

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

4-2022

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 Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Community Development Administrator, Stacia-Fe Gillen; Prothonotary, Sarah Snare; Treasurer, Susan Harry; Deputy Treasurer, Cathy Bilger; EMA Director, Joe Thompson and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

Commissioner Sather, Jen Caron from Eckert Seamans; Alisha Henry from PNC Bank; and guest, Laura White attended via GoToMeeting.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Walls. Prayer was led by Commissioner Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Sather.

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

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

There were two additions to the agenda. Sarah Snare requested consideration of approval to hire for the open clerk position in her office. Jim Lettiere requested approval to announce the availability of 2022 Marcellus Shale Legacy Grant Funds. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to add these items 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. He commented that he hopes everyone will do their part to help keep everyone safe.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, consideration of approval was given for Ordinance 1-2022 for the general obligation bond. This bond, in the amount of \$10,250,000, is being undertaken to refinance the Bailey Building and 911 debts and cover the cost of issuing the bond. This will provide an estimated \$20,000 in annual savings for the County and eliminate risk of increased interest rates. Commissioner Thomas commented that it is a good day any time we can save the tax payers and the county money. All three commissioners thanked Ms. Caron and Ms. Henry for their professionalism and hard work. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for change order number one for the library elevator project. Supply chain issues have created delays and this change order would provide an extension for substantial completion of the project from 12/21/2021 to 5/31/2022. Commissioner Walls asked if the cost of the project would remain the same and if any penalties would be incurred as a result of the extension. Mr. Lettiere confirmed that the cost would remain the same and there would be no penalties. Commissioner Sather clarified that no general fund dollars are being spent on this project. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval for volunteer appointments to the Huntingdon County Transportation Committee. They are requesting a change from a committee of 18 people to 11. Wendy Melius, Charles Harper, Debra Clark, George Conrad, Judy Scott, Laura White, Matthew Price, and Zack Lee have volunteered to serve on the committee. Brian Wiser, Jim Lettiere and Stacia-Fe Gillen will serve as ex officio members. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Wall, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval to announce the availability of 2022 Marcellus Shale Legacy Grant Funds. Total funds available are \$30,000. There will be two technical assistance workshops on February 16th – one at 12:30PM and one at 7PM. Applications will be due April 8th to the Planning Office and we will present to the County Planning Commission on April 21st. We will present recommendations to the Commissioners at the public meeting on April 26th. Commissioner Walls noted that there is \$30,000 available, and projects are typically funded at \$10,000. We urge all municipalities to take advantage of this funding opportunity. Commissioner Thomas commented that there are really no strings attached to these grants and municipalities should make use of this opportunity. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Stacia-Fe Gillen, Community Development Administrator, requested consideration of approval for change order number one for the MUMA Hill Valley Sewer Project. This is a fiscal year 2018 CDBG Project. There was a site visit on January 11th. The project is ongoing but supply chain issues are causing delays. We are requesting an extension of the timeline from January 7, 2022 until March 30, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Susan Harry, Treasurer, requested consideration of approval to hire Lauren Heane for the position of full-time clerk effective 1/31/2022. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Sarah Snare, Prothonotary, requested consideration of approval to hire Doug Heart, who is currently employed in the EMA Office, to an open clerk position in the Prothonotary's Office effective 2/7/2022. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for the resignation of Rance and Jane Catlin and Patricia Lewis from the Children's Services Advisory Board. They have served for a long time and have displayed incredible commitment to the children in foster care in Huntingdon County. Their service is greatly appreciated. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to appoint Mary Ann Lemke to the Children's Services Advisory Board. Commissioner Walls commented that Ms. Lemke has quite a bit of public service experience and

will be an asset to this board. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for a grant agreement between Huntingdon County and Alleghenies Broadband Incorporated (ABI). Commissioner Thomas commented that ABI reached out with some RFPs to do a regional fiber optic network design. Basically they would put a fiber ring through the six counties. The cost of the project is \$321,000. ABI is asking for a contribution of \$50,000 from each of the counties. This can be paid for from ARPA funds. The remaining cost of the project will be paid for from grant funding that has already been secured by ABI. They would like to start with the study on February 1st. This is looking at a long-term solution for internet access in Huntingdon County. Fiber is the gold standard for internet connectivity. Commissioner Thomas will abstain from this vote because he serves as Chairman of ABI. It was moved by Commissioner Sather, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, abstain).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, presented an update on COVID-19. For the week ending 1/22/2022, the average number of new cases per day in the county was 100 which is up from 79 the previous week. To date, Huntingdon County has had 10,282 cases of COVID-19 which is about 22% of the population. SCI Smithfield reports 304 positive inmates and 34 positive staff. SCI Huntingdon reports 84 inmates and 33 staff. 2 county school districts and the CTC went virtual last week due to high case counts. The Department of Health reports a total of 74 COVID cases among school-aged children and 13 among children 4 and under. Juniata College had 10 positive cases. Penn Highlands reports a total of 6 in-house COVID patients. 1 is in the ICU. The ER volume has been up and down. Yesterday they were overflowing with COVID patients and people experiencing long COVID symptoms. PCR positivity for the county is 31.9% up from 26.3% the previous week. The state is at 31% down from 35.3. Long-term care facilities are doing well with few reported cases among residents. 23,604 vaccinations have been given in the county which is approximately 52% of the county population. 9,666 boosters have been administered, which accounts for 46% of fully vaccinated individuals. There were 6 COVID-related deaths in the County in the past week. 218 county residents have died from COVID since the beginning of the pandemic. Omicron is still the dominant variant according to the CDC, representing over 99% of COVID cases. Testing and vaccines are widely available in the county. If you have question please speak to your healthcare provider.

Joe Thompson also commented on County cellular service. 3G phones will stop operating this year, including for emergency calling, as more resources are being put into 5G. ATT will be shutting down 3G services next month.

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 Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary