

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

14-2020

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioners Office with the following present: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas and Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the following individuals were present via GoToMeeting: Solicitor, Peter McManamon; Debra Clark of Huntingdon County Business and Industry; Rebecca Wills of the Abuse Network; News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitors, Bill Hoover and Dean Fluke.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Chief Clerk 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 April 7<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.

Two items were added to the agenda: a proclamation for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Resolution 7-2020 regarding the bridge loan. 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 reminded county residents to fill out the census. You can fill it out online and doing so will financially benefit the residents of the County. He further reminded residents of the Broadband Taskforce survey. This is an important survey to assess internet access in Huntingdon County. Commissioner Walls encouraged residents to pull together and help each other out in these difficult times and to keep others in prayer. Commissioner Sather encouraged residents to keep in mind healthcare workers and local food banks. Donations to local food banks where possible are needed and appreciated at this time.

During the public comment period, Bill Hoover thanked the commissioners for providing remote access to the public meetings and hopes that the commissioners will continue to provide this access after the crisis is over. Dean Fluke commented that "three meetings ago a person came from an agency of the county and wanted to get money for a project that she had and the public was asked to comment and the match that she presented was 100% and I want to make sure that that problem is corrected." Commissioner Sather noted that that was answered previously. Regarding the Center for Community Action grant request for Huntingdon and the five other counties that Center for Community Action serves, the match is not county-funded. Those funds are provided by the Center for Community Action. Mr. Fluke commented, "In the future, I think the commissioners have the responsibility to make very clear there is a match involved and make clear to the public that that is included and what the cost of that project would be." Mr. Fluke read a portion of the County Code that described what items should be discussed at a public meeting and the requirement for a meeting to be held physically in person. Commissioner Thomas answered that this has all been discussed at the last meeting that Mr. Fluke attended. It was made very clear that the grant in question was a match grant and that the Center for Community Action was providing the matching funds. Commissioner Sather addressed Mr. Fluke's second comment regarding public meetings, noting that in the case of emergency situations such as we currently find ourselves in, meetings held digitally are acceptable as noted by the Office of Open Records and the Sunshine Act. Mr. Fluke commented, "You can rest assured that at the next public meeting that the public is allowed to attend, this is going to come up again because you're not saying to me, 'That was a mistake and we will not allow that to happen.' As the one that has the authority over that agency, you're involved and it ought to be corrected." Commissioner Sather noted that these questions have now been addressed on multiple occasions.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Debra Clark, of Huntingdon County Business and Industry, requested consideration of approval for an Enterprise Zone Loan Deferral Request. This deferral would allow loan clients to make interest only payments upon request for a period of six months. These loan clients would have to be in good standing to qualify and there would be a balloon payment at the end of the loan to cover the principal payments. The Commissioners all expressed support for the small businesses in the community. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Rebecca Wills, of the Abuse Network, requested consideration of approval for proclamation 2-2020 in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The theme for this year is "I Ask" and programs are targeted at youth to teach how to ask for consent early in life. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for Resolution 7-2020. This is a borrowing resolution to accept the proposal from Community State Bank for a \$1.5 million loan to continue county operations through the COVID-19 outbreak. This is a short-term loan which will reach maturity in 6 months. Solicitor Peter McManamon noted that these kinds of loans are not uncommon when presented with a situation like this. Dean Fluke asked if there is a match. Commissioner Sather responded that there is not a match. This is a short-term loan. Mr. Fluke asked about the interest rate. Commissioner Sather answered that the interest rate is 2.2%, which is the lowest of the bids received. Mr. Fluke commented, "Okay, but I'm saying that the public out there has got to be aware that you've got three county commissioners now that when the budget was formed they never looked at the expenses, so when December 31<sup>st</sup> comes there's going to be negative comments, you rest assured." Commissioner Sather rebutted that comment noting that this loan is being taken out due to the unforeseeable circumstances of a global viral outbreak and the lag in revenue that it has caused. Commissioner Walls commented further, "You were Commissioner in 2014, correct?" Mr. Fluke, "Yes." Commissioner Walls, "You had a budget shortfall then and borrowed \$700,000 to meet expenses. Is that correct?" Mr. Fluke, "Yes." Commissioner Walls, "The minutes will show that you voted in the affirmative for that. How did you budget to pay that \$700,000 back?" Mr. Fluke, "I would have cut expenses somewhere else." Commissioner Walls, "No, in fact it was not budgeted for. You were Commissioner in 2015. Is that correct?" Mr. Fluke, "Yes." Commissioner Walls, "There was a budget impasse in the state and you were forced to borrow \$1.75 million. Is that correct?" Mr. Fluke, "Well, you're going down a road, Scott, that you want to have an excuse to ... You have to balance the budget using business-like tactics. When you put out no reservations or any comment to understand the Treasurer and also the Maintenance Department, it's coming down the road. The public is going to be really angry at what's happening at the present time." Commissioner Walls, "What I'm trying to say is there was a payment for \$276,000 on those two loans that, when the budget was given to the former Board of Commissioners, was not even budgeted in the budget to pay off those loans. You're sort of the pot calling the kettle black here. This loan will be paid off from budgeted funds in six months. It will not be kicked down the road. This is just a short-term loan to pay the vendors that are very appreciative of ... They provide services for us and I'm certainly not going to deny them payment. This loan will be paid back in six months, unlike the two loans that you agreed to take out in 2014 and 2015. Thank you." It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

There were no matters for action, information and discussion.

There were no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary