

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

47-2021

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; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Ed Zach from Susquehanna Accounting and Consulting; Probation Director, Len Hahn; Wendy Melius from the Center for Community Action; Mike Hannon from Tri County Drug and Alcohol and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

Attending via GoToMeeting: Deputy Treasurer, Cathy Bilger.

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 no additions to the agenda.

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas urged residents to get the COVID vaccine and the booster, if eligible. He also encouraged residents to allow their children to be vaccinated against COVID. Commissioner Walls offered his wishes of a prosperous and safe new year to everyone. He urged residents to stay safe while celebrating this weekend. Commissioner Sather prays for health for everyone in the new year and for families who are struggling.

Under public comments, Mike Hannon commented that at this time of year we see people struggling with alcohol. We are continuing to see people in person and we have services available for drug and alcohol treatment. We are waiting for some clarity on the opioid settlement and what services can be offered with those funds.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, consideration of approval was given to adopt the 2022 County Budget. The budget has been on public display for 20 days. This is the first time that the public has gotten to see the budget presented under the new modified accrual system. Mr. Zach commented that the budget has not changed since it was presented for public display 20 days ago. There will be no tax increase. This Board of Commissioners has made a commitment to improve the county finances from a reporting standpoint. If you look at last year's budget compared to the presentation from this year, you would just see the general fund. As we have been going through this process, we are breaking out some of the departments into their own funds. For example, CYS has been set up to show a special revenue fund and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has also been set up as a separate fund in the budget. We continue to make changes to improve the records to better reflect the financial state of the county. Also

of note, ARPA funds have not been used to balance the County budget. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to enter executive session at 9:41AM. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes) to return from executive session at 9:47AM. Discussions were held and no decisions were reached during this time. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to approve the 2022 budget with the same millage rate as last year.

Wendy Melius from the Center for Community Action requested consideration of approval for a contract extension for the PHARE Wood Township contract. COVID has delayed some of the work in this project. The State has approved the extension. We are requesting an extension until the end of the first quarter of 2022. Kylie Hawn asked how many houses have been completed. Ms. Melius responded that she believes 5 have been completed and we are targeting 8. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Wendy Melius requested consideration of approval for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2 (ERAP2). We have been awarded \$2.4 million. Funds must be spent by 2025. This program is to assist renters who have been financially impacted by COVID and need help paying for rent and utilities. There are 102 people on a waiting list right now for this program and we are working on getting to them all as fast as we can. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Len Hahn, Probation Director, requested consideration of approval for the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) Subgrant Award Notification. The County has been awarded adult probation grant-in-aid in the amount of \$23,219 for a grant period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Len Hahn requested consideration of approval for the Central Counties Youth Center (CCYC) owner county agreement. Commissioner Thomas commented that unfortunately the cost has skyrocketed over the past few years. It is a service that we need, but it is very expensive. We are paying quarterly what we used to pay yearly when he first became Commissioner. It shows how much more we are using it and that the cost of everything is going up. Commissioner Sather noted that the cost is \$226,583 annually and it is paid in 4 installments throughout the year. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented an update on COVID-19. Huntingdon County is still in a high rate of community spread. In the last week, there was an average of 24 new cases per day. The percent positivity rate is 7.4% for the county and 15.3% for the state. The total number of infections in Huntingdon County since the beginning of the pandemic is 8,362. A total of 192 Huntingdon County residents have died from COVID. The average daily hospitalization at Penn Highlands is 8 people. There is a concerning trend developing in the hospital emergency department. Two weeks ago about 2% of their emergency room visits were for COVID-like illness and now it is above 3% again. The number of fully vaccinated individuals is 20,600 (about 45% of the population). The CDC has recently changed its quarantine guidelines. Their quarantine and isolation guidelines for asymptomatic individuals is now shorter. Those who are diagnosed with COVID-19 are now only required to isolate for 5 days. This guidance is the same no matter the vaccination status of the individual. This is likely driven by the recent surge of cases related to the Omicron variant. There is some early research which seems to indicate that Omicron may cause milder illness, but it is more highly transmissible. There is concern that there will be another surge soon that could crush hospitals and healthcare workers. There is also discussion of potential supply chain concerns due to a number of contributing issues. There is not currently a shortage of PPE in Huntingdon County. We are also hearing that there are more people that are becoming infected but showing now symptoms. At home rapid test kits are now available. The majority of patients that are showing up in hospitals, in the ICUs, and on ventilators are unvaccinated. We are also seeing

more younger people who are getting very sick. Being vaccinated and getting a booster is the best line of defense against severe illness.

There was nothing discussed under 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 10:23 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary