

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; Deputy Treasurer, Cathy Bilger; Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitor, Dean Fluke.

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 January 19<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.

Under public comments, Dean Fluke commented that about a week ago the public defender came to give a report but he was not ready. He does not see that report on today's agenda. He commented that he believes the public needs to hear that report. Commissioner Sather responded that the topic of that meeting was the parole hearing board, and having adequate labor and counsel for the parole hearings. At that particular point in time he said that once duties had been assigned, then there would be follow-up reports. At this point in time, it has not yet begun and we have not received any updates on that. Mr. Fluke countered that it is an expenditure of \$40,000 at one level and \$20,000 at another level. An expenditure of that size should not ever be not explained by the County Commissioners to the general public. I do not think there is any group in the county, or organization, or department head that should be above that finding. Commissioner Thomas asked for clarification on Mr. Fluke's question. Are you asking about the conflict counsel or the parole hearings? Mr. Fluke responded "consideration of approval for conflict counsel contract with Lance Marshall." Commissioner Thomas commented that that conflict counsel contract, as I have said before, is the same contract that has been passed for years. It is not something new that the county is doing. Mr. Fluke has himself approved many of these contracts while he was a commissioner. When there is a conflict with the Public Defender's Office, we need counsel. That has been going on for years and years. The number of cases contracted for is listed there and was stated at the last meeting. Commissioner Walls commented that we sign all of those contracts at a public meeting and those figures are given at the public meeting – the amount of the contract and the number of cases. That information is all publicly disseminated and voted on at a public meeting. Mr. Fluke commented that he does not think that the Commissioners should be saying that this was a contract that was in effect when he was a Commissioner. "Just because it was done when I was done, that doesn't mean it is right. There's no way that something that is of this expense to the county should be left go without notice or without having a report on this." Commissioner Sather commented that there were several discussions on the conflict counsel. What is in question here today is the conflict counsel contracts and the Public Defender did state that we would receive reports on that. The reports come as the court is scheduled and as conflict counselor time is used. In summary, we are accordingly to receive that information, as has been stated.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, presented a report of the Planning Commission. At the January 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Commission meeting, there was a discussion regarding the review fee that our office charges for our subdivision and land development reviews. Subsequent to that meeting, Mr. Lettiere provided notification to all land surveyors, architects, and engineers and provide them the opportunity to participate in this meeting so they could engage themselves in this discussion. Our last fee adjustment, which was in the form of an increase, was made by the Planning Commissioner at their October 17, 2013 meeting. That became effective in January of 2014. This increase applied only to minor subdivisions, which are defined as the creation of one to five lots, and minor residential land developments, which are less than or equal to five dwelling units. These costs increased by \$25 respectively from \$75 to \$100. Under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Planning Commission is authorized to set fees sufficient to cover the costs of reviewing the applications. I reached out to the Pennsylvania Planning Directors Association and received fee schedules for 19 of the 67 counties. On average, it takes 2 hours of Mr. Lettiere's time and an hour and half of Laurie Nearhood's time, for a total of three and a half hours, to process each application. There is no difference between a one lot or a three lot subdivision. They all take about the same time. This costs, including our benefits, around \$125.94 per plan. If we base the comparison on the 2020 cases we received, we received 66 plans, and our fee income revenue to our department was \$5,245. The actual cost to our office was \$8,312. There is a difference there. Mr. Lettiere is not suggesting that the fees be increased to meet our actual costs, but he does believe the fees should be increased by an amount yet to be determined. Things to consider will be fees charged in similar sixth-class counties with similar populations. We need to recognize that we are advisory comments only to these municipalities but it does provide a service to them. Some of them rely on our reviews to make a decision about an application. At this time, this is where we are. Most likely there will be a decision made at the February 18<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting. At that time there will be enough data to make an informed decision and that will be available to the public. Commissioner Sather asked for clarification. The message here this morning, in addition to announcing the February 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, is the Commission is in an advisory position for the municipalities enacting any kind of fee structure. According to what I have heard here, that is from a municipal ordinance. Mr. Lettiere commented that that is correct. The Planning Commission is strictly advisory. We have no jurisdiction over any of the activity in the county because there is no county ordinance. Commissioner Walls commented that the Planning Commission Board has the right, by municipal code, to set the fees that the Planning Office would charge for reviewing whatever was sent by the municipalities. Commissioner Sather commented that, from a historical point of view, the ordinance to create the Planning Commission was Ordinance 62-1 dating back to August of 1971. That is where the Planning Commission ordinance had been created to act as an advisory body for the municipalities throughout the county. Commissioner Walls asked, based on the fee data obtained from other counties, would Mr. Lettiere say that the County is in the median range or are we much lower than other counties in charging for these services? Mr. Lettiere responded that the County is in the median range. He does not think that we are significantly lower. The commissioners thanked Mr. Lettiere for the information.

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented a COVID-19 update for the County. Unfortunately Huntingdon County is still in substantial community transmission. The daily case number is drifting downward, which is a good sign. There is a bit of a concern that there are a few more patients in the local hospital and the ERs are busier than usual with COVID cases. Juniata College has scaled up some of their testing. Their new semester started yesterday. Other schools are currently operational as well. The local prison is maintaining stability. Huntingdon Prison has 13 active inmate cases, 13 staff. That is not new, just continuing. SCI Smithfield has 45 active inmate cases, all asymptomatic, and 7 active staff cases. The Commissioners have asked that we pursue a number of questions and get some information here. The federal government recommended widening of the eligibility requirements to receive the vaccine now. The state of Pennsylvania went by that recommendation and frankly now there is more demand than supply. Pennsylvania is getting 143,000 vaccines per week but we are currently receiving 400,000 requests for the vaccine per week. It will take a while to catch up. Huntingdon County has 2200 partially vaccinated individuals. Over 300 are now fully vaccinated. There has been discussion for a community mass vaccination clinic. This would probably take place in late March or April. One concern that has been raised is how we are getting the word out to folks who may not be internet savvy or have a good internet connection. We did raise that question with PEMA and the Department of Health. They are recommending strongly that the entity that is providing the vaccine takes proper steps to help make that information available. That does not mean that we are not going to do anything to help. If someone calls us we will do our best to help them get in touch with someone about vaccine availability. The Daily News has done a really good job of reporting where the vaccine is available and how to get in touch with those places. Remember the County Commissioners, EMA, and the places that get the vaccine have nothing to do with how many doses the county receives. Our role is to request. It looks like we are going to also be exploring the potential for another COVID-19 testing site in the county that should be coming up in February. EMA will keep everyone up to date on that as more information is available. The Huntingdon County Offices do remain open by appointment. Things are running pretty much as normal at the County Jail. We have also been in touch with folks at SCI Smithfield. They will now be the central reception facility for all new male inmate commitments. There will also be a new regional infirmary for male inmates who do not have COVID-19. Attorney McManamon thanked Mr. Thompson and his staff for all of the good work they are doing. The Commissioners thanked the EMA staff for their work and for keeping the lines of communication open for the public. Commissioner Thomas commented that he serves on the Board of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. They recently met virtually with the

Governor's Office, the Secretary of Human Services, and the Deputy Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs, and he really hammered home that they need to do better with getting information out to our vulnerable populations. They basically agreed with that. Many of our elderly and rural citizens do not have internet access to get this important information. Mr. Thompson commented that when we consider that 20% of the population in our county is over age 65, a number of those folks may not have ability or access to the internet. We need to do our best. The Daily News did do a nice job, for folks that can get information that way. The State indicated that it is up to whoever is offering the vaccine to do all the work to get the word out. I do not accept that and I do not believe the Commissioners would accept that answer from me either. We need to do our best to help spread the word. Commissioner Walls commented that he is unsure of what compensation these facilities are receiving for administering this vaccine, but if the state is going to put all of the promotion on those facilities, it could be an undue burden or expense. The staff is already burdened with caring for the individuals who get sick with COVID-19 and also the guidelines for everything they have to do with the facilities. It is interesting that the state would also burden them with the responsibility to educate the public on their options for getting the vaccine. Mr. Thompson commented that that was discussed in recent meetings with PEMA as well. Possibly there could be some funding for that. It is our understanding that those who are giving the vaccines cannot charge for the vaccine itself. It is funded by the federal government. They would, however, have the option for an administration fee and that could be billed to the insurance company or billed in other ways. We will keep our ears open on that.

Consideration of approval was given to hire for the position of Elections Intern. The Commissioners' Office has worked with Juniata College over the past few years to provide internship experiences with the Elections Office. This allows students to gain an understanding of what it is like to run an election. Theodore Wienberger has passed all of his pre-employment screenings. His start date is to be determined and we are excited to have him on board. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under Matters for Action, Information, and Discussion, Commissioner Sather commented that one week ago at the public meeting under the announcements section he had expressed his appreciation to the county offices, which have stayed open throughout the pandemic. It is recommended that members of the public wishing to access these offices call in ahead of time to make an appointment if they are not able to access the services they need remotely. This morning the EMA Director again verified that the County Offices have remained open by appointment. We unfortunately have been notified by a county resident that there have been inaccuracies in communicating this message to the public, most notably from the Treasurer's Office. Individuals calling into the Treasurer's Office have received the following inaccurate message, "Hello, you have reached the Huntingdon County Treasurer's Office and the Tax Claim Bureau. At this time, the County Commissioners have the doors locked to the public. All delinquent tax payments, dog licenses, and small games of chance licenses applications must be mailed to our office at 233 Penn Street. Also there is a drop box located in the rear parking lot on Washington Street next to the glass double doors. If you are calling about a lost dog, please call (814)643-3960. If you have any questions or need assistance, please call during normal working hours." The Commissioners would like to remind the public that, as an elected officer, the Treasurer can do with the office as she sees fit, however that does not include county buildings. The statement does remain that the County buildings are open by appointment. It is recommended to call ahead for an appointment or to do business as you can online. Commissioner Walls commented that we do have the doors locked to help with social distancing so the offices do not become overcrowded, but all county buildings remain accessible to the public. The individual offices controlled by elected officials by law can, at their choosing, limit access to their offices by the public. As Commissioner Sather said, we want the public to continue to have access to all county offices on a structured basis. Commissioner Thomas commented that while we encourage appointments, if you walk up to the door of any building, if you do not have an appointment, the number to the office that you need is listed on the door. If they are not with somebody else when you call in, the department heads have been instructed to let you in and we hope that the elected officials are doing the same. It was disheartening to hear of an individual that was denied access to a building saying they had to drop stuff off through a drop box, but we cannot dictate how the elected officials run their offices. The buildings are open by appointment and if you don't have an appointment you can call from the front door using the numbers listed there. Mr. Fluke commented that he sees that the numbers that are used to access the public meetings are not posted after this week. Are there other numbers that will be available? Heather Fellman answered that they will continue to be available as they have been throughout the pandemic. We will continue to advertise and post to the website.

There were no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

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

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary