

## Commissioners wrap up County FY20 budget drafting process

After more than 6 months of meetings, calculations, and research, the Fiscal Year 2020 budget review process was finalized at a March 19 budget workshop with Levy Court Commissioners. In April, the proposed budget will be introduced for public hearing and hopefully adopted in late April or early May with a July 1 effective date.



Commissioners agreed to incorporate a 2 percent cost of living adjustment into the proposed budget and a 2 percent step increase for those employees with more than 9 months of service and not at the top of their pay range. Commissioners also agreed to provide a 1% COLA for County retirees from active service and no increase for pensioners (former employees who vested but did not remain employed by the County until retirement) and beneficiaries receiving a County pension.

On health insurance, the County will begin the second year of a two-year commitment to self-insured municipal cooperative Delaware Valley Health Trust (Aetna) on July 1 and base premiums will increase by 7%. The DVHT program and its comprehensive wellness benefits have won high praise from employees and eligible retirees. Levy Court considered a number of cost share alternatives, but ultimately decided to maintain the current 7% employee and 20% dependent cost share arrangement. The Commissioners also agreed to add an infertility rider which complies with a new State law requiring most fully insured health plans (but not self-insured plans) to provide coverage for infertility treatments. The final cost share rates will be presented to Levy Court for approval in April in advance of open enrollment held in May.

On Proposed Personnel Actions, Levy Court authorized Finance staff to incorporate costs into the budget associated with adding a new full-time custodian and a new full-time maintenance worker to the Facilities Management staff in anticipation of the new paramedic sub-station to be located west of Dover on Route 8 and growing maintenance responsibilities. Commissioners also approved funding to increase Register of Wills office staff from 35 hours to 40 hours per week as well as for the Utility Locator position in the Public Works Department, and establishing on-call pay for code enforcement. Contractual funds were approved for a Naturalist in the Parks & Recreation Division and a Grass ordinance enforcement position in the Inspections & Enforcement office. Cost neutral reclassifications were also approved for 1 position each in the Planning Services and Finance Departments.

Finally, the budget workshop discussion focused on potential future cost saving measures for pension and retiree benefits expenditures – the annual pension contribution is up nearly \$400,000 to \$3,418,100 with a projected increase of \$865,000 in FY2021 and the retiree benefits (OPEB) contribution is up nearly \$800,000 to \$2,154,500. Levy Court agreed to proceed with actuarial modeling for various benefit alternatives to consider before the new fiscal year begins.

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