

FINANCE & RULES COMMITTEE
November 18, 2025

Present: Tom Osborne, Chair; Jeff Nellenback, Vice-Chair; Herb Frost; Vincent Nortz and Barry Lyndaker. Herb Frost was excused.

Legislator Osborne called the meeting to order at 3:22 p.m.

Legislator Osborne moved to approve the October 21st committee meeting minutes as submitted, seconded by Legislator Nellenback, and carried.

Housing Survey Results – Joel LaLone, Director of the JCC Center for Community Studies

Joel LaLone presented an overview of the Center for Community Studies, detailing its establishment in 1999 and its focus on community-based research. He stressed the significance of gathering public input for housing needs assessments, which had not been previously accomplished in the county. Joel also acknowledged the leadership in Lewis County and encouraged ongoing collaboration for future research initiatives.

The presentation on community-based research initiatives emphasized the successful survey participation from residents on Bostwick Street before the Lewis County Fair parade. The Community Housing Needs Assessment Study seeks to analyze data on housing attitudes and preferences, utilizing intercept sampling and email outreach to gather responses. It was confirmed by a conference room participant that adherence to human subjects rights laws was maintained in the research process.

The survey's methodology was highlighted, noting that it aimed for a diverse demographic representation among its 729 participants. The team avoided asking respondents about their districts due to inaccuracies in self-reporting, instead collecting data on their towns for better district estimation. It was added that the survey allowed for comparisons across different demographics, such as gender and socioeconomic status.

The survey findings were discussed, showing that 86% of participants live in single-family homes, with a notable preference for rural living, as three out of four respondents indicated a desire to live outside a village. The survey also revealed that 75% of respondents considered internet access very important, while access to public transportation was less prioritized. Additionally, interest in accessory dwelling units (ADUs) was noted, with around 30% of respondents expressing interest in living in or creating one.

The distribution of housing costs among renters and homeowners was discussed, noting that 43% of homeowners have a mortgage while others have paid it off. The

average monthly cost for renters is around \$900, while homeowners with a mortgage incur costs of about \$2,100 monthly, factoring in property taxes and maintenance.

The difficulties in collecting clean data from humans were emphasized, using the example of health insurance knowledge to illustrate the point. It was noted that many respondents struggle to accurately describe their housing affordability situation, with a significant portion indicating they need more information before making decisions. Additionally, it was added that similar challenges exist in understanding housing costs.

The discussion revealed that 40% of respondents were concerned about homelessness, with 14% being very concerned. The importance of affordable housing was emphasized, with 61% of participants indicating it is very important for community well-being. The need for supportive housing was also highlighted, with a strong majority supporting the efforts of human services agencies in Lewis County.

Constable Bill discussed the analysis of survey data regarding community demographics, including poverty levels and household sizes. He pointed out that the responses regarding the importance of affordable housing were largely uniform across different demographic groups. Bill encouraged attendees to consider how their decisions reflect the community's majority views.

2026 Budget Analytics – Timothy Hunt, County Manager

The discussion centered on the new features of the Lewis County website, particularly regarding public access to financial information. The tentative budget book and the 2026 capital budget plan were presented, confirming that there have been no updates since the previous presentation. A live data analytics page was introduced, enabling users to explore detailed budget and payroll data, including departmental spending and local tax contributions.

Insights into the compensation breakdown by department were provided, highlighting that the Sheriff's Department has the largest payroll. Participants urged users to engage with the data and to submit questions or feedback via the website.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Adopting the 2025 Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, prepared by the Planning & Community Development Department and the Lewis County Transportation Task Force, as its updated Plan to improve community mobility and quality of life for the residents of Lewis County.

AYE 4 NAY 0

2. Setting a public hearing for December 18, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. to solicit the views of Lewis County citizens regarding CDBG funding for community development,

planning, public facilities, small business, and economic development needs under program year 2025 NYS CDBG funding applications, in amounts not to exceed \$1,000,000.

AYE 4 NAY 0

3. Authorizing a renewal agreement from December 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026 with Swiftly, Inc. at a cost not to exceed \$21,763.80 to provide the software services necessary for Lewis County Public Transportation presence on the Transit App.

AYE 4 NAY 0

4. Reappointing Lehman as a member of the Lewis County Planning Board to serve a three-year term effective January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028.

AYE 4 NAY 0

5. Authorizing the appropriation of \$28,905.00 representing the proceeds received from the online auction sale of miscellaneous County equipment and property to the Capital Equipment Reserve Account.

AYE 4 NAY 0

6. Designating the banks, banking associations, and trust companies as official depositories for Lewis County funds, with maximum authorized deposit limits.

AYE 4 NAY 0

7. Authorizing the Treasurer to make all necessary interfund and departmental budget transfers required to properly close the financial records for the 2025 fiscal year.

AYE 4 NAY 0

There being no other business to come before the committee Legislator Osborne moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 p.m., seconded by Legislator Nellenback, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board