

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

16-2020

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioners Office with the following present: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman and Solicitor, Peter McManamon. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the following individuals were present via GoToMeeting: Planning Director, James Lettiere; Elections Coordinator, Tammy Thompson; News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitors, Bill Hoover, Celina Seftas, Lisa Erickson and Doylan Gladfelter.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Chief Clerk 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 April 21st 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 was one addition to the agenda: the Fair Housing Resolution (10-2020). It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas thanked county residents for doing their part during this pandemic. "We realize that the small businesses are really hurting and we realize the residents are ready to get out to support those small businesses. Please stay calm and we'll try to work through this to get us to the yellow phase." Commissioner Sather added his recognition of the entrepreneurial creativity that small businesses are using to make it through this time.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Lisa Erickson, Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Library, requested consideration of approval for Resolution 8-2020 to apply for the Keystone Grant to replace the library elevator, which is approximately 60 years old. This is a matching grant, and the library will provide the matching funds. No county funds will be used. Commissioner Walls reiterated that no County funding will be used as the matching funds will be supplied by the library. Commissioner Sather asked if this will help with ADA compliance. Ms. Erickson noted that the current elevator is ADA compliant, however it is old and a lot of money is being spent on maintenance. This will also not impact the historical nature of the building. The elevator is being replaced, but the elevator shaft is not being moved. Commissioner Sather asked about the estimated cost for the project. Ms. Erickson noted that the estimated cost is \$97,000 and they are applying for a \$48,650 grant. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Celina Seftas from the Huntingdon County Conservation District requested consideration of approval for Conservation District Week. Ms. Seftas thanked the commissioners for their support of conservation districts. "Huntingdon County has seen an increase in constructions permits coming in and our staff has been reviewing and approving permits remotely. We're happy to assist these new and expanding businesses in getting good projects on the ground without undue delays. Our goal in these reviews is to make sure the project meets environmental regulations and to help prevent future issues with erosion from the site." She further noted that road construction projects are starting back up, the Conservation District is working with 10 municipalities on grant projects, assisting

farmers, and has recently been awarded a Coldwater Heritage Grant to reduce erosion and improve the habitat in the watershed. They are also continuing to work to find ways to keep their educational programs working while schools are closed. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Tammy Thompson, Elections Coordinator provided an update on the Presidential Primary. The last day to register to vote or change your party before this election is May 18th. The last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot is May 26th. The Application must be in the office on May 26th. Postmarks do not count. The last day for the County Elections Office to receive voted ballots is Election Day, June 2nd. Postmarks also do not count for these. With the uptick in applications for mail-in and absentee ballots, Ms. Thompson addressed several questions from voters. Voters will receive a paper ballot when they apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot. It will be exactly like the ballot you would receive if you were voting in-person. Act 77 requires that all absentee and mail-in ballots be counted at the County Office. We use a scanner to count the ballots just like the ballots are counted at the polling places when you vote in person. 917 ballots have been mailed so far. There are hundreds of applications waiting to be processed in the office. If you have not received your ballot yet, there is no need to apply a second time. We are processing applications as quickly as we can every day and your patience is appreciated. Act 12 was recently signed by Governor Wolf, which allows for the consolidation of polling places only for the June 2nd primary. We have lost many poll workers and many more are uncertain. Many of the buildings that typically serve as polling sites are also now buildings that have been ordered to be closed. Details of our polling place consolidation plan will be published in the paper. This is not an ideal situation but we are doing what needs to be done. Commissioner Thomas reiterated that this is not something that the Board of Elections wanted to do, but something that we have been forced to do just for June 2nd. The public is encouraged to consider working at a polling site if they are healthy enough to do so. Personal protective equipment will be provided to all poll workers. Call the Elections Office if you are interested in serving. Commissioner Thomas further commented, "We are in desperate need of poll workers. It is our civic duty to make sure that everyone votes." Many cannot work because of the virus, which is understandable, but if you are able to, please call the Elections Office and sign up to work at a polling place. Commissioner Sather added, "What we are doing by consolidating is actually consolidating the polling places, but to consolidate to a larger venue to be able to do the social distancing. Even though there may be multiple polling precincts at one location, that location is now a lot larger and it does allow social distancing to be practiced." Ms. Thompson added that with the loss of poll workers, the poll workers who have committed to work this election will be stepping up to help other districts that may be short of poll workers. That is what led to the need for consolidation. We have lost so many poll workers throughout the County. Commissioner Walls complimented the office staff for their hard work to put this all together. "It has been a difficult task and to see how they're putting this together and all of the extra measures they're taking, I want to commend them on their efforts." Commissioner Thomas added his thanks to all of the poll workers that have committed so far for their willingness to work together in another precinct if needed. "This is definitely a time when we all need to work together to get this done."

Consideration of approval was given for Resolution 9-2020 to consolidate polling places for the 2020 Presidential Primary. Originally there were 58 polling places, and those will be consolidated to 24, which is a 60% reduction in the number of polling places in Huntingdon County. This resolution is being considered due to COVID-19 and the loss of poll workers. Commissioner Sather commented that the resolution with a listing of the polling places will be posted on the website. Kylie Hawn asked when it would be available on the website. Heather Fellman commented that we will try to have them posted by the end of the week. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

James Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for Resolution 10-2020, the Fair Housing Resolution. The resolution is required as part of each year's Community Development Block Grant entitlement application. It affirms an understanding that discrimination in housing is prohibited under Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Under Matters for Action, Information, and Discussion, the Commissioners signed a letter to Governor Wolf on behalf of Huntingdon County asking the Governor to reexamine and revise the COVID-19 plan for Huntingdon County. The Commissioners are asking for a change in the regional designation for Huntingdon County. Huntingdon County does not fit in the current regional designation. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Doylan Gladfelter was given the opportunity to make a public comment at this time, understanding that he had difficulty connecting to the call in time for the public comment period. Mr. Gladfelter asked that since the Governor said we could defer the penalty on taxes, are the commissioners going to do that? Commissioner Sather noted that we are currently in the face value period. Mr. Gladfelter asked if the penalty would be deferred through August. Commissioner Sather commented that we have gone through the discount period and are currently in the face value period. Towards the end of this period the Board will discuss a decision about the delaying of penalty periods but a decision has not been made at this time. Commissioner Thomas commented that the townships have the right to do that at the township level. "If we are going to do that county-wide it would make it a lot easier, because when you have the penalty on some and the face value on some, it will be a mess for your tax collectors to figure out before they send it in. I would like to see a decision by the Commissioners sometime in May, by the first of June at the latest so that people know."

There were no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary