

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

10-2022

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 Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Warden, Brad Glover; CYS Director, Shannon Walborn; CYS Staff Member, Sara Gongloff; Mike Hanna from Tri-County Drug and Alcohol; Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and guests Dan Berger, John Romano and Connie Kough-Pittenger.

Commissioner, Mark Sather; EMA Staff Member, Katie Unger and Christine Steidle from Mainstream Counseling attended remotely via GoToMeeting.

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

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

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

There was one addition to the agenda: consideration of approval to hire a part-time CO. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather 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.

Under public comment, Mike Hanna from Tri-County Drug and Alcohol commented that they are seeing a new concern with vape pens. It appears that now some people are using vape pens to smoke fentanyl. All agencies need to keep an eye on this growing concern. Our office and Mainstream Counseling distributes Narcan to community agencies and individuals upon request. There will be a distribution event in Mifflin County on March 17th from 5-7. People from surrounding areas can attend and pick up Narcan for their agency or as an individual.

Under items to be addressed by the solicitor, Solicitor Newton announced that the Huntingdon County General Authority had a reorganization meeting last Friday. We have learned in our Juniata College project that the funding has to pass through a checking account that the authority must have. We will be opening a checking account to accommodate that project.

Under new business, Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval for the resignation of Caseworker Cody Hockenberry effective March 13, 2022. This will bring the agency to a total of two open positions. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Shannon Walborn updated the Board on the recent state inspection of the CYS Department. The State pulled a full complement of files, 10%, and no safety violations were found. 3 documentation citations were found. They were for very minor issues, for example, a late signature by one day on a document. The state representative that was at the inspection this year said he was pleased to be at the office and it is absolutely the best family-like environment he has seen in a Children and Youth Agency. He also complimented the agency on the steady staffing situation that we have compared to other counties in the area. Several years ago, the agency was not in such a good place. The program has come leaps and bounds and I thank the staff for all of the hard work they have done to accomplish this. The Commissioners communicated their appreciation to Ms. Walborn for her leadership and asked that she relay their appreciation to the staff at the agency as well. Shannon Walborn introduced Sara Gongloff, Foster Care Caseworker. She noted that Ms. Gongloff meets with all of the foster parents. She is in charge of making sure that everything that they need is taken care of. For Ms. Gongloff's part of the inspection, they pulled all 30 of her files and there were no citations in foster care. To have a new program start up and have zero citations is excellent. She does a great job ensuring the safety of our kids in foster care. Ms. Gongloff provided an update on the in-house foster care program. There are currently 22 approved foster homes in the county with five in the process of being approved. We have participated in many community events for recruitments activities. We would like to have an HCCS Christmas party this year for the foster parents and children in care in the county. I think it is great to bring them all together to see each other and support each other. We are trying to involve community resources in this project as well. Sarah Jefferson is a parent/child therapist that we work closely with. She has graciously volunteered to help me create trainings for our foster parents to help them with the process. She has been great at putting those together and volunteering her time. I would also like to create trainings to help foster parents understand how the CYS system works to lessen the struggle for those foster parents. I would also like to thank the community for generous donations to our program. We have received clothing, blankets, coats, backpacks and other items. Every donation is appreciated and the kids love getting new surprises. We are always recruiting foster parents. Please contact the agency if you are interested. 98% of our homes are actually in Huntingdon County. That is rewarding because if we can keep the kids in our county, it strengthens the chance of reunification with the natural parents. The Commissioners expressed that it is wonderful to have foster care services back in Huntingdon County.

Consideration of approval was given for the resignation of Kachira Cross, Probation Officer, effective 3/10/2022. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for budget modification number one to the contract that we have with DCED for the CDBG CV funding for Huntingdon County. The total amount was \$166,152. Of that, \$12,402 was designated for administrative costs and \$153,750 was designated for the program to provide mortgage, rent and utilities assistance for families struggling financially. We contracted with the Center for Community Action to carry out this activity. They attempted to expend these funds but ran into problems finding eligible clients. At this point, they have expended \$5,599.81. A balance of \$4,150.19 will be utilized for the same purpose. We are going to eliminate that activity and create the Divens Park improvements project. We will use \$144,000 from this amount for improvements of the park including re-fencing the tennis courts, resurfacing the courts, and paving the parking lot. Mount Union is on board with this project and a public hearing was held in February 2022. Mount Union Borough is going to provide \$25,000 for engineering costs for the design of the amenities that are going to be improved at the park. Resolution 4-2022 effectively decreases the approved 2020 Huntingdon County COVID-19 Prevention and Housing Utility Assistance Activity in the amount of \$144,000 leaving the modified budget of \$9,750. The newly created Divens Park Improvements Activity will have a total budget of \$144,000. Commissioner Thomas commented that this action sounds like it is taking money away from paying for rent and mortgage assistance for people experiencing financial hardship and we are but there is plenty of funding out there to help with this. We have the PHARE act through the County that is administered by CCA. There are other avenues of funding coming into the CCA to help with this. Please do not think this means services have stopped. If you have a need, please contact CCA. There are millions of dollars in available funding. It was moved by

Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Brad Glover, Warden, requested consideration of approval to hire a part-time corrections officer, Kyle Houck-Myers. He has completed his pre-employment screenings and is available to start tomorrow. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for the NTIA grant agreement for broadband expansion. This grant is for a total of \$20 million for Huntingdon, Bedford and Fulton Counties. It also includes towers in Franklin, Mifflin and Juniata counties. Towers in those counties will serve both counties. The grant was very competitive. They were originally going to release \$288 million. They received \$2.5 billion in requests. They only awarded 13 projects in the US and its territories. The grant is a public-private partnership grant, which means that a private company has to partner with the region on the project. Upward Broadband approached us about submitting this. They presented it at a public meeting and the Commissioners approved the application. We get some questions from the public about how we could give one company all this money and why it was not bid out. These are not funds that Huntingdon County could have pursued on our own. We had to partner with a company and Upward Broadband was the company that approached us. Bedford County will get a little over \$5 million and their share cost is \$560,000. Fulton County gets \$8.1 million and their share cost is \$360,000. Huntingdon County gets \$8.3 million and the share cost is \$400,000. It is a 10% match grant. Our responsibilities, if we accept this, is making sure the money is spent the way it is supposed to be and reporting to the federal government, and we will have assistance with this from the experts at ABI. Bedford and Fulton County both have voted at public meetings to approve those match funds. We need to approve this and get it back to NTIA. We will have a co-op agreement put in place with Fulton, Bedford, ABI and Upward Broadband. Commissioner Sather commented that the action we are taking today is in anticipation of these pending cooperation agreements with the other counties and ABI. Commissioner Walls commented that we did meet with the other counties and ABI and our solicitor will work out the details. We are voting to accept the grant today, but we do not have to expend one cent until we are comfortable with all the details. We also have to look at the coverage map to see what areas are already covered. A lot of work will go into it before any funds are expended. The total amount of the funding is \$20,463,175.24. Commissioner Thomas presented the coverage map and explained the coverage areas. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for Proclamation 1-2022 to designate March 2022 as Kindness Awareness Month. Residents are encouraged to make kindness a priority in their interactions with others not only during this month, but year round. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, 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 5, down from 11 the previous week. The State is at an average of 1,047. SCI Smithfield currently has 21 inmates and 3 staff testing positive. SCI Huntingdon has no one testing positive. There is nothing to report with the schools. The Department of Health reports a total of less than 5 COVID cases among school-aged children and less than five among children 4 and under. Juniata College continues surveillance testing and has had a total of 55 positive cases this semester. COVID hospitalization for the state stands at 1,048. Our incident rate for the county is 70.9 per 100,000 and the state is 52.7. The PCR percent positivity is 3.6% for the county and 4.6% for the state. Long-term care facilities continue to do well. 24,152 vaccines have been distributed in the county. 10,346 boosters have been given. The county is over 48% vaccinated. There were no deaths in the last week. The dominant variant is still Omicron. Nationally, Omicron BA.1.1 accounts for 74.6%, B.1.1.529 is 17.2% and BA.2 is 8.3%. In Pennsylvania, Omicron B.1.1.529 is at 91.1% and BA.2 is at 8.9%.

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

There were 2 Veteran's Burial Allowance.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:23 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary