

Christian County Commission

Notice is hereby given that the Christian County Commission met for a Work Session at:
The Historic Christian County Courthouse | 100 W. Church Street Room 100 | Ozark, Missouri, 65721
On the 12th day of January 2023, at 9:00 a.m.
Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Presiding Commissioner, Lynn Morris	County Auditor, Amy Dent
Eastern Commissioner, Bradley Jackson	Highway Administrator, Miranda Beadles
Western Commissioner, Hosea Bilyeu - Phone	Clerk, Paula Brumfield
Commission Executive Assistant Tammy Nuckolls	Clerk Admin, Eryn Burton
Maintenance Supervisor, Richard Teague	Road Superintendent, Brent Young
Captain, Rocky Seiner	Human Resources Director, Amber Bryant
Sheriff, Brad Cole	Captain, Mark LaRose
CC PA, Kristen Tuohy	Circuit Clerk, Barb Stillings
Real Estate Assistant, Sandy Liles	Commercial Appraiser, Jeremy Burns

A quorum was established at 9:00 am.

The Commissioners met to discuss the County's 3% Sales Tax on Recreational Marijuana.

Sheriff

This will be an impact on the sheriff's office with recreational marijuana. With the passage of Amendment 3, it's a pretty broad stroke from one end to the other, affecting the patrol division, investigations to the jail, and anything in between. The marijuana arrests that we see will greatly decrease. The change in the type of crime will impact us the most. They see a lot of burglaries, petty theft, and different types of crimes that require a lot more investigation than the marijuana arrest. The difference is that the number of crimes they work is not a huge difference from what they had before the passage of marijuana. It's just different types of investigations and crimes. The type of investigation and crimes they are investigating now take more manpower and hours to investigate. There will be a huge difference in the amount of time we spend on certain investigations. This will be one of our bigger issues; we will need more people. Also, there are major deficiencies in the jail, and we recommend that the jail be replaced. When it rains, it floods cells; we have to clear them out. We have heating and Air conditioning issues in the jail. The jail is 21 years old, and the life cycle of the jail, on average, is 25 years. Traffic safety is going to be an issue. You will see an increase in fatalities and crashes on the roadways. We don't know if we will have to regulate dispensaries. We could possibly put more school resource deputies in the schools to educate these individuals on marijuana, so we can be an influence in their life early. The number of calls we will probably answer related to children's investigations will also increase. The most significant impact will be on the Sheriff's office and our overall operations.

Amber

I 100% believe most of our costs and issues will be to law enforcement. Colorado saw a 700.00 cost increase in workers comp claims when they went recreational. The cost of our premiums for workman's comp may go up.

Amy Dent

It's maybe a warning about restricting funds right off the bat because if this passes and there are no restrictions, you can use it wherever you need it. But just looking at the restricted funds we currently have, we have 31 separate funds in the county that are budgeted. The total fund balance on the last day of the year, close of business, was slightly over forty-three million dollars. The availability for general operations was 6.7 million. In contrast, the fund balance available exclusively to the Sheriff's office is 6.4 million. This is a heads-up. We can't access those funds if there is an emergency or a widespread issue.

Hosea

It is extremely difficult for us to make good decisions on this because of the unknowns that Mr. Morris and others have mentioned. To try to make a decision that then locks us in utilizing the 3% that comes from the sale of marijuana for an indefinite period of time without having any specific information other than what we hear from other states. It's going to be very difficult. Would it be possible to escrow the funds from the sales tax for the first year or two and then determine how those funds would be utilized? Lynn will run Hosea's idea by attorney Austin Fax.

Rocky

I am speaking about the amendment. There is going to be an influx of traffic issues. It will not be just a problem for the visitor going to Branson but for everyone's family. The Sheriffs are the ones that are going to be there to answer that call for service. The written amendment specifically says the passage of this amendment would assist and fund law enforcement. It did not say anything about funding the general revenue source or a particular office; it specifically said law enforcement. Whatever the normal sales tax portion of the county is, it will be affected immediately. You're going to collect that anyway. The county general revenue source will already get that almost 2%. I believe it will be difficult if you put it forth to the citizens, and if you have any language in the ballot that says general revenue, you will have a hard time getting it passed.

Kristen Tuohy

This is going to impact law enforcement directly. We don't know how it will impact the Prosecuting Attorney's office, but I can confidently say that Law enforcement doesn't have the support regarding the resources to fund the additional positions. The prosecuting office will see no impact. We know there will be an increase in traffic safety issues. Amendment 3 specifically placed language in there with regard to blood results and DWI investigations. What I anticipate the prosecutor's office will need in order to prosecute impaired drivers that are impaired by marijuana on our roadways will be trained officers, such as drug recognition experts, that can come into court and testify about the test they performed to identify those impaired drivers. This will require hiring folks who want to undergo that extensive training. You will need more than one deputy and officer devoted to that because those folks are called out in the middle of the night, or if you are fortunate enough to have your officer roadside trained, they can perform that evaluation. We also don't know if Christian County will see an increase in the homeless population; if this happens, we may see an increase in crime. Law enforcement is going to be who is going to be responsible for enforcing compliance with Amendment 3 and the enforcement of those civil penalties. At this point, I don't know if the prosecuting office will be responsible for prosecuting civil penalties. Law enforcement needs to have the resources to investigate so that I can prosecute those selling marijuana outside of the approved dispensaries.

Barb Stillings

I wanted to reconfirm that putting it in the general revenue would be better for the county. I think general revenue would be easier because then Amy could put it in different places where the Commission decides where certain things need to happen.

Miranda

I'm not here for the road department. We will have unknown impacts and revenue, which will impact unknown departments and people. Is there a way to create the ballot language so that it says clearly and truthfully that this revenue will go toward (the folks that it will impact) and then say that if there is a surplus of funds, then it will go to what the Auditor would like for it to go to, like a fund balance, emergency reserves or whatever she chooses it to go to.

Sheriff

One final thought. Commissioner Morris has said multiple times that this needs to have language that specifically states what the money will be spent for. Over the last month of being out in public, talking to people about this issue, and speaking from my experience of talking with these people. I believe that if you put any of the language of this money going to the general revenue, you're putting something on the ballot that will be defeated by the people.

Lynn

We have to decide next Tuesday; we have two votes. We have got to vote on whether we will do it, we have had a discussion, but we have not voted as a Commission to put the 3% on the ballot. The second thing we have to decide has to be voted on next Tuesday, is where the money will be. We don't have to have the ballot language perfect; we have until the 24th.

Bradley

I don't want the City of Ozark's ballot measure to fail. I want to be able to address the needs that we know were going to have in this community. So I think It would behoove us to be consistent in our language and mission. We know that we will have new revenue from this that goes to 1.75, so additional revenues are coming into the county in addition to 3%. This jail over here is a money pit. It needs to be addressed quickly. We need to be funding the jail.

Hosea

Amy Dent, How much general funds go to help work for security people? Approximately a million dollars in the past. Language could be written that would indeed give the people of Christian county sufficient information, not in any way hiding anything, but indicating our intention that the 3% tax be used for the cost associated with the use and abuse of marijuana and that the determination of the specific uses be determined as our department submits requests for those funds. I would love to see it after a year of the revenue; we get an idea of how much is coming in and going out then we can give a certain percentage to specific departments.

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 am.


Western Commissioner
Hosea Bilyeu

5/30/2023


Presiding Commissioner
Lynn Morris


Eastern Commissioner
Bradley A. Jackson