

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

9-2022

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioner's Meeting Room with the following present: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Treasurer, Susan Harry; EMA Staff, Katie Unger and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

No one attended remotely via GoToMeeting.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. 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 were three additions to the agenda. The first was consideration of approval for a new hire in the Treasurer's Office. The second was a financial assistance award for Broadband. The third was an appointment to the Children and Youth Advisory Board. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to add these items to the agenda.

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas urged residents not to let their guard down about COVID. Get the vaccine and the booster, if eligible. He also encouraged residents to allow their children to be vaccinated against COVID. Commissioner Walls commended the staff of the CYS department on the results of their recent inspection, which found no violations in the operation of the county foster homes.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Fred Gutshall, Public Defender, requested consideration of approval to attend the 2022 Criminal Law Symposium on June 2-3 for a total cost of \$598. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval to accept the updated preliminary cost figures for the replacement of the New Fording Bridge. Preliminary engineering costs are anticipated at \$583,853.04 and constructions costs are anticipated at \$1,189,481.06 for a total cost of \$1,773,334.10. PennDOT has been able to secure extra TIP funding for this project. It will be 80% funded by the FHA (\$1,418,667.37), 15% by PennDOT (\$266,000.13) and 5% by the County Liquid Fuels funding

(\$88,666.71). It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for the resignation of Sean Houck, Mapping Director, effective 3/10. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to accept his resignation with regrets.

Susan Harry, Treasurer, requested consideration of approval to hire Bryce Stinson for the position of Clerk. He has completed his pre-employment screenings. His effective start date will be 3/7/2022. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to accept the federal financial assistance award for broadband expansion in Huntingdon County. The amount of the award is \$20,463,175.24. Commissioner Walls asked if we have 30 days to respond. While \$20 million is certainly a great thing to come into the county, and I certainly agree and want to do everything I can for broadband, I would like our solicitor to review before we sign it. The recipient has a lot of responsibilities. I do not know what we are on the hook for. Are we assuming all of the liability? I have a lot of questions. Commissioner Thomas responded that we do have a lot of responsibility just like the other grants that Huntingdon County takes the lead on. We are responsible for reporting to the federal government. We will have Alleghenies Broadband Incorporated to help us through that. Commissioner Walls asked if we have an agreement in place with them already for these services. Commissioner Thomas noted that we will have to get an agreement in place. We already have their help for the ARPA funding and an agreement would be of the same type for this funding. Commissioner Walls asked if it would be better to table this item until we get some of these details ironed out. Solicitor Newton noted that we have to act quickly on this. Looking at this, I want to make sure there is no overlap with this grant and with ARAP funding. Commissioner Sather commented that there is an agreement in place with ABI for the ARPA funding but we need a separate agreement for this NTIA grant. That should take place prior to the signing of this grant agreement. Commissioner Thomas commented that this funding is very important and we should not hesitate to move forward on this. This is the most significant grant that has ever come into Huntingdon County for broadband expansion. Commissioner Sather commented that since we just received this at the end of the day on Friday we need to do our due diligence and look into this further. Knowing that there are other counties involved in this, there are some questions open and I think we need a contract in place with ABI before we can sign this grant agreement. Solicitor Newton commented that we need to act quickly on this, but it would be good to get some clarification and input from ABI. He suggested considering it for adoption at the next meeting. We need to have a conference with ABI in the meantime. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, no; Walls, no; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to revisit the NTIA grant agreement for broadband expansion upon satisfactory review at the next meeting. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, no; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to appoint Connie Jones to the Children and Youth Advisory Board. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Katie Unger, EMA Assistant, presented an update on COVID-19. The average number of new cases per day in the county was 11, down from 19 the previous week. The State is at an average of 1,537 down from 2,496 the previous week. SCI Smithfield currently has 33 inmates and 5 staff testing positive. SCI Huntingdon has 1 inmates and 4 staff. In-person visitation has resumed. There is nothing to report with the schools. The Department of Health reports a total of 12 COVID cases among school-aged children and less than five among children 4 and under. Penn Highlands reports only 1 COVID patient, who is

currently in the Med Surge unit. Juniata College continues surveillance testing and has had a total of 55 positive cases this semester. COVID hospitalization for the state stands at 1,439 down from 1,921 last week. Our incident rate for the county is 150 per 100,000 and the state is 79. The PCR percent positivity is 6.4% for the county and 6.6% for the state. Long-term care facilities continue to do well. 24,057 vaccines have been distributed in the county. 10,285 boosters have been given. There were 3 deaths in the last week. The dominant variant is still Omicron. Omicron BA.1.1 accounts for 75.6%, BA.1.1.529 is 20.6% and BA.2 is 3.8%.

There was nothing discussed under matters for action, information and discussion.

There was 1 Veteran's Burial Allowance.

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

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary