

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 via GoToMeeting: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; CYS Fiscal Supervisor, Claudia Conrad; CYS Fiscal Tech, Chris Dixon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Elections Coordinator, Tammy Thompson; Treasurer, Susan Harry; Wendy Melius and Natasha Brubaker from the Center for Community Action; Debra Clark from Huntingdon County Business and Industry; visitor, Dean Fluke and Daily News Reporter Kylie Hawn.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. 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 Sather and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, abstain) to approve the minutes of the October 27<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 minutes of the November 10<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting.

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

There was one addition to the agenda: consideration of approval for the renewal of the administrative agreement for the EZ Loan Program. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Under announcements, Commissioner Sather announced that there will be no public meeting next week as the Commissioners will be virtually attending CCAP.

Under public comments, Dean Fluke commented that he has a problem with the minutes. "When Jeff was absent from the meeting, it was suggested that he could vote the day after the time of the meeting. My question is when I came to talk to the chief clerk, she said it was because he had voted for it before. When do the Commissioners think amended means a change in the voting? He was not at that meeting where that change was made. My concern is that when does the person have right to vote and doesn't vote or does vote that that can be done a day later? I'd like to have that question answered." Commissioner Sather responded that there were multiple decisions and actions that were to be taken and that were taken that day at that meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup>. The one that you are asking about is Resolution 13-2020. At that point, that was revision. We had asked Peter McManamon, our solicitor, to weigh in. Our solicitor made the comment that since it was a revision and Commissioner Thomas had previously approved the resolution that would be up to Commissioner Thomas to decide if he would sign. That explanation appears in the minutes of that meeting. Commissioner Thomas commented that he was unable to attend the meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>, but if the questions is whether or not I support the actions taken, I most certainly did. It was a very minor revision to the resolution.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Natasha Brubaker of Center for Community Action, requested consideration of approval for the ESG-CV Emergency Shelter funding application. It has a short application window of 10 days. This would allow us to provide hotel vouchers for five counties. The amount of the available funding is \$102,128. It is for a four

month period ending in April 2021. The Center for Community Action hopes to be able to use this funding to help 20 households. Commissioner Sather asked who the public can contact for more information on this program. Ms. Brubaker responded that they can reach out to the local Huntingdon Office at (814)643-4212. Wendy Melius commented that the public can also call 1-800-323-9997 and it will go to the appropriate staff person. This is a short turn-around grant application that we received a week and a half ago. The state wants us to pass resolutions with elected officials. The purpose of the funding is to reduce the stress of local shelters and limit the spread of COVID. The hope is to house homeless individuals and find permanent housing situations. Commissioner Walls asked how families are identified for this program and does the Center have any families currently in mind. Wendy Melius responded that they can get a list of families that were unable to be helped due to lack of shelter dollars that would benefit from this program. This is needed funding on a short-term basis to get people out of the cold. We can get that number and email it. Commissioner Walls asked if Commissioners from all five counties have to approve this in order for the Center for Community Action to receive this funding. Natasha Brubaker responded that the Center can still receive the funds but that those funds will not be spent in counties that do not approve. Ms. Melius responded further that each county does not have its own pot of money, but the State would like to see is the commitment that the Counties are in favor of this. This is part of the COVID funding and is a quick turn-around to get the funding out to areas that need it. She is not sure if Counties that do not approve are unable to be served. Jim Lettiere commented that the Planning Office was contacted by Huntingdon House relative to their office applying for this funding. Does this assist with her needs? We were unable to accommodate Huntingdon House. Ms. Melius responded that this does meet their needs and they have already been in touch with Huntingdon House regarding this funding. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Chris Dixon, CYS Fiscal Tech, requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Community Specialist Corporation (New Outlook Academy), an all-girls residential drug and alcohol program. This is a renewal from last year at the state-approved rates for contract year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Chris Dixon requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Summit Schools Inc. (Summit Academy), an all-boys residential drug and alcohol program. This is a renewal from last year at the state-approved rates for contract year July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, provided an update on COVID-19. We are currently seeing the predicted fall resurgence. We are at a critical and very concerning point in the pandemic. The total number of cases in Huntingdon County, the percentage of the tests that are positive, and the hospitalizations have increased steeply and the numbers are very high. It is spreading more rapidly now than at any point so far. The risk of contracting COVID-19 has increased. We are averaging 24 new cases per day in Huntingdon County and we have seen 1,372 cases so far. Our infection rate is very high at 3,000 cases per 100,000. We have had 37 COVID-related deaths in the county. Penn Highlands Huntingdon is averaging 5-9 COVID patients. ER visits continue to increase. The PCR rate is a good indicator of community spread. Huntingdon County's PCR rate is 13.3%. The state average is 9.6%. COVID is impacting the operation of all kinds of industries and services in our community. The test site was open for 10 days. During that time, they tested 1,396 people. 184 of them tested positive. The highest infection rate is in the age group from 25-49. The long-term care facilities and hospitals keep soldiering through. Huntingdon County Jail staff and inmates are returning as they are cleared. We currently have a good supply of PPE for community agencies. There are now concerns of the seasonal flu in addition to COVID. EMA encourages residents to get a flu shot. EMA has also been working with the Department of Health and has formulated a mass vaccination plan for the county. Judge Zanic has postponed in-person hearings. As a reminder, COVID is a respiratory illness. It is going to be with us for a while. The earliest I am hearing is six more months before we see a real break. Certainly if we can all work together and take the proper precautions we can knock a dent in the surge. Take the standard precautions: wear a mask, physically distance yourselves from others, wash your hands regularly and if you are sick stay at home. The higher the rate of community transmission, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading. Everyone needs to pitch in and help stop the spread. Commissioner Sather commented that the Commissioners appreciate everything Mr. Thompson and his team have been doing. It is quite an undertaking and you and your team are doing a great job. Now that the testing site is closed, where can residents get tested? How long is the average turn-around? Mr. Thompson responded that they would need to contact their healthcare provider. Hospitals can do the testing. Penn Highlands tests are usually returned in a few days. 3-4 days is roughly the average although it is highly variable based on how many tests are being conducted. Commissioner Thomas commented that the walk-up testing site was really a benefit to the county. Bedford, Blair, Centre, and Huntingdon all have severer outbreaks. Is there a possibility that the state would be able to rotate one of those testing sites between our four counties in this region? Mr. Thompson commented that that could be a possibility. They look at community spread and community impact when making determinations about where to bring one of those testing sites. We could

contact the state and propose that idea. Commissioner Thomas commented that at the beginning of all of this people were not concerned and they thought it was all in the institutions. Now it is not just in those institutions. It is spreading through the whole community and it is spreading like wildfire. There are simple precautions that we can take to stop the spread: wear masks, social distance, wash your hands. There are a lot of folks that have ignored all the guidelines and that is why we are in the predicament we are in. Commissioner Walls commented that the Commissioners had a meeting with local business leaders yesterday who expressed concerns that sometimes asymptomatic people are having trouble getting a prescription for a COVID test. Is there something we can do or discussions we can have with local healthcare providers? Mr. Thompson commented that there is some concern about the availability of testing supplies. We can certainly talk to local health care providers and business leaders. Jim Lettiere asked if there is an update regarding the availability of a vaccine for the general public. Mr. Thompson responded that right now it looks like the vaccine will first be released by the end of the year. It is a two-dose regiment. Initially it will be available for critical essential workers. For the general public, it looks like January or February. Kylie Hawn commented that she had heard that MedExpress in Altoona and State College have the rapid antigen test that gives results in 15 minutes. Geissinger also gets their results back quickly, usually within 24 hours. Commissioner Thomas commented that the residents of Huntingdon County have no idea how much Mr. Thompson and his team do. The Commissioners all expressed their gratitude and support of the EMA team.

Tammy Thompson, Elections Coordinator, provided an update on the election. Putting together the election cycle this year has been very challenging certainly because it was a presidential year, but also because of COVID. Thank you to everyone that pitched in and helped us get through this election cycle and its many challenges. For the poll workers it was a very long and busy day. We experienced voter turnout that we have never seen – 80.5%. Thank you for the hard work that poll workers put in. The new mail-in system was a big undertaking for our small office. We were able to mail out over 5200 ballots. We commend the voters for their diligence as we had a return rate of 89%. Election activities are now winding down. Some people think election are just a couple of days every year, but there is a lot of processing leading up to and following Election Day to make sure everything is processed and accounted for appropriately. Final certification is due on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>. At this point, everything has been counted. Thank you again to everyone who helped with this election. We had some great part-time staff, and intern from the college, and county employees that all pitched in and helped this election run smoothly. Commissioner Sather offered his congratulations for managing another enormous vote. The actions of you and others is very much appreciated. Commissioner Walls commented that he has received a few calls and there is information circulating on social media about provisional ballots. Voters were given information to look up their ballot status on the state website and some of them have found that when they go on there the information is not available. When will that be available so that they can see that their vote was counted? Can you explain that process? Ms. Thompson responded that ballots were just certified yesterday. They can use their ballot receipt to track the ballot. Letters also went out today to everyone who voted by provision ballot to let them know whether their ballot was counted, or if it was not counted what the reason was. We did not have too many that were not counted. We had some voters that were not registered to vote and some who were registered in another county. Provisional ballots cannot be counted across county lines at the direction of the state. Joe Thompson offered his congratulations on a job well done. Kylie Hawn commented that both Joe Thompson and Tammy Thompson do a great job and offered her thanks for their hard work. Commissioner Thomas commented that the public does not see all of the evenings and weekends that you worked for the past couple of months. All of the hard work is very much appreciated and it will get better. Commissioner Walls commented that there were so many people that helped to make this election run smoothly. It required a lot of organization and hard work. Commissioner Scott thanked Chief Clerk Heather Fellman for helping keep the county afloat while assisting with the election. It was all hands on deck and everyone did a wonderful job, including everyone who worked the polls. Commissioner Sather offered his thanks to Ms. Thompson for all she does.

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, and Debra Clark, HCBI Executive Director, requested consideration of approval for the annual administrative agreement between the Huntingdon County Commissioners and Huntingdon County Business and Industry for the Enterprise Zone Program. The term of this agreement is July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The Enterprise Zone designation is for the portion of the county extending from Alexandria to Mount Union and exists to promote economic development. The funds are used for the purposes of administering the enterprise zone. The County agrees to pay HCBI funds accumulated from the interest of the Enterprise Zone revolving loan fund not to exceed \$50,000 for activity involving the implementation of the enterprise zone in the current year. Mr. Lettiere would like to point out that on page three of the document, under County Responsibilities and Understandings, under County Administrative Responsibilities, a small section was removed. The prior agreement under a read, "Preparation and submission to DCED of all requests for payments." This was removed because we have no grants or funds to draw from since 2014. All other portions of the agreement remain intact. Debra Clark commented that this helps offset general expenses, taxes, staff benefits, retirement plans, staff travel and training, mortgage and telecom expenses. Those are the line items that we have used in this budget to allocate those funds. Commissioner Sather commented that this is one way that we can encourage and assist entrepreneurial development. Thank you to Mr. Lettiere and Ms. Clark. Commissioner Walls commented that HCBI has loan

programs and the Commissioners are part of the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission which has funds available for different business operations. Together there are a lot of programs to assist businesses with funding. We are here to help you as County Commissioners and HCBI. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Debra Clark requested consideration of approval for an extension for Steegness LLC of interest-only payments for October 1, 2020 through April 1, 2021. They have not been able to qualify for any of the available COVID funding due to the fact that their business only opened a few days prior to the shut-down. We have taken that into consideration. They are up-to-date on their payments prior to the first request for the interest-only payments and they made all payments during the course of the first agreement. We are requesting an extension of this agreement for another six months. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to accept a fuel oil bid from Bumgardner and Flasher Oil Inc. They were the only bidder and submitted a bid with two options. Option one is a variable rate at 15 cents above rack price. The current rack price is \$1.245. Option two is a cap rate at \$1.729 or the lower cash price on the day of delivery. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to accept the option one variable rate bid.

Consideration of approval was given to solicit bids for the tax anticipation notice (TAN). The County solicitor is directed to send an invitation letter to bidders on the \$1.75 million TAN for 2021. Commissioner Thomas commented that eventually we will have to consider increasing the TAN. It takes about \$1.5 million to operate for a month. January to March is a really tough time for us because there is not a lot of revenue coming in. I have concerns this year because I have not seen the budget passed yet for the state. Commissioner Walls commented that the TAN is a one year loan that must be paid off by the end of the year. The purpose is to hold us over before the property tax revenue starts coming in. As Commissioner Thomas stated, it takes about \$1.5 million to run the county offices for one month so depending on the state budget it could get very tight at the beginning of the year. Commissioner Sather commented that we do need the state to solidify their budget. That would go a long way in assisting the 67 counties of Pennsylvania. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, 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 10:44 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary