**Minutes of August 19, 2024, Budget Committee Meeting**

**Approved by the Budget Committee at the meeting held on November 6, 2024.**

The Budget Committee of the Clerks of Court Operations Corporation (CCOC) held a meeting on August 19, 2024. An agenda and materials were distributed in advance of the meeting and posted on the CCOC website. Provided below is a summary of staff notes from the meeting. These staff notes are designed to document committee action, not to be a full record of committee discussions. All motions adopted by the committee are in **bold** text.

**Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order and Introduction**

Clerk Tiffany Moore Russell, Chair of the Budget Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. The meeting was turned over to Griffin Kolchakian, CCOC Budget and Communications Director, to conduct roll call. Mr. Kolchakian called the roll.

Present in-person: Chair Tiffany Moore Russell, Vice-Chair Greg Godwin, Clerk Nikki Alvarez-Sowles, Clerk Tom Bexley, Clerk Ken Burke, Clerk Stacy Butterfield, Clerk Nadia K. Daughtrey, Clerk Tara S. Green, Clerk Crystal Kinzel, Clerk Grant Maloy, Clerk Angela Vick.

Present via Webex: Clerk Pam Childers, Clerk Gary Cooney, Clerk Clayton Rooks, Clerk Rachel Sadoff, Clerk Cindy Stuart.

Absent from meeting: Clerk John Crawford, Clerk Brandon Patty (military deployment), Clerk Carolyn Timmann.

**Agenda Item 2 – Approve Agenda**

Clerk Alvarez-Sowles asked if we would discuss establishing a Needs-Based Budget since it was not on the agenda. Chair Russell stated that it would potentially be addressed at a future meeting.

Clerk Burke asked if the budget deliberations agenda item could be moved up to right after the approval of the minutes. Chair Russell recommended moving this to after the revenue and expenditures update.

**A motion was made to move the budget deliberations to after agenda item #5 by Clerk Burke and seconded by Clerk Kinzel; the motion was adopted without objection.**

**A motion was made to approve the agenda with the noted change by Clerk Alvarez-Sowles and seconded by Clerk Maloy; the motion was adopted without objection.**

**Agenda Item 3 – Approve Minutes from 6/12/24 Meeting**

Chair Russell presented the minutes of the June 12, 2024, meeting to the committee.

**A motion was made to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2024, meeting by Clerk Godwin and seconded by Clerk Alvarez-Sowles; the motion was adopted without objection.**

**Agenda Item 4 – Revenue and Expenditures Update**

Chair Russell called on Mr. Kolchakian to provide the revenue and expenditures update. Mr. Kolchakian provided the update through the month of June. He stated that, during the first 10 months of the fiscal year, the clerks collected over $392 million, which was 3.1% above the REC’s estimate year-to-date. We are currently on pace to exceed the annual projected amount of $458.5 million. For the expenditures update, clerks had nine months of expenditures data totaling $333 million, which was 6.4% below the year-to-date straight-line projection.

Clerk Burke wanted to clarify that, if the REC was 100% accurate in their projection, clerks would have had $11.6 million more to spend in their budget this year. Mr. Kolchakian confirmed that we are currently on pace for that. Clerk Burke asked if this becomes reality, would the clerks lose almost $6 million in revenue that would be required to go to State GR. Mr. Kolchakian confirmed that 50% of the excess would go to GR; however, part of this increase is likely due to the redirects the clerks received mid-year via HB 1077 which increased revenues slightly over the original projection.

**Agenda Item 5 – Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) Meeting Update**

Chair Russell called on Mr. Kolchakian to give the REC update. Mr. Kolchakian provided an update from the July REC meeting. The REC set the revenue for 2024-25 as well as for the out years. For CFY 2024-25, the REC estimated the clerk’s revenue to be $494.1 million, which was a $35.6 million year-over-year increase as well as $26.3 million higher than the December estimate. He also mentioned that the redirects to the Public Records Modernization Trust Fund are not included in these amounts.

Chair Russell recognized Clerk Burke to address the issue he raised that revised the agenda order. Clerk Burke stated that, before the budget presentations began, he believed the motion to allocate funding that was passed at the last meeting was improper, so the committee should revisit whether the motion that was passed was something they wanted to go with, or not. He wanted to discuss additional allocation options that were potentially available for committee consideration.

Clerk Bexley asked for a reminder on how the initial amount was distributed. Chair Russell responded that the original motion stated that 50% would be distributed based on weighted cases, 25% based on a living wage distribution (as presented by Clerk Alvarez-Sowles), and the remaining 25% was left for the committee to address today.

Committee discussion ensued on the original motion and the living wage allocation calculation. There was discussion on whether the living wage calculation captured all of the necessary factors that the committee wanted to consider, including compression and vacancies. There was concern that the living wage allocation did not allocate funds to all 67 clerks.

Clerk Alvarez-Sowles responded to the comments about the living wage distribution and reviewed the workgroup’s scope of work and the allocation proposal. Clerk Alvarez-Sowles stated that there seemed to be some misunderstandings about the MIT living wage and thought it would be beneficial to schedule a virtual workshop to walk through it.

Clerk Butterfield stated that the case weights needed to be reviewed as well as a few significant budget components that are not included in the weighted workload measure, including cost-of-living, multiple courthouses, AOs, and senior judges.

A 3% salary increase to match what the state provided was then discussed and considered.

**A motion was made to remove the current 25% MIT living wage allocation and add it to the unallocated remaining balance to be disbursed by the committee today by Clerk Burke and seconded by Clerk Bexley. The motion was adopted with Clerk Alvarez-Sowles voting nay.**

Clerk Alvarez-Sowles opposed the motion because there was a lot of work put into the calculation by the workgroup and believes it should not be completely discarded.

Chair Russell stated the committee will now return to the original agenda.

Mr. Kolchakian briefly summarized the potential salary options for the 3% increase, including a $9.4 million option for just a salary increase (without benefits), a $14.3 million option for a salary and benefits increase, and a $13.6 million option for a salary and benefits increase excluding vacancies. These calculations use CFY 2023-24 Operational Budget data submitted by clerks in February. In all three calculations, the elected clerk’s salary is excluded as well as separation payouts. There was discussion on whether benefits and vacancies should be included in the increase.

**A motion was made to add a 3% COLA with benefits and no vacancies to the budget allocation to all clerks by Clerk Green and seconded by Clerk Godwin. The motion was adopted with Chair Russell voting nay.**

Chair Russell voiced her disappointment that the motion adopted by the committee at the June meeting was overturned at today’s meeting. Since that motion allocated 50% of available funds to all 67 clerks, she believed it was inaccurate to state that some clerks would be “losing” with the living wage allocation. Prior to the meeting, the expectations for today’s meeting were communicated to all clerks. Presentations were prepared based on the approved motion from the last meeting; changing this alters expectations.

Mr. Kolchakian stated that, due to the established budget cap, there were now three clerks who had hit the cap. That funding would need to be added back into the unallocated pot, bringing this amount to just under $5.1 million.

Budget discussions were postponed until after the budget presentations.

**Agenda Item 6 –** **Budget Presentations**

Chair Russell recognized Mr. Kolchakian to provide a brief overview of the clerks’ budget requests statewide.

Budget Presentations included:

* Citrus County – Clerk-elect Tracy Perry presented
* Collier County – Clerk Kinzel presented
* Highlands County – Clerk Jerome Kaszubowski presented
* Hillsborough County – Rick Costolo presented
* Leon County – Kenneth Ken presented
* Martin County – Jamie Roberson presented
* Orange County – Chuck Crigler presented
* Palm Beach County – Shannon Ramsey-Chessman presented
* Pinellas County – Clerk Burke presented
* Polk County – Clerk Butterfield presented
* Baker County – Clerk Stacie Harvey presented
* Manatee County – Clerk Angel M. Colonneso presented
* St. Johns County – Dwala Anderson presented

Based on the updated calculation, Mr. Kolchakian stated that the total funds available to allocate is now $4.2 million.

**Agenda Item 7 – Hope Cards Allocation**

Mr. Kolchakian stated that, during legislative session, SB 86 was signed into law which required the clerks to develop the Hope Cards Program. The FCCC initiated the Hope Cards Workgroup to design and implement these cards. SB 86 provided the clerks with $176,000 of non-recurring GR for SFY 2024-25 to be used for the remaining three quarters of the State Fiscal Year. Mr. Kolchakian presented two proposed options to allocate the $176,000; the first option uses CFY 2021-22 injunctions for protection data and proportionally distributes the funds based on that, and the second option uses CFY 2022-23 injunctions for protection data and proportionally distributes the funds based on that (the most recent finalized data).

**A motion was made to adopt option #2 (using CFY 2022-23 data) to allocate the Hope Cards funding by Clerk Daughtrey and seconded by Clerk Burke; the motion was adopted without objection.**

**Agenda Item 8 – Budget Deliberations / Approve Revenue-Limited Budget**

Chair Russell reminded the committee that the amount remaining for allocation was $4.2 million. There was committee discussion on weighted cases, individual budget issue requests by category, compliance efforts, and incorporating the impact of cost of living.

Chair Russell stated that, in the past, the committee has funded FTE for new judges. Mr. Kolchakian stated that one FTE per new judge would total $658,000.

**A motion was made to allocate $658,000 total for one FTE per new judge by Clerk Burke and seconded by Clerk Butterfield. The motion was adopted with Clerk Kinzel voting nay.**

Clerk Daughtrey brought up the jury shortfall issue that each clerk will face. Clerk Vick wanted the jury funding considered because the clerks would not be able to make up the statewide deficit. She proposed setting aside funds for clerks that experienced an extraordinary event during the year. It was determined that the projected jury funding shortfall would be $4.7 million. Clerk Vick recommended allocating the remaining $4.2 million to help fund the projected jury deficit.

Clerk Cooney wanted clarification since Clerk Vick stated it would be a jury reimbursement, so he wondered if it would not be an allocation. Clerk Vick corrected herself and said she meant to say jury allocation as a method. Clerk Maloy raised concerns about this one-time jury funding getting included into the recurring Base
Budgets moving forward. He also stated that this proposed jury allocation would penalize those offices that made proactive efforts to reduce jury expenses. =

Clerk Cooney proposed that each clerk be guaranteed to receive at least a 6% year-over-year increase. The budget cap previously adopted was referenced which caps each clerk’s budget at the amount requested via the budget issue requests submitted in June.

**A motion was made to provide Union and Lafayette at least a 6% year-over-year increase and the remaining balance to be distributed via a jury allocation was made by Clerk Daughtrey and seconded by Clerk Bexley. The motion was adopted with Clerks Kinzel, Maloy, and Cooney voting nay.**

**Agenda Item 9 – Other Business**

Chair Russell stated the CCOC Executive Council would be meeting on September 10, 2024. She stated that the Operational Budget Workgroup had been established and would soon begin its work.

Clerk Kinzel asked what the process was to get something on the agenda as a committee member; she requested to do so prior to this meeting. Chair Russell stated that the request for the current meeting was declined because it was not relevant or productive to the discussion. Clerk Kinzel stated that she wanted to propose a budget methodology. Chair Russell stated that methodologies were discussed at the June meeting and were not relevant to the topic of this meeting.

There was discussion on the need for State funding when new judges are added to address the clerk staff needed to support these judges. Clerk Green recommended that Chair Russell send a memo to the TCBC chair on the fiscal impact of new judgeships to the clerks to facilitate collaboration. Clerk Burke agreed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:39 PM.