STATE APPEAL BOARD

In Re:	Washington County) Order
	Budget Appeal)
)
	FY 2000-2001	June 5, 2000

BEFORE THE DIRECTOR OF THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT, CYNTHIA P. EISENHAUER; STATE TREASURER, MICHAEL L. FITZGERALD; AND STATE AUDITOR, RICHARD D. JOHNSON

The above captioned matter was heard on May 10, 2000, before a panel consisting of Ronald J. Amosson, Executive Secretary to the State Appeal Board and presiding officer; Stephen E. Larson, Executive Officer III, Office of the State Treasurer; and Chad Olsen, Legislative Liaison, Office of the State Auditor.

The hearing was held pursuant to the provisions of Section 331.436 and Chapter 24 of the <u>Code of Iowa</u>. The spokesperson for the petitioners was Layne Twinam, Washington County Farm Bureau President. Virginia Bordwell, Chairperson of the Washington County Board of Supervisors, represented the county.

Upon consideration of the comments made at the public hearing which indicated the petitioners and the county had reached an agreement concerning the issues of the budget appeal, the FY2001 revised Washington County budget is sustained.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The FY2001 Washington County proposed budget summary was published on February 24, 2000 in the Washington Evening Journal, the Kalona News, and the Wellman Advance. A public hearing on the proposed budget was held on March 7, 2000, and the budget was adopted on the same day. The Department of Management received the budget on March 17, 2000.

A petition, initiated by the Washington County Farm Bureau and signed by members and non-members, protesting the certified FY2001 Washington County budget was filed with the Washington County Auditor on March 23, 2000, and was received by the State Appeal Board on March 24, 2000. The petition stated the petitioners objected to the budget because of the proposed 23% increase in the countywide tax rate (37% increase in the levy). The reasons given were the public safety budget (service area 1) is growing at an unacceptable rate (18%) and the increase in the countywide levy is being used largely to increase cash reserves. In addition, the petition stated that the petitioners objected to large

increases in spending in the following additional service areas: Service Area 3, Physical Health and Education (23%); Service Area 5, Social Services (10%); Service Area 8, State and Local Government Services (16%); and Service Area 9, Interprogram Services (4%). However, Farm Bureau agreed to negotiate the budget with the County in the hopes of reaching a budget compromise.

In a letter dated March 21, 2000 the County Auditor asked the Director of the Department of Management for an extension of time until April 5, 2000 to certify the County's budget. The letter said that the Board of Supervisors would like more time to review the budget in response to the concerns expressed by the Farm bureau and other taxpayers. The Director granted this request in a letter to the County Auditor dated March 24, 2000.

DISCUSSION

At the public budget appeal hearing, petitioner Layne Twinam said that on behalf of the Washington County Farm Bureau he appreciated the opportunity to address the State Appeal Board. This opportunity enabled the parties to continue with open lines of communication giving the Washington County Farm Bureau and the County time to come to an agreement regarding the budget appeal. He was thankful the differences were resolved locally. He said the resolved differences were evidenced by the revised certified budget. Mr. Twinam said that the Washington County Farm Bureau no longer had objections to the FY2001 County budget as revised and did not want to pursue the appeal any further.

Virginia Bordwell, speaking on behalf of the County, acknowledged the working relationship the County had with the Farm Bureau. She said several meetings were held and, as a result of those efforts, a compromised budget was reached on April 4, 2000. The revised budget was certified on that same date.

The hearing officer asked if any members of the audience attending the budget appeal hearing would like to address the State Appeal Board. Barbara Edmondson, County Attorney, said she appreciated the opportunity to work on a budget compromise and hopes that there will be continued open lines of communication in the future. She said that during the process of preparing for the appeal, the County was able to identify why it appears the County has such large fund balances over the last few years.

Virginia Bordwell, now speaking as a private citizen, said that this is the last year she will be on the Board of Supervisors. She expressed concern about future increased jail costs because the jail was ordered closed effective June 30, 2000. Ms. Bordwell also expressed concerns about the County's ability to respond to emergencies if the fund balances go too low.

FINDINGS OF FACT

There are no outstanding disagreements between Washington County and the petitioners regarding the Fiscal Year 2001 budget.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The State Appeal Board has jurisdiction over the parties and the subject matter of this appeal, pursuant to lowa Code sections 24.28 and 331.436.

ORDER

The Fiscal Year 2001 budget for Washington County is sustained.

STATE APPEAL BOARD

Cynthia P. Eisenhauer

Chairperson

Richard D. Johnson

Member

N.

Michael L. Fitzgerald

Vice Chairperson