



# KOOTENAI COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

W. TODD TONDEE • DANIEL H. GREEN • JAI K. NELSON

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## Media Release

**Date:** August 6, 2014

**Re:** 2015 Budget Hearing

The Kootenai County Commissioners are pleased to announce the proposed 2015 budget of \$79,646,264 is complete with no tax increase planned. Of this amount, \$41,278,987 will be funded from property tax. The proposed budget is an overall increase compared to the current adopted budget of \$75,105,242.

The budget includes new construction growth revenues of \$1,039,293. In adherence with the county's Fund Balance Policy, appropriations totaling \$3,177,596 will be allocated from fund balances for capital projects, comprised of \$2,677,596 from county revenue and \$500,000 from internal service fund revenue.

### Special District Budgets

As county commissioners, the Board also serves as the Ambulance Board with oversight and services through Kootenai County Emergency Medical Services System (KCEMSS). The proposed KCEMSS budget is \$6,971,438 with no property tax increase. Ambulance services are mainly funded from user fees revenues with 32 percent stemming from property tax.

The Aquifer Protection District is another special district with a proposed budget of \$437,400. The annual fee is planned to be increased from \$6 to \$7.

### Personnel

The budget includes an additional eight positions. These include support staff for the Sheriff, Information Systems, the grant department and solid waste. Additionally, they include a Sheriff's detective position, an Adult Misdemeanor Probation officer and two District Court Clerks. Due to several positions being eliminated or inactivated the net change for positions is -0.5 for a total of 773 full time equivalent budgeted positions.

The current budget proposal includes a wage adjustment for the fourth year in a row. Last year, after a market study was conducted, wage increases were made to adjust pay grades to within 3.5 percent of market. However, this created wage compression issues. Consequently, this year, for the general pay plan, an analysis was conducted to compare employees' pay rates relative to the position's market rate of pay. The Board was presented with three options to address this adjustment and elected to increase the applicable employees' wages by an overall total of \$730,859 in a one-year timeframe.

Additionally, another 1.5 percent has been allocated for merit-based increases which include funding to address the attorney pay band, sworn officer matrix and the 9-1-1 dispatch matrix equating to a total of \$1.3 million for wage increases.

## **Benefits**

Benefits include maintaining current healthcare benefits with no proposed increase for the employee's contribution or out-of-pocket expenses.

The County's wellness program is a tremendous success with nearly 80 percent participation of all eligible employees. Wellness will be enhanced this year with a \$15,000 allocation for added programs and incentives.

## **Expenditure Highlights**

Preliminary budget highlights include eight patrol vehicles, two detective vehicles, a probation officer vehicle and the reconstruction of Airport Drive. Due to the increasing volume of involuntary holds, also referred to as police holds, this state mandated budget item was increased by over 100 percent to \$1,070,424.

The largest capital expenditures are for rural site improvements for solid waste as well as an \$800,000 tub grinder to process and recycle over 10,870 tons of wood waste annually. The current method is to contract a vendor for the processing and hauling of wood waste. By handling this in-house, the Solid Waste Department will save approximately \$250,000 each year and therefore, within 4 years will have recouped the initial investment. The Solid Waste department is funded from user fees and there has not been a residential fee increase since 2010.

Technology highlights include two items that will make interacting with county government more user-friendly. For job applicants, an online applicant tracking software will streamline the application process, create efficiencies and improve record-keeping for the Human Resources Department.

An online GIS module is proposed for building contractors and the public for locating properties, reviewing building permits, conditional use permits, zoning, and other property data.

This year, as part of the County's two-phased *Less Paper Initiative* a case management and paperless case filing system has been implemented for the Prosecutor's office and Misdemeanor Probation. The Public Defender's office will be coming on line later this year with the completion of Phase 1. The projected savings for Phase 1 is \$138,000 annually. In 2015, Phase 2 will include the juvenile justice departments. Once Phase II is implemented, annual savings and increased productivity will increase significantly.

## **Hearing Information**

The Board encourages the public to attend and provide testimony on the proposed fiscal year 2015 budget at our hearing scheduled for August 27, 2014 at 6 p.m.

The budget hearing will be held at the Kootenai County Administration Building, Room 1A/B, 451 North Government Way, Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. For additional information or questions please contact the Commissioner's office at 446-1602 or by email at [kcboce@kcgov.us](mailto:kcboce@kcgov.us).