

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

17-2021

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, Larry Newton; Christy Steidle from JVBDS; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; Community Development Administrator, Stacia-Fe Gillen; Deputy Court Administrator, Stephanie Smith; EMA Director, Joe Thompson, 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 Sather and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Walls.

There was one correction to last week's minutes. Mark Reifsteck should be Marv Reifsteck. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the April 27th 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 two additions to the agenda. The first is consideration to hire for an open position at District Justice Gummo's Office. The second addition is a request from the Area Agency on Aging to approve Resolution 6-2021 to appoint Connie Brode as executive administrator. It was moved by commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under announcements Commissioner Walls noted that a new restaurant relief program opened today. Anyone working in the food service industry can contact the Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce or Huntingdon County Business and Industry for more details. The application period just opened today. Commissioner Sather announced that County Public Meetings will be held in-person again effective May 11th. It is conditioned upon the CDC social distancing requirements and the capacity of the meeting room in the courthouse.

There were no public comments.

Under Matters to be addressed by the solicitor, Attorney Newton noted that under new business we will be discussing the indemnification and cooperation agreement with Juniata College and the Huntingdon County General Authority.

Under new business, Christy Steidle from Juniata Valley Behavioral and Developmental Services requested consideration of approval for Proclamation 5-2021 for Mental Health Awareness Month. The month of May is Mental Health Awareness Month. In collaboration with various coalitions and agencies throughout the tri-county area of Huntingdon, Juniata, and Mifflin, JVBDS has started the initiation of the Light the Way Project. This will be done in conjunction with the Huntingdon County Prevention Network. The purpose is to encourage residents and businesses to change their porch and spotlights throughout the county to green. This is to raise awareness for mental health. We have given the county three spotlights to light the Courthouse up green. We purchased porch lights and were able to distribute almost 75 of those at Mayfest. This also helps us kick off our Out of the Darkness Walk that will take place October 3rd at Detweiler Field. Commissioner Sather reported some mental health statistics. Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in PA and the second leading cause of death for ages 10-34. It is something to recognize in Huntingdon County. Commissioner Sather asked who members of the public should contact if they would like a green light to participate in the Green Light campaign. Ms. Steidle responded that members of the public can contact her at Mainstream Counseling at 814-643-1114. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jim Lettiere and Stacia-Fe Gillen, from the Planning Department, requested consideration of approval for the CDBG 2020 Contract Delegation of Signing Authority form. This helps us draw down our invoices for this program and is an annual requirement to allow Jim Lettiere to sign for contract items. Commissioner Sather noted that this contract is in effect from January 27, 2020 to March 29, 2025 and the contract amount is \$470,240. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Thomas, yes; Walls, yes).

Stacia-Fe Gillen requested consideration of approval for a revision request to the fiscal year 2017 CDBG contract. I have prepared all of the required documentation that DCED needs, which includes a cover letter and a more formal letter detailing what we will be doing in that revision. This is a three-part revision which got a little complicated. We basically are moving one of Huntingdon Borough's 2017 projects into the 2018 year. That is because that project at 912 Washington Street that we have through Habitat needed more time. We are adding in a project in 2017 for Huntingdon Borough. That is the main component of that revision. Given the time constraints on that contract, we are trying to finalize all of the curb cuts for ADA compliance that Huntingdon Borough wanted to conduct. We also have a small additional budgetary change also in 2017 for the County allocation, which is because Todd Township's project, the ADA upgrades to the municipal building, was completed a little bit under budget so we are reallocating those remaining funds to the existing 19 South Jefferson Street project in Mount Union. This support letter is to support these revisions. Commissioner Walls commented that he has gotten some calls on the 19 South Jefferson Street project. The County is just assisting with that. Any responsibility or liability is with the Borough to have that demolished, but we are trying to assist with funding that project. Ms. Gillen confirmed that that is correct. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Heather Fellman, Chief Clerk, provided an update on the upcoming municipal election. We want to make sure that the public has all of the information that they need so that they can make decisions about what the best way to participate in this election is for them. The deadline to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot is Tuesday, May 11th. The deadline to return completed absentee or mail-in ballots is Tuesday, May 18th by 8PM. Voters may return their ballots via mail or in person. Only the voter may return their ballot in person. The County will not be using drop boxes. All precincts in the County will be open on Election Day, May 18th. Sample ballots are available on the County website at www.huntingdoncounty.net or you can pick up a sample ballot in our office. We are located at 233 Penn Street on the second floor of the Bailey Building. Poll workers are still needed for the following precincts: Huntingdon, 3rd District; Mill Creek Borough; Miller Township; and Wood Township. If you are interested in serving as a poll worker on Election Day or if you have any questions related to the election please call the Elections Office at (814)643-3091.

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, provided a COVID-19 update. Huntingdon County is still in the substantial level of community transmission. Please continue to follow the same basic precautions that we have been stressing since the start: wear a mask, wash your hands, and social distance. Huntingdon County's positivity rate is 6.7%, which is lower than the state percentage of 7.6%. Our seven day positivity average is 13 new cases per day. The total number to date of positive tests in Huntingdon County is 4,922. There are currently three individuals hospitalized locally at Penn Highlands Huntingdon with COVID-19. That is staying fairly steady. The ER visits with patients experiencing COVID-19 symptoms is slightly up. There is no one currently in the ICU. Most hospitalizations state-wide are for people aged 65 and older. The 14 day state-wide average number of hospitalized patients is starting to come down. There have been no new deaths in Huntingdon County in the past week, but unfortunately there have been a total of 128 COVID-related deaths in our County since this began. SCI Huntingdon is reporting no inmate or staff cases. SCI Smithfield is reporting less than 18 inmate cases and no staff cases. We are keeping in touch with long-term care facilities. There are just a few residents and staff incidents in those facilities. All but one of the county schools is holding in-person classes. Juniata College does continue their testing of faculty, students, and all employees. They are doing a great job. They have performed about 18,000 tests over the last year and have only had 88 positive cases. They do plan on having in-person graduation next Saturday. The DOH is working with enrolled vaccine providers in Huntingdon County to get vaccines to everyone who wants them. As of today, PA has administered first doses to 50% of its population. The state ranks 10th among all states for first doses administered by percentage population. Vaccine providers have administered 15,139 total vaccine doses in Huntingdon County as of today, which is about 33% of our total population. Of that number, 12,375 are fully vaccinated and just shy of 2,800 are partially vaccinated. Everyone aged 16 and older is now eligible to schedule a COVID-19 vaccine. Anyone with questions about the vaccination process is encouraged to call the Department of Health. The toll-free number is 1-877-724-3258. You can also talk to your physician or pharmacist. You can also find information on health.pa.com. I know it has been a long time, but please continue to wear masks. Mask-wearing is still required in all businesses and whenever leaving home. The reason is that there is a lot of research and a lot of reason to believe that following these basic guidelines will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is important for everyone to consider getting the vaccine when they can. We are seeing some positive signs but we are not out of the woods yet. It is really important for all of us to consider the importance of getting a vaccine to help get rid of this.

Consideration of approval was given for an indemnification and cooperation agreement with Juniata College and the Huntingdon County General Authority. This is necessary for the college to move forward with the college library project. The college has approved the agreement and we will set up a special meeting with the authority to sign on as well after approval by the Commissioners. Commissioner Walls commented that this is a RACP grant which passes through the county and the authority. This agreement basically holds the county harmless. Commissioner Sather commented that he appreciates what the college does for the county. It is a major employer in the area and it has been recognized nationally for education quality. Commissioner Thomas noted that as long as he has been Commissioner they Presidents of the college have all been very active in reaching out to the community and asking how they can contribute. Kylie Hawn asked what the total amount of the RACP grant is. Attorney Newton responded that it is for \$4 million. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to hire Bernice Dysard to the position of Secretary in District Justice Gummo's Office. She has completed her pre-employment screenings. Stephanie Smith, Deputy Court Administrator, requested a start date of May 10th for Ms. Dysard. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for Resolution 6-2021, requested by the Area Agency on Aging, to appoint Connie Brode as the Executive Director of Huntingdon, Bedford, and Fulton Tri-County Area Agency on Aging. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

There were no Matters for Action.

There were 4 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary