

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

18-2021

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; Public Defender Representative, Traci Shope; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; CYS Director, Shannon Walborn; CYS Fiscal Supervisor, Claudia Conrad; CYS Fiscal Tech, Chris Dixon; Wendy Melius from the Center for Community Action; 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 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 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 four additions to the agenda. The first is the COVID-19 weekly update from Joe Thompson. The second addition is Wendy Melius from the Center for Community Action. Ms. Melius will be discussing rental assistance and transportation available for vaccine appointments. The third addition is the first amendment to the Mifflin County Inmate Agreement. The fourth is a request from Shannon Walborn to hire for the position of Caseworker I. It was moved by commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under announcements Commissioner Thomas noted that there will be no meeting next week due to the election. Commissioner Walls further commented that it is a municipal election year. He wants the public to understand that we will have write-ins and when you are voting for someone by write-in you must darken the oval next to the area where you write the name or the vote will not be counted. Commissioner Thomas asked that anyone who would like to do their civic duty and serve as a poll worker on Election Day, please call Tammy Thompson at (814)643-3091. We are still in need of poll workers in Miller and Wood Township.

There were no public comments.

Under matters to be addressed by the solicitor, Attorney Newton provided an update on the Gail Galloway case. The initial complaint was dismissed. Gail Galloway filed an amended complaint. The County filed preliminary objections. After the objections were filed, he filed a second amended complaint. We filed preliminary objections and the matter is yet to be decided.

Under new business, consideration of approval was given for Proclamation 6-2021 to proclaim May as Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month for ABATE. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for a brief recess to present a framed copy of the proclamation to representatives of ABATE from the Highlanders Chapter 55 on the Courthouse steps. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to return from recess. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Traci Shop, representative of the Public Defender's Office, requested consideration of approval for Fred Gutshall and Margaret Nollau to attend the 2021 Criminal Law Symposium, which is being held online on June 3rd and 4th. This is a budgeted item

totaling \$575. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Chris Dixon, CYS Fiscal Tech, requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Tussey Mountain Area School District. This is a renewal for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. This is for transportation of children in foster care to be transported to their home school district if that is in the best interest of the child. The cost of transportation is split three ways between the home school district, the school district where the child is placed, and our agency. This is a state mandate through the Every Child Succeeds Act. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Chris Dixon requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Tyrone Area School District. This is a renewal for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. 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 Juniata Valley School District. This is a renewal for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Chris Dixon requested consideration of approval for a purchase of service agreement with Mount Union Area School District. This is a renewal for contract year July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, requested consideration of approval to hire for a Social Service Aide position. This is a new position created for the in-house foster care program. It has taken a while to fill the position. The candidate, Alecia Wilson, was a virtual intern for the department last year and did a great job. She has passed all of the state requirements and pre-employment screenings. Her requested start date is May 24, 2021. This is a state-approved position. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for the Act 13 Agreement between Huntingdon Borough and the County Commissioners for the Bryant Park Project approved in August 2020. Borough Council signed the agreement on May 4, 2021. They have one year from that date to complete the project. This project consists of the redevelopment of the former M&T Vacuum Building in the 500 block of Washington Street. There was a fire in 2019 and the building was demolished. The Borough has taken over ownership of the lot. This lot will be transformed into an outdoor food vending and community gathering space. There will be public sewer and water, 30 and 50 amp electrical service, and an outdoor movie screen, park benches, planters and tables. The award amount is \$10,000. \$9,400 covers the construction costs and \$600 will go to the admin fee. The total cost of the project is \$38,709. The Borough will contribute \$28,709 and the balance of the \$9,400 will supplement those efforts. Commissioner Sather asked for clarification that this is the 2020 Act 13 funding. Mr. Lettiere confirmed that that is correct. It was approved by the Commissioners on August 25, 2020 for the 2020 Act 13 monies. Commissioner Thomas noted that everything was delayed that year due to COVID. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval for a sub-recipient agreement for the Huntingdon County 2020 CDBG CV Grant funding between the Commissioners and the Center for Community Action. The total amount of funding is \$104,250 to assist low and moderate income families in paying rent, mortgage and utilities. The effective date of the agreement will be May 11, 2021 through September 15, 2022. Wendy Melius commented that these funds will especially help fill gaps in mortgage assistance. We have plenty of rental assistance so we are hoping to help those individuals who are behind on their mortgage. We can help up to three months. Once approved, we will get the marketing materials out to the local banks so they can get that information to their clients who are struggling. Commissioner Walls asked if there will be an environmental review requirement given the lead paint mitigation requirement. Ms. Melius commented that we are not disturbing the household at all because we are not going to be doing any renovations with this funding. It is strictly for mortgage, rental, and utility assistance. Kylie Hawn asked if it is three consecutive months of aid for mortgage assistance and 6 consecutive months for rental assistance. Mr. Lettiere clarified the language from Appendix A of the agreement. Payments are limited to 6 consecutive months. If there are lead paint requirements that could not be met, they would be limited to three consecutive months. This does not apply in this case because there is no renovation or disturbance of the household. Ms. Hawn also asked if interested parties can contact CCA to apply for this funding. Ms. Melius responded that people can call the Huntingdon Office at 814-643-4202 or the 800 number at 1-800-323-9997. Ms. Hawn asked about an exception to Huntingdon Borough. Mr. Lettiere elaborated that there is an exception for those living in Huntingdon Borough because Huntingdon Borough has their own allocation of CDBG funding. That agreement is forthcoming. Smithfield Township opted not to accept the CV funding, so there will not be any funding exclusively for Smithfield Township. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval for a sub-recipient agreement between the Huntingdon County Commissioners and Mount Union Borough for the 2017 CDBG funding for the demolition of 19 South Jefferson Street in the Borough. It partially collapsed due to the severe wind storm we had a couple of weeks ago. This funding amount is \$54,377.04 to completely demolish the structure, grade the site, and keep it as green space. We have an expedited schedule here as it was declared an imminent threat to the public on May 5th. The bid notice has been advertised on May 7, 8, and 11th. We have a pre-bid meeting onsite scheduled for May 12th. May 17th we are planning a bid opening in the Annex 1 Building at 205 Penn Street. On May 25th we have the notice of award with the County Commissioners at the public meeting. We will have notice to proceed at that meeting as well with demolition to follow probably at the end of the week. We had our engineer of record do an examination of the structure after the windstorm to determine if any interim stabilization methods could be done to protect the public and adjoining property owners. The conclusion was that the east wall should be knocked into the rest of the foundation prior to the rest of the demolition to ensure safety. The north wall and south wall pose no threat. The Borough took further action to limit parking in the area. Commissioner Walls commented that everyone knows that it has become a safety hazard and if the Commissioners could make the funding available more quickly to have it taken care of, we would. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, provided a COVID-19 update. Response activity is continuing but the work is changing from over a year ago when this all started. The EMA department is helping with vaccines and responding to requests for assistance. We remain in the substantial community spread category with a slight uptick in the positive testing numbers and percent positivity. The Department of Health reports 86 new cases in 7 days. Our average is 12 per day. Yesterday was an exceptional day for Huntingdon County with no new cases reported for the day. So far this year we have had 5,008 cases in the county. There is one individual currently hospitalized for COVID-19 at Penn Highlands and that person is not in the intensive care unit. 14-day state-wide hospitalizations and new case numbers are going down. The Huntingdon County percent positivity rate is 7.3%. This is just a bit higher than the state rate at 6.6%. There were no new deaths in the county over the past week, but unfortunately we have lost 128 people in our county to COVID-19 overall. SCI Huntingdon is reporting no inmate and 4 staff cases. SCI Smithfield is reporting 25 inmates and one staff member who have tested positive. There is a slight uptick in positive tests at our long-term care facilities. We are in touch with them to see if any assistance is needed. Schools continue to be in session. Today, tomorrow and Thursday Southern Huntingdon is closed due to some positive cases. This happens on and off with the various school districts in the county and it has over the year. From the federal government to the state, the supply of vaccine is becoming more steady and reliable. The Department of Health continues to work with a number of vaccine providers in Huntingdon County. The ultimate goal is to ensure the vaccine is provided to anyone who would like it as efficiently as possible. PA has administered first doses of the vaccine to 53% of its entire population. The state ranks 10th in first doses administered by percentage of population. 45% of Pennsylvanians aged 18 and older are fully vaccinated. Vaccine providers have administered 15,521 total vaccine doses in Huntingdon County as of today. That is about 34% of our total population. Of that number, 12,900 are fully vaccinated. 2,650 are partially vaccinated. Our estimate is that 41% of all eligible Huntingdon County residents (aged 16 and over) have received the vaccine. We encourage anyone with any questions related to vaccines or COVID-19 to call the PA Department of Health at 1-877-224-3258. You can also talk to your local physician or pharmacist. At vaccines.gov you can find locations to get the vaccine. It is a really good resource. You can choose your vaccine, your provider, and get scheduled. Please remember that mask-wearing is still required in all businesses and whenever you leave home. A number of encouraging changes are starting to happen. Fully vaccinated people are able to do a lot of activities without a mask. We are still hearing that consistent mask-wearing is critical for curbing the spread of COVID-19. There were attempts to have vaccine clinics at a couple of local high schools. Southern Huntingdon High School looked at having one last week. Unfortunately it was cancelled due to lack of sign-ups. Juniata Valley was scheduled to have one today. We have not heard anything on that project yet. There is a regional vaccine clinic at the Bryce Jordan Center in Centre County. You can choose between the Johnson and Johnson or the Moderna vaccine. The FDA has approved the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer vaccine in kids as young as 12. It will now go to the CDC for approval. Those are primarily the highlights. If anyone has any questions I am happy to help out. Commissioner Thomas encourages the residents to get vaccinated so that we can achieve herd immunity. That will help save your loved ones and we will come back to full normalcy sooner if folks would just get the shot. If you are nervous, talk to your physician. If it is for other reasons, ask yourself, "Why am I refusing this shot when it could save a life?" Not yours, but maybe someone else's. Commissioner Walls commented that the Governor said that he will lift the mandates when we reach vaccination for 70% of the population. Is that by county or total across the state? Mr. Thompson responded that he is looking for clarification on that as well, but he expects that it is state-wide. Commissioner Walls asked if this is an achievable benchmark. Is this a rate of vaccination we see in a regular year for the flu? Mr. Thompson did not have those figures available at this time. Wendy Melius commented that her organization is dedicated to making sure vaccines are available to all residents of Huntingdon County and the other counties that we serve. Through several planning sessions with Connie Brode from the Area Agency on Aging and Joe Thompson, we talked about how we can make sure that the most vulnerable individuals have access. Transportation still presents a barrier for many. We are working on partnering to provide this transportation through the Community Services Block Grant COVID funding. We are currently targeting individuals who are not MATP eligible in the 18-59 age range. Ask yourself why you are not getting the vaccine. If it is a transportation issue, maybe we can help. This is a great program and we want to make sure it is available to all residents of Huntingdon County at 200% of the poverty level. There will be a press release going out to all local papers today. People can contact our main office in Bedford for more information on this program. The number is 814-623-9129. The contact person is Penny Stoop. Commissioner Thomas thanked Ms. Melius and Mr. Thompson for their work on this project. Hopefully a lot of people will take advantage of it. Commissioner Sather asked if any outreach is being done for the drop-in centers to reach those individuals who may not have transportation. Ms. Melius said yes, there will be outreach to those places but only individuals who are not MATP eligible will qualify. We are trying to fill a gap of those who may have regular insurance but for whatever reason do not have transportation to reach any of the vaccine sites.

Wendy Melius provided an update on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. To date in Huntingdon County we have received 85 applications. 19 have been denied, mostly because of duplication of the applications. To date we have approved 21 applications. Total adults served are 38 and total children are 26. To date, as of the end of April 30, we have spent \$83,033.28 of the \$2.9 million. This is 2% of our funding. We have to have 65% spent by July 31st. We are not sure what is going to happen

if we do not meet that target. We are looking for guidance from the state. They keep shifting things around on us so we are trying to keep abreast of the changes. This program is greatly needed for our area. We are doing the best we can to facilitate the applications. We would need to approve 96 applications per month through June 31st to stay on track to hit that 65% spent goal. We are averaging about \$4,000 per household with expenditures to help with rental assistance and utility assistance. With that said, of the 85 applications we have received, we still have about 45 pending. If you know of anyone who is struggling to pay rent due to COVID, please have them contact our office or apply on the state COMPASS website. Commissioner Thomas asked if this was just for rent and utilities. It does not work for mortgage payments? Ms. Melius confirmed that it is not for mortgages. That is why the CDBG CV funding is critical. Commissioner Walls commented that it is concerning that the government is not providing you with clarification. If you do not spend the 65% by the deadline, does that mean you are going to be responsible to repay what was spent? Ms. Melius responded that we do not know yet. We do not think we will have to repay what was spent. Our biggest concern is what will happen after July 31st going forward? Will we still have a certain percent of money to spend? As of now, this grant ends December 31st. The state has requested to extend it to September 30, 2022 because there was a change in the federal regulation. To date, we have not heard if the federal government approved that. There are questions that are still out there. Some of it is the state and some of it is in the federal government. We continue to process applications as quickly as we can and work with the families in need as best as we can to make sure that they are maintained safely in their homes.

Consideration of approval was given for the Mifflin County Amendment to the Inmate Housing Agreement. This amendment continues the agreement that was previously established at the same rates, terms, and conditions. Commissioner Thomas noted that on the previous contract, the rates went up every year by a certain amount. The amendment does not make note of any changes to the rates. Solicitor Newton commented that he would assume that you would take the last number of the previous contract based on the language in the addendum. Commissioner Sather commented that the final rate of the previous contract was \$68 per day plus an additional \$5 per day. Number three on the current agreement does state "remainder of inmate housing agreement shall remain in full force and effective as fully set forth." Attorney Newton commented that it does not appear that there is a change in rate. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve pending solicitor review.

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 10:45 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary