



News

Lewis County to Make \$2.5 Million in Cuts

NO LAYOFFS: Officials Look To Close Deficit With Furloughs, Cuts To Travel and Overtime

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Lewis County will avoid layoffs in tackling its \$5.8 million 2009 budget deficit, two commissioners said Monday.

The Lewis County Commission will vote on approximately \$2.5 million in budget reductions as part of an amendment Sept. 28. Commissioners Ron Averill and Lee Grose said Monday the reductions will include some furloughs, but will not include laying off county workers.

Instead, the cuts will be comprised of a combination of reductions to overtime, salaries, benefits, travel and over budgeted expenditures along with week-long leaves and the elimination of unfilled positions.

The county will also use \$3.3 million in reserves, along with the reductions, to shore up its \$5.8 million deficit, according to Fiscal/Budget Director Dawna Truman.

"We've been able to get away without significant payroll cuts," Averill said.

According to information provided by Averill, the budget amendment will include reductions to almost every department under the county's current expense fund. The Lewis County Jail will absorb \$406,000 in cuts while the Sheriff's Office plans to reduce its budget \$207,000 and the juvenile justice program shaves \$136,000. The prosecutor's office will eliminate 1.5 full-time positions that are currently vacant.

Law and Justice departments comprise about 70 percent of the total budget and thus will absorb the largest reductions, Averill said.

The county will also delay the implementation of a new financial system in order to delay the expenditure of \$803,000.

The amendment comes as the county works to create a budget for 2010. Commissioners have scheduled meetings throughout the week with directors to decide how the county will operate next year.

"There's probably going to be a lot more furloughs in order to make that budget pass," Averill said.

Initiative 1033, championed by conservative activist Tim Eyman, could also complicate matters, Averill said. The measure, which will be on the November ballot, would limit growth in state revenues deposited in funds subject to the state expenditure limit, and limit growth in county and city revenues deposited into the county and city current expense funds. The limit would be adjusted based on annual growth in inflation and population.

The initiative would hit reserve funds hard, Averill said, which would impact the county's ability to operate between two annual property tax collections.

"It makes a bad situation very, very, very worse," Averill said.

Averill said the initiative would make it difficult to use and accumulate reserve funds, and could even result in the bankruptcy of several smaller counties throughout the state.

The county began 2009 with a \$2.7 million deficit but announced projected revenue shortfalls of \$3.1 million in August that increased it to \$5.8 million.

Among the factors contributing to the deficit between revenue and expenditures is about an \$800,000 shortfall in sales tax, \$500,000 in lost interest revenue, \$700,000 in forest board yields and another \$700,000 shortfall at the Lewis County Jail, budget director Truman said in August.

The public hearing for the 2009 budget amendment is Monday, Sept. 28 during the regular 10 a.m. commissioners' meeting on the third floor of the Historic Lewis County Courthouse.

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Below are some of the cuts proposed in an amendment to the Lewis County budget for 2009 being proposed at the Lewis County Commission meeting Sept. 28, according to Commissioner Ron Averill.

Commissioners' office — \$95,000

Auditor — \$31,000

Assessor — \$81,000

Treasurer — \$29,600

Clerk — \$80,000

Superior Court — \$27,000

District Court — \$49,600

Prosecuting Attorney — 1.5 full-time positions

Risk Management — furloughs

Human Resources — \$22,900

Lewis County Jail — \$406,000

Sheriff's Office — \$207,000

Juvenile Justice — \$136,000

Weed Control — \$8,000

Coroner — \$2,900

WSU extension — \$2,300

Delay of new financial system — \$803,000

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