

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

12-2020

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; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the following individuals were present via GoToMeeting: Solicitor, Peter McManamon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Register and Recorder, Virginia Cooper; Debra Clark from Huntingdon County Business and Industry; Yvonne Martin from the Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce; News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitors, Dean Fluke, Bill Hoover, Peggy Stuller and Bill Smith.

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 Sather and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Walls.

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the March 17th 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.

Consideration of approval was given to add three items to the agenda. Debra Clark will be discussing the COVID-19 Working Capital Access (CWCA) Program. Yvonne Martin will discuss the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The Commissioners will consider reaffirmation of the Juniata Valley Behavioral and Developmental Services (JVBDs) joinder agreement. 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.

Commissioner Walls announced that law enforcement and government agencies are doing the best that they can in these difficult times to get everyone through this outbreak as safely and effectively as possible. We do not have a manual for this situation and are making the best decisions that we can based on the information that we have. Commissioner Thomas asked that members of the public follow the guidance from health officials and federal and state governments. Commissioner Sather noted that the Commissioners and Chief Clerk are following guidance on not gathering in groups of more than 10 people and are practicing social distancing during this meeting as well.

Under public comment, Bill Hoover thanked the Commissioners for setting up remote access to the public meeting. Bill Smith also thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to participate in the meeting in this way and urged them to continue to allow remote access after this crisis has passed. Dean Fluke asked how many people are physically present at the meeting. Heather Fellman answered that there are four people in the room: the three Commissioners and the chief clerk. Mr. Fluke expressed his displeasure at having the meeting closed to the public. He also reiterated his concerns about minutes not being complete when published in the paper. He again expressed that he believes that the Commissioners should have cancelled this public meeting and read the County Code concerning public meetings. Commissioner Sather noted that the Commissioners are well aware of the County Code. The Office of Open Records has issued guidance on how the COVID-19 outbreak impacts the Sunshine Act. According to this guidance, if official emergency declarations prevent public meetings from being held in person, meetings may be conducted via teleconference, webinar, or other electronic method that allows for two-way communication. The County Emergency Declaration was approved on March 16th and we are operating under those guidelines now. Debra Clark did not have any public comment. Peggy Stuller also thanked the Commissioners for setting up the meeting in this way. Commissioner Walls asked Solicitor Peter McManamon if the County is in compliance with the Sunshine Act. Solicitor McManamon noted that it is his belief that operating a meeting in this manner is perfectly within the law and was an appropriate action to take. Virginia Cooper expressed her thanks to the Commissioners for allowing the meeting to be conducted in this manner. She expressed her opinion that not only is it safer, but frankly it is more convenient. Yvonne Martin had no public comment.

Under new business, Debra Clark discussed the CWCA. She is advising small business owners to go to the Small Business Administration's website for more information on loan opportunities. Any small business owner with questions is urged to call the Huntingdon County Business and Industry office. Things are changing on a daily basis and their office is doing their best to keep people informed with the latest guidance received. Commissioner Sather asked Ms. Clark to describe a business that would be eligible for these loan programs. The first step in determining eligibility is to run a comparison of the debt schedule and net income for the past year. If taxes for 2019 have not been filed yet then they can use 2018 numbers. The business must at least be breaking even. For profit businesses with less than 100 employees are eligible. Loan amounts are based on costs from the last three months. The maximum loan amount is \$100,000 or the sum of expenses for the last three months (whichever is less). Commissioner Sather asked about loan amounts and whether there were matching requirements. Ms. Clark responded that there is a 50/50 match requirement if it is a retail or service enterprise. There are no job creation or retention requirements. These are three year loans with no payments required in the first year. Ms. Clark further noted that the office is currently working remotely. You can still reach them by phone at 814-506-8287, however the best way to get in touch is via email at dclark@hcbi.com. Dean Fluke noted that he is having problems with the reception and that this is not at all like being physically present at the meeting. He reiterated his belief that public meetings should be cancelled. Commissioner Sather noted that there is County business to conduct and we must continue meeting and functioning.

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, offered an update on COVID-19 efforts. His office has been monitoring for the last month and he expects that we will continue to be at this elevated threat level for at least another month or two. He is continuing to work with many other regional and local groups. He is transitioning to a virtual emergency operations centers which allows his office to be much more efficient. The EMA office is coordinating distribution of PPE to emergency responders and the regional task force. If minimal replacement requests for PPE continue, they should be able to continue to meet demand for the next 30 days. Hand sanitizer was also distributed to emergency responders today. Commissioner Thomas thanked Mr. Thompson for the excellent job he and his staff are doing.

Joe Thompson requested consideration of approval for a designation of agent resolution for PEMA/FEMA. This is the first of many steps to receive federal reimbursements. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Joe Thompson requested consideration of approval to submit the public disaster assistance application and agreement for financial assistance to PEMA. This is the second part of the first step of applying for and receiving federal assistance. Dean Fluke commented that he would like a more detailed meeting agenda. The copy that he has at home is not complete. Heather Fellman responded that there is an agenda published online. Due to requirements that we post the agenda 24 hours before a public meeting, any items that are added within that final 24 hour period must be added to the agenda at the meeting after a vote by the Commissioners. That is why you will not see Debra Clark, Yvonne Martin, or the JVBDS joinder affirmation on the agenda online and the Commissioners voted to add them this morning. Dean Fluke wants to see more in the minutes in the Daily News. It is his belief that the Chief Clerk misses what she wants to miss when creating the minutes. Commissioner Thomas noted that Mr. Fluke is aware of the fact that minutes are taken and put online. The minutes online are accurate minutes. He noted that if Mr. Fluke is referring to the paper, the Commissioner's Office does not control what is published by the Daily News. Peter McManamon offered his thanks to Joe Thompson and his staff. Virginia Cooper and Mark Sather also offered their thanks to Joe Thompson and his staff for their efforts. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Yvonne Martin from the Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce discussed the CARES Act. She noted that her office is receiving many daily updates from elected officials at the federal and state level. The Chamber has also dedicated a portion of their website to information on local businesses and how the shutdowns are affecting their hours. Huntingdon County Strong has a list of restaurants offering takout and delivery as well as a listing of local business hours and closings. Ms. Martin discussed changes to the unemployment system. They are waiving certain requirements including the waiting week, registration with CareerLink, and job search requirements. The State is working on a new application system for unemployment applications. There are many loan opportunities available. One of those that businesses may qualify for is the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Program offers low interest loans to pay for expenses that could not be met because of the disaster. There is a \$10,000 grant that can be issued within three business days of application. Question about unemployment and loan opportunities can be addressed to (814)643-1110 or ymartin@huntingdonchamber.com. Commissioner Thomas thanked Ms. Martin for the updates and urged the public to check websites regularly to see if your business qualifies for these loan opportunities. Commissioner Walls further urged small businesses not to hesitate to reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and HCBI. Commissioner Sather also noted that the CARES Act can even help those who were self-

employed. Solicitor McManamon commented that this system of public comments has worked out better than he originally anticipated and he congratulated the Commissioners on a job well done giving the public an opportunity to be heard.

Consideration of approval was given for reaffirmation of the JVBDS joinder agreement between Huntingdon, Mifflin, and Juniata counties. This joinder has been in place since March 30, 1976 and has been approved by the Department of Human Services. Commissioner Thomas also wanted to let the public know that the County is applying for the Human Service Block Grant again this year. The Human Services Block Grant has been available since approximately 2013. By becoming a block grant county, it helps the residents of Huntingdon County and keeps money within the County. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under matters to be addressed by the solicitor, bids were opened for the taxable bridge loan of \$1.5 million. This is a short-term 6 month loan related to the COVID-19 outbreak. First National Bank offered two options in their bid. Option 1 is a drawdown line of credit at a rate of 2.25913%. Option two is at an interest rate of 2.215% with maturity at six months from the date of close. Kish Bank bid at an interest rate of 2.23% with a \$500 loan fee with maturity at six months from the date of closing. Community State Bank offered an interest rate of 2.2% with no fees and a date of maturity 6 months from the date of closing. Commissioner Thomas commented that the pandemic has slowed revenues. This is not a tax increase. This is a short-term loan to get us through this pandemic. Commissioner Walls noted that funding from the state and federal governments has been slower to come in than anticipated and tax revenue has also slowed. This is a short-term loan to be paid back with budgeted funds. Commissioner Thomas has asked that action be taken on this bid next week after review of the options and incoming revenues. Solicitor McManamon noted that each bid needs to be reviewed before taking action. Dean Fluke commented that he was upset to see the Commissioners borrowing money again. The Commissioners need to understand that this is all tax money. Commissioner Sather noted that the borrowing for this loan does not involve tax money. It is in response to the emergency declaration.

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 Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:44 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary