

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

45-2021

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 and Walls; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Larry Newton; EMA Administrative Assistant, Doug Heart; CYS Director, Shannon Walborn; Sheriff, Jeff Leonard and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

Attending via GoToMeeting: Commissioner Thomas; CYS Fiscal Supervisor, Claudia Conrad; CYS Fiscal Tech, Chris Dixon.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. 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, abstain) 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 Walls commented that there was an article in the paper last week that contained a statement that the county could be obligated to pay \$400,000 towards the broadband project that the county is undertaking. Commissioner Thomas is the Chairman of Alleghenies Broadband Incorporated. He has been reaching out to partner with school districts and other entities to share the portion of this cost that the county would be responsible for. We are hoping that through partnerships that the county will not be responsible for the full amount, however we are also hoping that whatever the county contribution is that we will be able to secure grant funding for it. Commissioner Thomas commented that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to progress Huntingdon County into the future for education and healthcare and to provide more opportunities for working from home for county residents. We do have a commitment of \$40,000 from one of the school districts already. We are waiting for others to get back to us. I do not believe we will be paying the full \$400,000. The County cannot do this alone. That is why we are reaching out. Commissioner Thomas also urged residents to get the COVID vaccine and the booster, if eligible. COVID this year is every bit as bad as last year with hospitalizations and deaths. Please get the shot. Commissioner Sather announced that yesterday morning the Commissioners received notice that funds have been released for the RACP grant in the amount of \$1.1 million. This funding is for the East Broad Top Railroad restoration.

There were no public comments.

Under matters to be addressed by the solicitor, Solicitor Newton announced that on December 21st the resolution for the TAN will be voted on at the public meeting. Closing will be scheduled for January 3rd.

Under new business, Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Wardell Associates DBA Family Intervention Crisis Services of Centre County. We take sex trafficking and human trafficking very seriously. This is something that is very prevalent and something that we need to continue to focus on. The State is now mandating initial evaluations with every child that interacts with CYS to see if there are any indicators of sex trafficking or human trafficking. If those indicators hit a certain level we are required to send the child for further assessment. This company would provide that further assessment. We do not anticipate a large number of assessments but we need to have a contract in place in case it is needed. The

period of the contract is July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This is a new contract. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under matters for action, information and discussion, consideration of approval was given to approve an oil bid opened at last week's public meeting. The only bid submitted came from Bumgardner and Flasher. The Commissioners have chosen the variable rate at 15 cents per gallon above the rack price on the day of delivery. The rack price as of 12/13/2021 was 2.298 cents per gallon. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Doug Heart, EMA Administrative Assistant, presented and update on COVID-19. He noted that COVID rates are right back to where it was in December and January of last year. Hospitalizations are getting out of control. During the week ending December 11th, Huntingdon County averaged 33 new cases per day up from 29 the week before. This is the highest it has been since the first week of January. SCI Smithfield has 57 active inmate cases and 2 active staff cases. SCI Huntingdon has no active inmate cases and 9 active staff cases. The PA Supreme Court vacated the face covering order issued by the Department of Health in August. All four school districts acted quickly on this ruling and are now mask-optional. This does not apply to buses and vans. You are still required to wear masks on buses and vans. The Department of Health reported that there were 19 new cases among school-aged children in Huntingdon County during the week of December 1st-7th. During that same week there were 7 cases among children 4 and under. Juniata College has ended their fall semester. They had 4 positives in the week ending December 10th. The total for the semester was 39. They have done a great job at mitigating spread. Total vaccination rate for staff and students is around 95%. Penn Highlands reports 16 active in-house COVID patients. Five were in the ICU and 4 are in the behavioral health unit. Fewer and fewer ICU beds are available in the region and that problem continues to get worse. COVID hospitalizations for the state stand at 4,694 which is up from 4,177 last week. The incident rate per 100,000 for the county is 401 which is up from 350 last week. The state number is 321 up from 277 last week. The PCR for the county is 10.8% up from 9.2% last week. The state PCR is 14.4%. Long-term care facilities remain stable. Staffing remains at levels that they expect. The total number of people partially or fully vaccinated is 22,452 or 49.2% of the population of the county. 5,895 boosters have been administered which accounts for 29% of fully vaccinated individuals. Unfortunately there were 8 COVID deaths in the county during the week ending December 11th. Commissioner Thomas asked how many COVID deaths have there been in Huntingdon County this year. Mr. Heart responded that he does not have that number available at this time. Commissioner Thomas asked him to bring that information to the next meeting. People do not realize how many people are passing away. It is really disheartening and sad to see something to this magnitude happen when there is a vaccination out there that can help most people. I think those numbers will be eye-opening for people. Mr. Heart commented that the CDC website data in terms of hospital beds can be a little bit confusing. Penn Highlands will tell me that they do not have any beds but then you will look on the CDC website and it says 62% of beds are in use. I think this is because Penn Highlands evaluates how many beds can be serviced by the available staff versus actual number of beds physically present in the building. Commissioner Walls offered his gratitude to healthcare workers and first responders who have stayed in the field through this difficult time.

There were 10 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary