

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

41-2021

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: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Dan Berger from ABI; EMA Administrative Assistant, Doug Hart; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Community Development Administrator, Stacia-Fe Gillen and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn. Attending via GoToMeeting: CYS Fiscal Supervisor, Claudia Conrad; CYS Fiscal Tech, Chris Dixon; Brandon Carson and Dustin Bishop from Southern Alleghenies.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Tracey Rhodes 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 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 two additions to the agenda: consideration of the notice to proceed for the MUMA Hill Valley Sewer Project. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to add this items to the agenda. The second item is consideration to approve an agreement with the Department of Corrections for food services. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas encouraged residents to get the COVID vaccine and the booster if eligible.

Stacia-Fe Gillen announced that there is a meeting for prospective foster parents soon. Individuals considering becoming a foster parent are encouraged to attend. Commissioner Walls also commented that Veterans Day is coming up and he encouraged residents to thank a veteran for their service.

There were no matters to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration for contractor approval for the second pay application for the Huntingdon County Library Elevator Project. On October 19th the first payment was approved in the amount of \$2,667.60. Payout 2 is requesting \$6,721.20 to MidState Construction leaving a balance of \$128,354. This project was funded through a grant to the library. This project is to be substantially completed by December 22nd. Commissioner Sather noted that no general fund dollars are being used for this project. All costs beyond what is covered by the grant will be paid by the library. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval for a designation of agent resolution regarding Tropical Depression Ida, which damaged county bridges 5 at the cost of \$5,000-6,000 and 20 at the cost of \$11,000. In order to process these claims through FEMA, the Commissioners need to designate an agent to represent the county. Mr. Lettiere is volunteering to do that. We were required to submit a request for public assistance which was completed this week. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Stacia-Fe Gillen, Community Development Administrator, requested consideration of approval for a Notice to Proceed for the Guyer Brothers for the MUMA Hill Valley Sewer Project. Guyer Brothers did provide the appropriate bonding which was reviewed by the engineer. They are compliant in providing documentation so we are comfortable providing the Notice to Proceed. They will have 45 days to achieve substantial completion and 60 days for final payment. Work is to be completed by January 7, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Stacia-Fe Gillen requested consideration of approval for a Resolution for the Statement of Goals: Executive Order 11625 National Program for Minority Business Enterprises and Women Business Enterprises. This is an annual resolution for the CDBG Program. Any time we bid out a project, we let contractors know that they are required to do certain outreaches with the goal of achieving our set priorities in the effort to involve more minority and women business enterprises. This is county resolution 16-2021. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Stacia-Fe Gillen requested consideration of approval for Resolution 17-2021 to adopt the Huntingdon County Section 3 Plan for the CDBG Program. This is an annual resolution. Section 3 employees are lower to moderate income employees. We set a goal for contractors on larger projects, projects of over \$100,000. These projects do not come up often for CDBG but we do have this goal for when these contracts do come up. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Chris Dixon, CYS Fiscal Assistant, requested consideration of approval for a Purchase of Service Agreement with White Deer Run/Cove Prep. This is a secure residential facility for boys. This contract is for July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. It is a renewal from last year at the state-approved rates. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Chris Dixon requested consideration of approval for a Purchase of Service Agreement with the Bair Foundation. They offer foster care services. This is for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This is a renewal from last year at the state-approved rates. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Chris Dixon requested consideration of approval for a Purchase of Service Agreement with Bethany Christian Services of Central PA. They provide foster care services. This is for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This is a renewal from last year at the state-approved rates. Commissioner Thomas asked if this is the agency that they have had a problem with in the past. Solicitor Newton responded that there is a current lawsuit pending. We are in the discussion stage right now. Commissioner Walls asked if there was a rate increase. Ms. Dixon responded that there was a slight increase this year. It was moved by Commissioner Walls to table this item pending further review of the change of rates. There was no second and the motion died. Commissioner Thomas commented that he does not want to sign a contract with this group until the pending legal action is settled. Commissioner Sather expressed his agreement. Claudia Conrad commented that there are currently children in care

who are using the services provided by Bethany Christian Services. Commissioner Thomas commented that he believes we should not place any new children with this service provider until we get this resolved. He would also not agree to an increase in rates at this time. Commissioner Walls asked if we do not approve this contract will the previous contract stand. Solicitor Newton believes that it would. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to table this item pending resolution of the current legal action.

Brandon Carson, Executive Director of Allegheny Broadband Incorporated (ABI), requested consideration of approval for a grant coop agreement. We have been working on a broadband initiative to close broadband service gaps in Huntingdon County for quite some time. To that end, we released a request for proposals earlier this summer. Proposals were due in July. In total we received 13 proposals. Three of those provide for fixed wireless service that impacts Huntingdon County. We would like to talk more about those proposals today. Upward Broadband quoted \$1,401,312 to equip 15 towers that would serve 1,280 Huntingdon County businesses and households. Crows Nest Broadband quoted \$79,599 to equip two towers that would serve 250 household and businesses. The Rural Broadband Cooperative submitted a request for \$1,565,000 to equip five towers that would serve 650 households and businesses. These proposals have been reviewed by ABI. ABI is making a recommendation to accept two of those proposals – the proposals from Upward Broadband and Crows Nest Broadband. Commissioner Sather commented that the County has funds from the American Rescue Plan Act that may be used to make investments in broadband infrastructure. The Commissioners plan to dedicate a portion of these funds to broadband initiatives. ABI has the skills and experience to help the county plan and implement these projects. Kylie Hawn asked how much of the American Rescue Plan funds are being dedicated to broadband. Commissioner Thomas answered that we do not have an amount designated yet. James Lettiere asked if the per household cost is a one-time up-front cost to the homeowner or is that a per month cost. Commissioner Thomas answered that this is not a cost to the homeowner. It is a cost to provide services for that household. That figure represents the county's investment in the project. Stacia-Fe Gillen asked if those that would be served by Rural Broadband Cooperative are going to be served by the two providers that ABI is recommending. Commissioner Thomas commented that there will always be some overlap with wireless. There is no question that the two that they presented is the most economical and far-reaching. Ms. Gillen clarified that someone may look at the maps provided and may think those 650 residents will not be served. That's not necessarily true because there may be an overlap. Is there an assessment to know how many will not be served? Commissioner Thomas answered that they can go to each tower site and do an assessment to see how many residents will be served. Commissioner Thomas noted that there were also other projects that were funded through the CARES Act that are not noted in these studies as well. There were Broadband projects in the Southern end of the county that have already been completed. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to enter into a cooperative agreement with ABI.

Brandon Carson requested consideration of approval to award the Broadband proposals. ABI recommends accepting proposals from Upward and Crows Nest Broadband. Commissioner Walls asked if these proposals meet the requirements set out in the American Rescue Plan guidelines. Mr. Carson responded that they do meet those requirements. Commissioner Sather asked if there is a beginning date and end date for the work to be completed. Mr. Carson responded that the work should be complete and services should be live by July 31, 2022. Kylie Hawn asked when work will start. Commissioner Thomas commented that work will begin as soon as contracts are signed. Commissioner Walls asked if there are any performance guarantees built into these agreements. Mr. Carson answered that ABI is requiring speed testing when the project is complete as well as ongoing testing and monitoring over a five year period. Jim Lettiere praised ABI and the Commissioners for moving forward with this. In the County Comprehensive Plan one of the main goals and objectives is the expansion of broadband services. Commissioner Thomas commented that we are not done with our broadband expansion efforts. We continue to apply for and search for more funding opportunities to reach the very hard to reach areas in the county. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for project supplement 2021-01 to the grant cooperation agreement for the broadband expansion project. Commissioner Thomas commented that we need to discuss an administration fee for ABI. Commissioner Sather asked what administration fee Bedford County has agreed to. Mr. Carson responded that Bedford County awarded a little less than \$1,000,000 to Crows Nest for 21 towers. We agreed to an admin fee of 5%. Bedford has helped ABI with a number of things including get some of these template documents in place that you are reviewing this morning. What I am asking for the administration of these two projects in Huntingdon is a 7% administration fee. This is a not to exceed amount. Commissioner Walls asked if Mr. Carson will keep track of the actual cost to administer these projects. Mr. Carson responded that we will be documenting all hours and expenses related to these projects. We will only be billing for costs incurred during the administration of these Huntingdon County projects. Commissioner Sather commented that the county has contracted with Susquehanna Accounting for the administration of the ARPA funds. He questioned how we would pay admin fees in this overlapping area. Commissioner Thomas commented that we would subtract the funding assigned to ABI for management from the overall ARPA funding total before calculating Susquehanna's share since they will not be managing the broadband funds. Commissioner Thomas commented that he is serving as chair of ABI and will thus be abstaining from the vote. He fully supports this project and project supplement. Kylie Hawn asked if the admin fees are in addition to the \$1.4 million designated for the project. Commissioner Thomas answered that that is correct. Ms. Hawn asked how much ARPA funding was received by the County. Commissioner Thomas responded that he is not positive without the numbers in front of him but he believes we received the first half totaling \$4.1 million and there will be another \$4.1 million after 2 years. Mr. Carson noted that the project supplement was designed and set up to be a stand-alone project agreement for each project that the county would elect to award funds to. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, abstain).

Consideration of approval was given for the 2022 intergovernmental agreement between the PA Department of Corrections and the County for food services for the County Jail. This is the sixth amendment to the existing agreement. Since 2015 the County has saved over \$280,000 per year in food services costs by contracting with SCI Smithfield. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for the 2022 intergovernmental agreement between Huntingdon County and Centre County Correctional Facility. Solicitor Newton recommends tabling this agreement. At this time, he is still working with Cliff Beaver to sort out some insurance questions related to this agreement. Our existing agreement will remain in effect. Commissioner Thomas commented that he does not believe they will change this contract. Solicitor Newton commented that he believes we still need to know what our liability will be before signing. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to the 2022 intergovernmental agreement between Huntingdon County and Cumberland County Correctional Facility. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to begin the 2022 TAN process for \$1.75 million. Solicitor Newton will get the request for proposals out this week to the 9 banks that typically receive the requests. We will open bids on the first meeting of December. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for a cooperation agreement for the 2020/2021 Human Services Block Grant Program Reimbursement. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Doug Hart, EMA Administrative Assistant, gave an update on COVID-19. For the 7-day period ending October 30th the average was 18 cases and for the following week it was down to 16. SCI Smithfield has 11 inmates and 1 staff positive. SCI Huntingdon has 0 inmate and 2 staff positives. There is nothing significant to report from the schools and there is now a pediatric vaccine available. Penn Highlands has no plans to include pediatric vaccines in their program. Broad Top Medical is reaching out to school districts to gauge interest in a pediatric vaccine clinic. The Department of Health is reporting 19 cases among school-aged children last week. They are also now reporting cases in children 4 and under. In that group last week there were 5 cases. Juniata College had a few positive cases over the past couple of weeks. They are currently at 13 cases. Commissioner Thomas stated that he is baffled by Penn Highlands decision to not include pediatric vaccines in their vaccination program. He asked if they provided an explanation of their decision. Mr. Hart responded that they have not. Weiss Markets is planning on offering the pediatric vaccine. COVID hospitalizations for the state are starting to drop. Currently there are 2,475 which is down from 2,786 two weeks ago. PCR is at 5.2%. It was 9.2% two weeks ago. The state PCR is 9.3%. Long-term care facilities are stable. Total number of people partially or fully vaccinated in the county stands at 21,351 which is about 47.3% of the total population. 3,029 have received the booster. At the Jail they have 0 cases and are back to normal operations. The FDA has approved mixing vaccines for boosters. You can receive any of the available booster shots regardless of what your original vaccine was.

Doug Hart updated on the damage from Tropical Storm Ida. Yesterday afternoon they extended the deadline for applications for damage funding to December 13th.

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 10:58 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary