

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; Wendy Melius and Tiffany Jones from the Center for Community Action; Treasurer, Susan Harry; Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitor, Joan Rogers.

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 Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Sather.

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the March 2<sup>nd</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, Wendy Melius and Tiffany Jones from the Center for Community Action requested consideration of approval for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Administration Agreement. Wendy Melius announced that this is part of the federal stimulus funding that came out in December. The program will be run through the Department of Human Services. It opened on Monday of this week. Huntingdon County will receive \$2.9 million. This program will help individuals or households that are in arrears due to the pandemic with rent and utilities. That also includes sewer and water. We do have waiting list. The applicants can apply through the State's COMPASS website or they can contact us directly. The State prefers that they apply online first and then we can pull the application down from there and complete it. We are anticipating serving 365 families. Tiffany Jones added that this funding can also be used to pay ahead for rent three months at a time for anyone that was directly or indirectly affected with COVID. Commissioner Sather asked about the time period in which this is to be received. Ms. Jones responded that we received the funding already. We have to have 65% of the \$2.9 million spent by July 31<sup>st</sup>. If the funding is not expended by then, I am not sure what the State will do, whether they will recapture the funding or not. Commissioner Walls asked for specifics on funding for individual families. With 365 families serviced, does that mean there is a maximum of \$7,000 in funding per household? Ms. Melius answered that they do not currently know what the needs will be for Huntingdon County. We figured 365 households. Commissioner Walls commented that it would be good to get CCA's contact information out for those individuals who do not have internet access. Ms. Melius responded that people can call their office at 1-800-323-9997 or the local office number (814)643-4202. Joe Thompson commented that his office will create a write-up of the information discussed here and send it over to Ms. Melius's approval. Once approved, the EMA office can help spread the word. Ms. Melius thanked Mr. Thompson and also indicated that there is additional information on CCA's website as well. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented a weekly update on COVID-19 in Huntingdon County. Huntingdon County remains in the substantial level of community transmission. That designation has been established by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Pennsylvania Department of Education. This is a basis for a recommendation for Kindergarten through Grade 12 schools and how they should determine their instruction models, whether in-person, hybrid, or remote. There are three levels: substantial, moderate, and low. Substantial also means that all of us should be aware that we are in a situation where unfortunately the community spread risk is substantial to all of us in Huntingdon County. The vaccinations are going fairly well in Huntingdon County. We have 10 enrolled providers for the COVID-19 vaccine. If someone needs assistance and does not have internet access, they should use the PA Department of Health toll-free number. For older adults, they can get help

through the Area Agency on Aging. As a reminder, just because a place is designated as a provider does not mean they will have the vaccine available when you call. Please be patient with our local providers. Huntingdon County currently has had 4300 confirmed cases of COVID-19. The Statewide recovery rate is 91%. We have about 390 active COVID cases right now in Huntingdon County. Unfortunately we have had 125 COVID-19 related deaths. There have been just shy of 3500 partial vaccines given and about 3800 full vaccines. We are approaching about 20% of the population of Huntingdon County having at least the first dose. There will be a vaccination clinic for teachers and school staff for elementary through high school Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the TIU. This is being supported by PEMA and the PA Department of Health. That is a closed clinic. Our seven day average is 17 new cases per day. Our three day average is about 7. Our difference in confirmed cases is up a little bit. Our incident rate does remain a bit high. Daily hospitalizations are up a small amount. Our PCR is 6.3% and the state average is 5.7%. We were in touch with our long-term care facilities last week. They are reporting very low numbers both among residents and staff and their vaccines are rounding up. Penn Highlands Huntingdon reports 4 in-house COVID-19 patients. 2 are in the intensive care unit. SCI Huntingdon is now reporting 128 active inmate cases and 6 active staff cases. SCI Smithfield reports 20 active inmate cases and no active staff cases. The reason we mention this is that we know this could be a concern. There was a slight uptick last month at Smithfield, an uptick this month in Huntingdon. They are doing their best to protect inmates and those who work in the state prisons. While the virus continues, we have seen some lower numbers across the board since the holidays but we are seeing those numbers begin to go up again. We need to be aware that outbreaks may recur, whether that be at the prisons or long-term care facilities. Anywhere where there are large groups. The DOC mandates masks and enforces physical distancing. They are setting aside housing units to quarantine. They are doing testing for staff and inmates. They were able to catch what was happening early because of their testing program. A notice to the public, now that the weather is starting to get nice we know people want to go start doing things. We are getting word from the Department of Health however that some of the folks who were recently confirmed positive for COVID-19, more of those folks are indicating that they recently attended a mass gathering or other large event. Please be aware as we get out and get moving, it will still be important for a while to do everything we can to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please wear a mask anytime you are out in public. The CDC yesterday changed their guidelines to say that fully vaccinated individuals can now visit indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing masks and social distancing. We are hoping this is the first breath of normalcy we are seeing. We are happy to report that the State has extended the Nursing Home Virus Response Program. We have heard from several large-event organizers and we are doing our best to share information with those individuals as they navigate their decision-making process about hosting their event and doing it safely. Yesterday jury selection was held for the second time during the COVID-19 pandemic. It seems that all went well and this may be the new norm, conducting jury selection in small groups. Commissioner Walls thanked Joe Thompson for bringing this information. We are sure that the corrections departments are doing their best to manage this situation but it is good to let the public know what their numbers are so that the public and school districts have a better understanding of what our community spread looks like. Commissioner Sather commented that it was a concern hearing the rise from SCI Smithfield and SCI Huntingdon. It was more of a concern being labelled that from the state level. I would like those to be separated from our county count, because the inmates are not within the community. We want to reassure the schools that our community is healthy and we are taking the appropriate precautions. Commissioner Thomas thanked Mr. Thompson for the update. The public really appreciates you attending these meetings as well. Mr. Thompson responded that he does not know of any other county that is this open with communication that anyone can hear the exact briefing that is given to the Commissioners. I do not give the Commissioners a separate briefing apart from the one the public hears at these meetings. This is what you are hearing and they are hearing at the same time and I think that speaks volumes for trying to put what we know right out into the public. Joan Rogers asked what the status is of the J&J vaccine. Is it in Huntingdon County? Is it limited? Mr. Thompson answered that the DOH for the month of March and probably for the first couple of weeks of April has determined that the J&J allocation to Pennsylvania will be directed to education. I do not know if it will be opened to wide-spread use after that or if it will continue to be designated to specific groups.

Consideration of approval was given to hire Tammy Feagley to the position of Custodial Supervisor. Her start date will be March 22<sup>nd</sup>. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

There were no Matters for Action.

There were 3 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary