



JOSEPH K. WOOD
County Judge

280 N. College Ave, Ste 500
Fayetteville, AR 72701

WASHINGTON COUNTY, ARKANSAS County Courthouse

RE: 2021 Budget Process

Greetings Justices of the Peace-

I want to highlight a few items that I believe are critical as work begins on approving our county budget for 2021. Those items are as follows:

1. I ask we consider looking at employees on the front end of the budget process; especially given the dynamic environment COVID-19 has created for the County and her employees. County employees continue to serve in spite of the uncertainty, and have served well throughout these circumstances. I have provided a budget snap shot below that reflects the County's fiscal ability to care for her employees.
2. This pandemic has also underscored the necessity of maintaining good reserves as part of the budgeting process- in particular our Emergency Reserves. I ask that you approve an additional \$425K for the County Emergency Fund, as requested in my budget. Our County COVID -19 related expenses thus far have exceeded \$600K; which has been funded from various elected officials and their departments. These were unanticipated expenses. We are working closely with both FEMA and the elected officials to reconcile these unforeseen expenses. Increasing the Emergency Fund creates a better, simpler process for the elected and their departments to work towards reimbursing those unforeseen expenses. The same holds true when working with State and Federal entities.
3. *County Treasurer, Bobby Hill, projects \$96M to be available for the 2021 budget.*
4. *Comptroller, Shannon Worthen, indicates that proposed budgets for 2021 are only \$85M.*

Based on this nearly \$11 million in additional revenue, I think we can see a path moving forward to approve both an increase of 1-3% in pay for County employees and to also increase the County Emergency Fund. The specifics are outlined below:

\$104,237,795M	Total Revenues Projected for 2021
\$ 4,074,313M	Unappropriated Reserves
\$ 96,205,575M	Available to Budget
\$ 85,729,654M	\$74,018,049 County Proposed Budgets + \$11,000,000 for Radio System)
\$10,475,921	Revenues less Expenses

It is clear that Washington County is in great shape heading into our 2021 budgeting process, which is better than any of us could have predicted. The county-wide elected officials worked throughout the pandemic on loss revenue scenarios and responded accordingly. We reduced expenses, put off capital projects, and reorganized people and business plans to meet the likely loss of revenues. The \$11 million should comfortably address employee pay raises, increasing emergency funds, replenishing reserves, and funding the everyday business of Washington County. Additionally, the elected officials have agreed to work together and provide a 5 & 10 year human and capital funding plan in 2021.

Thank you again for your work, focus, support of the employees, and support of the elected officials as we all work together to serve the citizens of Washington County during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Washington County Leading Arkansas

Judge Wood