

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

36-2021

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: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Chief Assessor, Missy Bousum; Treasurer, Susan Harry; and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn. The following individuals attended via GoToMeeting: CYS Director, Shannon Walborn.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Tracey Rhodes 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 Walls and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Thomas.

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

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

There was one additions to the agenda: Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval for an internal promotion. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under announcements, Tracey Rhodes gave an update on the recycling event last Saturday. It was well-attended, with approximately 327 cars served. We had to shut the gate by the fairgrounds at 12:15 so that we could process all of the cars that were within the gates. Commissioner Thomas encouraged all residents who are able to get the COVID vaccine.

There were no public comments.

Under matters to be addressed by the Solicitor, Larry Newton announced that on October 8th the General Authority will be meeting for a TEFRA hearing regarding a bond issue for Juniata College. There will be a resolution related to this at the county public meeting on October 12th. Additionally, related to the County Bond issue for \$7,440,000, Solicitor Newton asked for some additions to the preliminary statement. Commissioner Walls noted that this is not a new bond issue – it is a currently held bond.

Under new business, Susan Harry, County Treasurer, requested consideration of approval to accept, with regret, the resignation of Brittany Traxler from the position of part-time clerk effective Thursday, September 30th. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Susan Harry announced that Employment and Training reached out to her and said that they had someone that might be a good fit for her office to work under the Displaced Worker Program. This is a 360 hour program. Employment and Training will pay for her wages, workers comp, and any fringe benefits. Dixie McNerlin has passed her pre-employment screenings for this position. Ms. Harry requested consideration of approval for this temporary hire effective October 1st. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Melissa Bousum, Chief Assessor, requested consideration of approval to attend the Annual Fall Conference for the Associated Assessors of Pennsylvania (AAP). This conference provides an opportunity to meet our continuing education requirements to maintain our CPE licenses. This conference is from November 3rd through the 5th. The cost of our classes and materials is \$425 for each of us. This is for Brandy Moore and Missy Bousum. Total cost for classes and materials is \$850 and the hotel would be \$506 for three nights. Commissioner Thomas noted that in the future he would like to see either Ms. Bousum or Ms. Moore remain in the office. He understands the need for continuing education for both of them, but since they are both in leadership roles in the office, one of them should be in the office when the other is out. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

James Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for amendments to the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) bridge priorities. The Planning Commission is recommending prioritizing bridges 1-6 of the 11 bridges on the list to be placed on the TIP. The remaining bridges will be considered for the next cycle. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, requested consideration of approval to attend the PEMA Central Area Quarterly Training on September 30th and October 1st. There is no charge to attend. It is a required training to be eligible for one of the grants that we receive. I would be available for emergency call-back and our there are deputies to remain on call while I am at the training as well. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Joe Thompson provided an update on COVID-19. Huntingdon County remains in the high rate of Community spread. Over the past week, Huntingdon County has had 217 new confirmed cases of COVID, for an average of 31 per day. The total number since the start of the pandemic is 6,098. That is 13.5% of the total Huntingdon County population. We have also had 2 COVID deaths in the past week for a total of 144. The percent positivity rate for the county remains fairly steady at 9.7%. The state rate is 8.9%. Penn Highlands ER is continuing to see many people with COVID symptoms. There are six patients currently in the hospital. Five of seven of their ICU beds are currently filled. These are not all filled with COVID patients, but it speaks to a trend across the region where ICUs are full or nearing capacity. Schools continue to work through mask mandates. Juniata College continues to do a great job. There is nothing exceptional to report from long-term care and correctional facilities. Most of the new cases, hospitalizations and deaths are primarily among the unvaccinated. About 45% of the eligible population of the county has received the vaccine. Penn Highlands Huntingdon is having a Pfizer vaccine clinic on October 7th. You can register online or via phone.

Joe Thompson provided an update on damage from Tropical Storm Ida. Huntingdon County has met and exceeded our public assistance damage threshold. PEMA has already sent the letter to FEMA asking that Huntingdon County be added to the federal disaster declaration. At this time, we have 13 eligible municipal applicants with a total of \$405,500 in estimated damages. It is expected that funding will be available within 3 to 6 months. The US Small Business Administration has added Bedford County to the PA Disaster Declaration for business and residents affected by the storm. As a result, economic injury disaster loans will now be available to small businesses and non-profits in Huntingdon because we are adjacent to Bedford. We have not received anything further about assistance for residents. Jim Lettiere asked about the Hazard Mitigation Plan and how participation impacts funding to those communities. Joe Thompson responded that all of the municipalities that were impacted by this disaster were municipalities that participated in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. If they had not passed their resolution, there is a possibility that they would be deemed ineligible to receive federal funding.

Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval for the transfer of Rosalie Freeburn from Clerk to Fiscal Tech effective September 21st. She has passed all of the requirements for civil service for this position. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

There were no matters for action, information and discussion.

There were 5 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary