

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

6-2021

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 via GoToMeeting: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Peter McManamon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Wendy Melius from the Center for Community Action; Sheriff, Jeff Leonard; CYS Director, Shannon Walborn; Treasurer, Susan Harry; Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitor, Dean Fluke.

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 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 February 2nd 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.

There were no additions to the agenda.

There were no announcements.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Wendy Melius, Executive Director of the Center for Community Action, presented the draft year-end numbers for her organization. There will be a final report to present to the Commissioners once we submit our final report to the Community Services Block Grant and DCED. Our numbers are all over the board. Some of them are lower and some are higher due to COVID. Our employment program had reduced due to COVID and the loss of the work ready program. The State discontinued the program and now it is rolled under another program. I want to highlight with our Emergency Solutions Grant, we received CARES funding in the amount of \$312,000 for the five counties we serve. We also received Emergency Solutions Grant Code Blue. That is a new program that helps individuals and families who are truly homeless receive hotel and motel stays until we can get them into permanent housing. Through that program we received \$97,000. We have also received PHARE CARES Funding. That has ended but we received \$276,000 for Bedford, Huntingdon and Fulton. That was a quick turn around and funding had to be spend by December 31st. We were unable to spend all of our funding and it went back to the state which I think is going to do another round of funding. We also received Homeless Assistance Program CARES funding for Huntingdon County in the amount of \$13,300. We were able to spend all of the funding for that. We received additional funding in the amount of \$49,000 for the state food program. We were on track with spending that funding and it truly helped those families get access to food. We also partnered with the Planning Commission for the Community Development Block Grant COVID dollars. Countywide we received \$104,000 and Huntingdon Borough received \$59,000. We do not have the final contract for that yet with the County but the funds are going to be used for homeless prevention, rapid rehousing, and mortgage assistance. We can pay up to three months of mortgage assistance for those who are behind. We also have three new programs for our Community Services Block Grant program. That is a scholarship program, a vehicle assistance program, and a technology lending library. The scholarship program will help individuals who are enrolled in a post-secondary education and/or training program. We can help up to \$2,000 with their expenses. It can be used for books, tuition or supplies. We are working with one individual in Huntingdon County currently. This person is looking to go into a

nursing program. That application should be finalized to help her finish her education. The vehicle assistance program, we can help people pay up to \$2,000 towards the purchase of a vehicle or pay up to \$1,000 worth of repairs, or assist with individuals who need help getting their driver's license. To be eligible you must be working 20 hours per week or enrolled in a post-secondary education program. The lending library of technology allows us to lend out laptops and mobile hotspots. We are partnering with the local libraries in Huntingdon, Mount Union and Orbisonia. We are hoping to get the mobile hotspots out to the libraries within the next week. In 2020, we served 471 unduplicated families and 1,086 unduplicated individuals, not including those served through the food pantries. We are also partnering with the Planning Office on the USDA Minor Home Rehab Program. We have two bids out and two families that have submitted paperwork. Hopefully we will have four projects underway here soon. We are having some difficulties with getting access to the homes due to COVID. The families are understandably concerned with allowing us to come in. We are working on making sure they feel safe and the contractors feels safe. We do have the proper PPE for our staff and contractors to go safely into the home. We are applying for the Emergency Solutions Grant for COVID round two. Because we are partnering with Huntingdon House to provide some additional capacity, Huntingdon County has to sign off on a certification of local government approval that is specifically for shelter activities. Commissioner Sather commented that he appreciated the report and everything that Center for Community Action does for the community. It is impressive to hear how many people have been served by your organization. Ms. Melius thanked the Commissioners for their support and for their work on expanding broadband in the County, particularly to underserved areas like Broad Top. This will complement the work we are doing as well to serve the community. If residents are not able to pay for internet service this is another thing that the Center for Community Action may be able to help with. Commissioner Walls commented that Ms. Melius had sent information on Senate Bill 109. The bill sends \$585 million from the federal government to PA. Is there a different proposal that would not give the counties as much money? Can you explain what you know about that? Ms. Melius responded that she does not know very much at this point in time about this matter. It will be run through the Department of Human Services. It is coming down through the HAP Program. This is money that was approved by Congress before the new president came in. This is the old stimulus money, not looking at what President Biden is proposing. It is just under \$3 million that Huntingdon will receive. We can pay for COVID-related things back to January 27, 2020. Right now a lot of our programs will only allow us to go back six months. This would help those individuals who were unable to pay their rent to the landlord through the year. It is a short turn around program. We have to have 55% spent by September 30th. We do not know what the end date is going to be. We are still in the process of figuring out what this program is going to look like. With \$3 million, we could pay 100% of rent for a year for 200 families which is good because there are a lot of families out there that are still struggling with the pandemic. As soon as I know more I will get the information to the Commissioners. Commissioner Thomas thanked Ms. Melius for the work that she and her team do. Dean Fluke asked where the County and the County Commissioners feel that this money should come from. Shannon Walborn commented that she appreciates the work done by Center for Community Action. She has just had staff from CCA attend the CYS staff meeting this morning. CYS staff is now up to date on all of the services that CCA can provide to families in need. We will continue to collaborate with CCA to serve the families that we work with in Huntingdon County. Commissioner Walls responded to Mr. Fluke's comment. We all can have our preferences for where federal and state money should go, but this money is offered to the county through federal dollars passing down through the state. If we do not take it, it will be given to other counties to spend. If that money can come into Huntingdon County to help families here and to support local businesses and contractors it goes directly into our economy. We can agree or disagree on whether the programs are the best way to spend the money, but when the funding is offered to Huntingdon County and it can come in and positively impact our local economy, I will support it. If we do not use it, another county will. If that money would go back into taxpayer pockets, we could have a different discussion, but it is not going back to the taxpayer. Consideration of approval was given for a certification of local government approval for the non-profit organizations to receive ESG funds from state recipients. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval to hire Jessie Duhon for the position of Caseworker I. Her start date will be February 25th. This will fill an opening in the agency. Her county pre-employment screenings have been completed. She is waiting on one department-specific clearance to be returned which will be required before she starts. Ms. Walborn does not have any reason to anticipate that it will not be here by the 25th. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jeff Leonard, Sheriff, requested consideration of approval to attend the mid-winter training conference in Grantville, PA from March 18-20th. The registration fee is \$75. The Association will pay for one of the night stays. He is requesting that the County pay for the second night at a rate of \$120. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented a weekly update on COVID-19 in Huntingdon County. Huntingdon County remains in the substantial level of community transmission. The daily case number is averaging in the low teens which shows some improvement. The EMA Office is maintaining close contact with human and social services agencies. There have been 3,965 cases of COVID-19 in the County to date with 116 deaths. Last week we were concerned. We were seeing a regular count of daily deaths. That fortunately has improved a little bit. In Huntingdon County there have been 2800 partial and 1300 full vaccines administered. The confirmed case number and incident rate is increasing but the daily hospitalization rate is down a bit. Our percent positivity, meaning community spread, is slightly above the state level. SCI Huntingdon has 5 active inmate cases. SCI Smithfield has 89 active inmate cases. Penn Highlands Huntingdon has 6 COVID-19 patients. That is down from the higher level of almost double that that they had recently. We are hosting a COVID-19 testing site in the county from February 21st to 25th. There will be a formal announcement later this week. It will be located in the Huntingdon Plaza. It is free of charge and is being coordinated through the PA Department of Health. In Huntingdon County and across the state we remain in the 1A group for vaccines. This means that healthcare personnel, emergency medical services, first responders, residents and staff of long-term care facilities, individuals who are 65 or older, or are over 16 with a high risk condition are eligible to receive the vaccine. We are concerned about elderly individuals who may not have access to a computer to register for the vaccine. We are partnering with the Area Agency on Aging to ensure access for those who are without internet service. Please contact the Area Agency on Aging for further assistance. We remain struggling with a limited supply of vaccine. Pennsylvania is receiving about 160,000 doses of vaccine per week. There is no timeline for how long this is going to take. Maybe by the end of March we will be done with this first phase of vaccination. Everyone is doing the best that they can to make the vaccine available to everyone who wants it. There are nine sites in Huntingdon County that are administering the vaccine. Please keep in mind that these providers may not have the vaccine on the day that you call. We should have an update today on the vaccine from the Department of Health. We remain in contact with local agencies and facilities through the regional task force, with the State agencies, including PEMA and Department of Health. There has been a report out that the seasonal flu numbers are down. This could be due to the mitigation measures in place. Please continue to wear your masks, wash your hands, and observe social distancing. EMA and LEPC offers training to emergency responders and others locally. We are looking forward to getting those HazMat training programs started again in March. Commissioner Thomas asked Mr. Thompson to list the nine sites that are approved to provide the vaccine. These sites are the Broad Top Medical Center Office in the WalMart Plaza, Huntingdon Weis Store, Huntingdon Rite Aide, the Huntingdon Giant Pharmacy, Mount Union Rite Aide, Mount Union Medical Center, the Broad Top Medical Center in Broad Top City, JC Blair Primary Care across from the hospital and Penn Highlands Huntingdon hospital.

There were no Matters for Action.

There were no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:14 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary