

FACERS Nov 2010 meeting

Questions to be addressed:

1. How much (%) has your department's budget (2011) declined since 2008?

Operating budget has remained approximately the same. Funding is from gas taxes and a stormwater assessment.

2. How many employees have you lost since 2008? What % decrease? How many were filled positions that resulted in layoffs?

Approximately 35 (about 15%). Most positions were eliminated two years ago as vacant positions. Last year, about 10 people were laid off.

This year we are expecting further reductions mid- year. Although the budget was approved without any layoffs, the Board instructed the Administrator to develop a plan for spending \$6 million less than budgeted. This is likely to have a 10% impact on each department – mostly personnel reductions. The Board is expecting to review this plan in January.

3. Will employees be receiving less or paying more in the future for insurance, etc.?

Minor reductions in benefits, some increases in costs passed on to employees.

4. Do you have a hiring freeze in place? Will it continue?

Freeze is in place, but positions may be filled with Administrator approval. It will continue at least until the budget reduction plan is addressed in January.

5. Do you have furlough days? If so, how many? How did you deal with union employees?

No

6. Have you gone to 4-day work weeks? If so, pros and cons. If not, did your commission discuss them?

No

7. What was your 2008 capital budget? 2011?

See item 8.

8. What does your Road Program look like compared to previous years and what is your projection for your future programs – fewer large projects, smaller projects, or more less costly smaller projects?

Capital budget for the last two years has actually grown, temporarily. Impact fees were suspended, but the Board enacted the 5cent local option gas tax and used it to support a bond issue. In addition, federal aid stimulus dollars (approximately \$15 million) have kept the capital program active, but the program will fall off drastically in the next couple of years. I expect future projects to concentrate more on preservation with little investment in capacity unless impact fees again become a viable fund source.

9. Did your commission increase the millage rate for 2011? If so, what % increase over 2010?

No

10. Did you suspend Impact Fees? Consensus or split Commission?

Yes - Consensus

11. What did you spend on road preservation/maintenance in 2008? 2011? Did your commission discuss the cut – or was it offered by administration and accepted without discussion?

Road maintenance programs are funded at about \$9Million. This level has been maintained for the last 3 years, but some level of service reductions have been required to deal with general cost increases. When we began to reduce programs, we prepared a program by program review of the maintenance plan and discussed with the Board the impact they could expect on the levels of service. This program by program analysis was discussed again with the Board last year as part of a comprehensive review of business plans of all departments. To a large extent we have been able to maintain adequate levels of service for critical functions, and have not seen much controversy over these issues.

12. Do you continue to install street lights? Has there been any discussion about turning some off?

Marion County does not install or maintain any street lights.

13. What was your mowing frequency in 2008? Now? Any discussion by your commission?

Mowing frequency on rural roads has been maintained at 4 times per growing season; for roads with sidewalks and/or curbs, 6 times. We have had limited

public discussion with the Board, but based on citizens' complaints, we are planning to increase frequency of mowing in residential areas.

14. Any new energy saving programs/initiatives being implemented in your department? Your county?

Completing conversion to LED signals.

15. Any shift from mast arms to span wire for new signals in an effort to save money?

No policy shift. Most of our signals have been and continue to be span wire. Mast arms are addressed on a case by case basis.

16. Have you reduced your sidewalk maintenance? If so, what pros and cons did you encounter?

Actually increasing sidewalk maintenance. Previously we had no comprehensive sidewalk maintenance program, but the ADA requirements associated with the federal aid stimulus projects have forced us to inventory the sidewalks and their condition. We have not yet determined the level to which this will be funded, but have identified a number of locations where sidewalk repairs are a priority.

17. What other changes have been made that has affected your regular maintenance efforts?

The most significant issues for us during the past year has been the freeze in January 2010. This required us to shift all available personnel and equipment from planned work to pothole patching and our crew that usually works on pavement edge drop-offs was reassigned to chip seal damaged pavements for six months. Our shoulder maintenance, tree trimming, and mowing programs all fell behind plan as a result of this shift.

18. Are you seeing an increase in land development activity (permits, site plans, etc.) that would indicate we are moving out of the recession?

No significant change here yet.

19. How does the 2012 budget look? More reductions coming? What issues will you be addressing?

The Department's budget has been balanced to revenues every year, and we see only modest adjustments needed to maintain this balance. Countywide, however, the reduction in ad valorem revenues has caused more severe problems with other programs and departments. The direction the Board has given is to apply the same level of reductions to all departments.

It now appears that we will see further reductions to the operating budget of this department, even though we operate with a dedicated fund source. It is unclear at this point whether any savings in the operating budget would be redirected to programs such as capital projects and pavement preservation, or returned in some form to the road maintenance programs.