

MINUTES OF THE ALPINE COUNTY SERVICE DISTRICT BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, May 6, 2024, 2:30 p.m.

Held via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83581948669?pwd=yz7HrFzzMQzUaut2AwbbLK5t4CuBEG.1>

Present:

- **Budget Committee Members:**
 - Commissioners: **Patrick Malone** and **Xanthippe (Xan) Augerot**
 - Citizen Members: **Frankie Gillow-Wiles**
 - **Benton County Staff:**
 - **Jenn Ambuehl**, Sr. Budget Strategist; **Gary Stockhoff**, Director of Public Works; **Marilee Hoppner**, Business and Financial Analyst; **Lindsey Goodman**, Executive Assistant
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1. Call to Order

Past Chair Frankie Gillow-Wiles (F. Gillow-Wiles) called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

2. Introductions

Group introductions of Budget Committee Members and Benton County Staff.

3. Elections of Officers

F. Gillow-Wiles opened the nominations for Alpine Budget Committee Chair.

F. Gillow-Wiles moved to nominate themselves (Frankie Gillow-Wiles) as Alpine Budget Committee Chair.

P. Malone (Commissioner Pat Malone) seconded.

F. Gillow-Wiles: All in favor?

Budget Committee Members: (unanimous) Aye

Citizen Member Frankie Gillow-Wiles has been approved to the Chair position.

Commissioner Xan Augerot (X. Augerot) nominated P. Malone as Vice Chair

F. Gillow-Wiles: Second.

F. Gillow-Wiles: All in favor?

Budget Committee Members: (unanimous) Aye

Commissioner Pat Malone has been approved to the Vice Chair position.

4. Review and Approve 2023-24 Minutes

F. Gillow-Wiles: I'll move to approve the minutes from last year's meeting as written.

P. Malone: Second.

F. Gillow-Wiles: Any opposed?

None opposed.

The 2023-24 meeting minutes were approved.

5. Presentation of the Proposed Budget FY 2024-25

F. Gillow-Wiles: Will the staff please present the proposed budget?

Marilee Hoppner (M. Hoppner) presented the budget: We are reviewing the Alpine sewer district; it serves 53 customers, at this point in time, and we are presenting a budget of \$75,950. The budget assumes no increase in rates for this upcoming year. The revenue increase that you're seeing on the budget is due to a new customer and that has built in Alpine. The sewer operations and material services budget increases slightly, with cost estimates based on financial software increases, estimated increases in utilities, and increases of insurance to the district. We are also requesting that we update the spending authority for capital outlay from \$5,000 to \$10,000 on the sewer construction account.

6. Committee Questions

F. Gillow-Wiles: What is the capital outlay funding for?

M. Hoppner: It is for any emergency repairs that need to be completed; it gives us that authority. We've had a couple of things come up at other districts where a pump has gone out, and the replacement pump has been \$9,000. Capital outlay is asking for that in-advance.

F. Gillow-Wiles: So that fund is the money in the cookie jar, so we don't have to come back together as a group to ask for more money?

M. Hoppner: Yes.

F. Gillow-Wiles: I'm looking at the contingency and expenditures, and there is a \$1,000 reduction in contingency.

M. Hoppner: The option is to increase rates to cover estimated expenses or pull from contingency. Some of the reduction is from the increase that is going up to the Capital Outlay. We are not forecasting any increase or decrease from the sewer operations.

F. Gillow-Wiles: We didn't increase rates last year; is there a projection on when we're going to have to do that?

M. Hoppner: I thought we did raise rates last year.

Gary Stockhoff (G. Stockhoff): I think you did a flat rate of \$1.50 or \$3; there was a minor increase last year.

M. Hoppner: We did do a \$5 increase last year.

F. Gillow-Wiles: Where are we on rate increases? How soon do you think we'll have to do another one?

M. Hopper: I think it's very hard to estimate. We've had some pretty big increases in cost this year. The public works facilities manager, Paul Wallsinger, had mentioned that we're expecting potentially a 12% to 25% increase in utility rates; effective January of 2025 and that could put us over if it's at the high end. We had a 75% increase in our financial software package. The cost is spread between all the districts as it's the software that we use to bill our customers; it went from \$1,600/year to \$2,800/year and we're not expecting an increase there again, but it's difficult to estimate. We had a 19% increase in insurance last year and I've accounted for another 5%, but if they come in higher than we would need to increase rates next year.

F. Gillow-Wiles: There was some conversation last year about a substantial federal grant to complete a water/sewer project; was there any movement on that?

G. Stockhoff: In the last 2-3 weeks we found out we were approved for the federal grant; I believe it's \$1.2 million. It is with the EPA and we're in the process of getting our agreement set up; once we have the agreement in place we can proceed.

X. Augerot: We have received the funds and contingent about the upon the final agreement with the EPA, they will be expended this summer.

F. Gillow-Wiles: I'm curious what these funds are earmarked for?

G. Stockhoff: To convert the chlorine gas system to a tablet system, make improvements to the lagoons, and some other infrastructure upgrades within the control room. We're planning on doing an evaluation of the lagoon this spring to see how full it is. We're hoping to have the contract for the sewer work ready next Spring depending on the EPA process.

F. Gillow-Wiles: There has been some construction just north of us, and there was an existing hook up and then they built two more houses, so now there's two more connections. Are there any other projected new service hookups or construction in our area?

G. Stockhoff: I haven't heard of any currently. I can check with our building folks to see if any permits have been applied for.

7. Public Hearing on Proposed 2024-25 Budget

F. Gillow-Wiles: There are no members of the public present. Are there any other comments? Does the committee have any additional comments?

X. Augerot: Since you've already opened and closed the public hearings, I think we can move on.

8. Committee Deliberations and Approval of Budget

F. Gillow-Wiles: I'll move to approve the budget in the amount of \$75,950.

P. Malone: Second.

F. Gillow-Wiles: All in favor?

Budget Committee Members: (unanimous) Aye

F. Gillow-Wiles: All opposed?

None opposed.

The 2024-25 proposed Budget was approved.

9. Adjournment

Chair Frankie Gillow-Wiles adjourned the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Recorder: Lindsey Goodman (concluded at 2:46 p.m.)

Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator

Jennifer Ficek, Administrative Supervisor

Frankie Gillow-Wiles, Chair of the Alpine Budget Committee