

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioner's Office with the following present via GoToMeeting: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Peter McManamon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Probation Director, Len Hahn; Treasurer, Susan Harry and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Heather Fellman conducted roll call of all call-in participants and discussed policies and procedures for public comment during the meeting. All participants will be muted for the duration of the meeting except during public comment periods. During public comment periods, participants will be unmuted individually to ensure that everyone is heard. Prayer was led by Commissioner Sather and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Walls.

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the January 26<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes) to approve the payment of bills.

There were no additions to the agenda.

There were no announcements.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Len Hahn, Probation Director, requested consideration of approval to hire an adult probation officer. The candidate for the position, Tyson Daniels, has passed his pre-employment screenings. This hire would fill an existing vacant position effective February 8<sup>th</sup> with the starting salary as agreed upon in the union contract. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented the weekly COVID-19 Update for Huntingdon County. We are now approaching one year of COVID, something that nobody could have foreseen at the beginning of this. At this point, it would be safe to assume that everybody knows somebody who has been affected by COVID-19. We remain in the substantial level of community transmission. The best thing we can do is to continue to follow CDC guidelines. Wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, avoid large gatherings, and continue physical distancing. Human and social service agencies are continuing to do the best that they can. They are challenged but they are doing everything they can to continue to provide services to everyone. I would like to highlight our fire companies in particular this week. Those individuals are volunteers in our community. They are the first ones we see often when we have emergencies. They are also facing challenges. We keep in touch with long-term care facilities, hospitals, schools, ambulances, business groups, and the prisons. The Huntingdon County case count total to date is 3,873. There have been about 12,000 negative tests administered. There have unfortunately been 115 COVID-related deaths. We are seeing a continuing trend of deaths from COVID. The average number of cases per day in Huntingdon County is about 22. The hospital has 10 COVID-19 patients under their care. Long-term care facilities are challenged but are reporting stable conditions. Their vaccine programs have been delayed a bit. There are a number of reasons for this. The vaccine rollout for expanding the phase one group and finding enough pharmacists and getting enough people in the right places at the right times to administer these vaccines. They have received their first round of vaccinations. They should be getting their second vaccinations in the next week or two. There

has been an expansion of the vaccination phase 1A. A lot of the emphasis is staying with the long-term care facilities and healthcare personnel along with those who are over age 75 and those with high risk conditions. There is a supply and demand issue. There is a huge demand for COVID vaccines all over the nation and there are only so many vaccines to go around. What happened was the phase was opened up. I am not disagreeing that it is good to get as many people vaccinated as we can, but the rules change so suddenly and so quickly the supply could not keep up with the demand. I believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel soon for getting everyone vaccinated. Registration does remain a choke point. We are talking about some ideas in our local EMA office and around the area to help with some folks who may have difficulty getting registered, especially our elderly residents. The places that are receiving the vaccine are Penn Highlands, Broad Top Medical Center Office in the Wal-Mart Plaza, Mount Union Medical Center, both Rite Aides and the Weis Store. Each one of those facilities, according to the guidelines, is responsible for setting up their registration system. We have been selected to be the location of another COVID-19 testing site. The dates are February 21<sup>st</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup>. It will return to the Huntingdon Plaza. We have had discussions with the Department of Health and it will be a drive-through and walk-in facility as before. There will be a change in hours, but that is the only significant change to how it will be run. COVID-19 has been tough for all of us. It is also affecting a lot of people mentally and emotionally. I encourage everyone if you are having difficulties with your mental or emotional health do not be afraid to reach out. There was an article in the Daily News on Saturday that mentioned the Crisis Line for the region. If you do not have a physician or a clergy member that you feel comfortable talking to, please reach out. This service is free and operates 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Call 1-800-929-9583. If you feel you need help, do not be ashamed or afraid to reach out. Commissioner Sather asked Mr. Thompson for an update on the PPE supplies the county still has in stock. Mr. Thompson responded that we are doing well with maintaining a small supply of PPE. We do not have a surplus, but through the federal disaster declaration and with the assistance of the Commissioners' Office, we have purchased a supply to help county agencies including the Sheriff's Office, the Courthouse facilities, emergency responders, hospitals and nursing homes. If someone needs assistance, we do our best to make sure we get them something. We can also rely on some other agencies for assistance in this area: Southern Alleghenies EMS Council and our Regional Taskforce. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Thompson for his work and his report. Peter McManamon also thanked Mr. Thompson and his staff for their hard work.

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, discussed the county recycling program, which is tied to the solid waste management plan. We entered into an agreement with Barton and Loguidice to update the tri-county Solid Waste Management Plan. Under DEP regulations, it is required to be updated every 10 years. When I started, this was one of my primary duties, to work with the Planning Directors in Bedford and Fulton Counties to further complete this effort. The plan is about 95% completed, however we had a recent discussion with DEP representatives and it has to do with the three county's recycling program. The DEP wishes for us not to submit the plan until we resolve the issues surrounding the recycling program. There are currently 20 recycling drop-off locations in the three county area. 10 of those are contracted under the Sandy Run Landfill. The other 10 are operated by Parks under the South Central Counties Solid Waste Agency. They are distributed within the three counties. Huntingdon County has four drop-off locations, Fulton has four, and Bedford has two. During the last three years, the agency has been operating in the red to pay for the cost of maintaining the drop-off locations for the recycling materials. In 2018, there was a deficit of \$53,336, in 2019, a deficit of \$89,947, and we had an additional \$60,000 deficit in 2020. The reason for this is globally the policies and restrictions that China and other Asian countries have placed on recycling have adversely impacted recycling in our county and in the United States. For example, in 2014, if you had a ton of recycling materials, you would be paid \$40 per ton. Currently, if you have a ton of recycling materials you have to pay \$58. The profitability of the market has plummeted due to lower labor costs and a limited domestic market for recycled materials. At this point, the agency cannot continue to subsidize the sites in the three county region. It will not be fiscally solvent to do such a thing. We consulted together with the County Commissioners to work with the host municipalities that have these facilities for the drop-off locations. They are Porter Township, Jackson Miller Elementary, Oneida Township, and Woodmizer. Of the four, it is costing the agency \$39,530 yearly to continue the drop-off and pick-up of bins for recycling. When we had discussions with DEP, they suggested the County Commissioners consider keeping at least one facility opened. If we keep one in each county, they would consider this a non-substantial amendment, which would mean we would not have to do more public outreach and public meetings to get the plan passed. That is probably the best option to enforce. At this time, I am trying to arrange meetings with each host municipality and the County Commissioners to discuss the funding that may be necessary to continue these sites on. I have been in touch with Porter Township and have not heard back from them. Jackson Elementary is going to try to let me know a time that is convenient for them this week. Oneida Township has requested that we provide a written notice to them relative to what the situation is. In the future, the South-Central Solid Waste Agency will meet on March 8th. There may be a decision made at this meeting. Final decisions will be made by the Commissioners in each of the three counties. Commissioner Sather offered a point of clarification about the 20 sites throughout the counties. 10 sites are contracted and 10 sites are not contracted and are under an agreement with Parks. This does not vacate those sites that are contracted under Sandy Run. The recycling program is still in operation. What is under review are the additional 10 sites that are not under contract with Sandy Run. Commissioner Thomas commented that he has been serving as the Chair of solid waste and recycling for about 7 years. Those four sites that the Planning Director is referring to, there was a handshake agreement a long time ago to do those when you could actually make money off of

recycling. It was never in the solid waste plan. Those other sites were already written into the plan. This has been ongoing for the last couple of years. About a year and a half ago I attended a Council of Governments meeting and requested that the municipalities consider chipping in. I said that there was a possibility of these sites going away. We got nothing back from that. It will probably be left to the municipalities after our meeting on whether they want to maintain those sites or not. Commissioner Walls thanked Mr. Lettiere for his work on this. While recycling is a good thing, it has been a problem for a lot of municipalities that are hosting these as far as people not abiding by regulation, dumping stuff outside and using our facilities for garbage disposal. Even if we keep whatever we can, we still will have to watch that. It has been a burden on municipalities so it will be interesting to see how many want to pitch in and keep those. Kylie Hawn asked which municipalities are the ones that contracted with Parks. Mr. Lettiere commented that the four that are under the South Central Solid Waste Agency that are serviced by Parks are Porter Township, Jackson Miller Elementary, Oneida Township, and Woodmizer in Dublin Township. Ms. Hawn asked which ones are serviced by Sandy Run. Commissioner Thomas commented that those are Smithfield and Marklesburg in Huntingdon County.

Consideration of Approval was given for the Act 13 Legacy Funds for Ag Land Preservation. Commissioner Thomas commented that the Commissioners have given to Ag Land Preservation for the last eight years. The County has always been involved. The Clean and Green money goes there. We started giving \$5,000 per year from the Act 13 Legacy funds. We normally announce this when the mini grants are going out, but we are working on another farm right now for the Ag Land Preservation. I asked Mr. Lettiere to stay on the call because while this is a county program, our Conservation District does a lot of the work but there is coordination with Planning and Mapping. I would like to ask for approval to give \$5,000 out of the Act 13 Legacy funds for Ag Land Preservation as we have in the past. Mr. Lettiere commented that on January 12<sup>th</sup>, Celina Seftas and Mr. Lettiere presented to the Board the County funds for the Ag Conservation easements. As part of that total amount, which was approximately \$50,000, the Commissioners certified that \$5,000 would be taken from Act 13 Marcellus Shale monies towards the Ag Land Preservation. Formalizing it today is fine. Commissioner Thomas commented that normally it is done at the announcement of the opening of the mini grants program. He withdrew his request as it has already been approved. He asked if there is a time frame yet when the mini grants program will be reopened. Mr. Lettiere commented that it will be within the next week or two.

There were no Matters for Action.

There were 2 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:07 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary