

Mayor Piros de Carvelho stated more communication was needed both between the City Council and staff and between the City of Hutchinson and the County Commission.

County Administrator Randy Partington went back to the January meeting. As staff for the county, he was not sure of what the City of Hutchinson wanted on the agreements. Mr. O'Sullivan had sent to City Attorney Paul Brown minor contracts and a major issue and after the meeting Mr. Cantrell asked for per diem then he replied no per diem. City Mayor asked if Mr. Partington could outline contracts. He said one of the contract portions was the old LEC agreement and a newer part added that needed to be changed. Also on the dispatch modifications, the county pays 50 percent of cost but has less than 50 percent of the calls and IT related to Law Enforcement. Mr. Partington thought the two administrators and attorneys could handle the contracts.

Dispatch needs to be a larger discussion by both parties on how to make it equal for city and county by possibly using an outside agency.

Mayor Piros de Carvelho asked about setting a deadline for the contracts to be completed. The Board thought a three-month deadline for the completion of the contracts was a start.

Both parties agreed to meet quarterly in a joint study session with an itemized agenda.

At 2:05 p.m. the meeting recessed until 9:00 a.m. for the regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, April 12th, 2022.

Approved:

Chair, Board of Reno County Commissioners

(ATTEST)

Reno County Clerk
cm

Date