

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; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; District Attorney, Dave Smith; Celina Seftas from the Conservation District; Deputy Treasurer, Cathy Bilger 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 December 22nd 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. Celina Seftas will provide a report on the operations of the Conservation District for 2020. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to approve this addition.

Under announcements, Commissioner Sather noted that this is the final public meeting of 2020 and that it will be good to put 2020 in the rearview mirror. He expressed hopes for a brighter future as we move into 2021.

There were no public comments.

There were no items to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Celina Seftas requested consideration of approval to fill three vacant positions on the Ag Land Preservation Board. Commissioner Sather asked if these were all for three-year terms. Ms. Seftas responded that that is correct. The three individuals to be appointed are Stewart Neff from Warrior's Mark, Tony Ricci from Three Springs, and Janet Lake from Pennsylvania Furnace. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to fill three vacant positions on the Conservation Board. Celina Seftas noted that these are for four-year terms. These are presented by the nominating agencies: the Planning Commission and the USDA Farm Service Agency. The three individuals requesting appointment are Russel Kyper, Andy Harpster and Alicia Palmer. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Celina Seftas reported on the work of the Conservation District throughout 2020. 2020 was a very different year and the staff adapted to new ways of working and were still able to accomplish a lot of the program goals. Under the Ag Land Preservation Program, the Conservation District closed on the county's 10th easement preserving 101 acres on the Metz farm in Big Valley. This program emphasizes preserving the county's best soils for farmland use. These are permanent easements that limit any non-agricultural development on the farm. The farmer still owns and operates their farm, but it can never be subdivided for any other use besides farming. In total, the county has 1,169 acres that are preserved in this program and Pennsylvania as a state leads the nation in this type of initiative.

Commissioner Thomas commented that this is a good program. He thanked Ms. Seftas for her work on this project. He noted that it is not an easy process and asked Ms. Seftas how long it takes to close on one of these easements. Ms. Seftas responded that it takes two to three years. It is quite involved because it is a permanent addition to a deed but it does help to drive development to more appropriate places in the county and preserve the most prime farmland based on the soils. Ms. Seftas further reported that the Nutrient Management Technician has assisted county farmers in many ways this year. One of those is through a program called the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) that provides a tax credit to farmers for implementing best management practices on their farms. It is administered by the State Conservation Commission but the Conservation District assists farmers with those applications. This year staff assisted with 11 REAP applications which resulted in tax credits of \$498,000 for county farmers. The dirt and gravel roads technician worked with municipalities to complete nine projects this year that included 4.55 miles of roadway. She also created some online videos that demonstrated road maintenance techniques that reduce erosion and require less maintenance. This is a double win for our municipalities by reducing time and money spent on maintenance and also reducing erosion to our local streams. In order to be eligible for funding from these programs, municipalities or any road-owning entity in the county have to attend a training. It used to be a two-day in-person training, but this has been adapted. These educational videos that have been created go above and beyond that initial training to become eligible. Commissioner Sather commented that the Commissioners encourage any township or municipality that has a need to seek Conservation Services out to receive these educational resources that open up access to funding. Commissioner Thomas commented that the Conservation District does a great job at promoting the dirt and gravel. Ms. Seftas commented that the technician will also offer one-on-one assistance before entities submit applications for funding. Ms. Seftas further reported that the erosion and sedimentation technician reviewed 82 plans for earth-moving projects in 2020. These would be small projects that just have erosion and sedimentation plans and also larger construction projects that require an NPDS program. This is another important step that the Conservation District is taking to reduce erosion to our local streams. Before any kind of earth-moving project, you are welcome to contact our office. Our technician is available to answer questions about any permits that may be needed and provide guidance for best management practices to complete the project without causing excess erosion. She completed 29 of those technical assistance calls and conducted 59 site inspections. This year our watershed specialist worked to plant six new acres of riparian forest buffer. Before the pandemic, they were able to reach out to 175 students. Our watershed specialist is certified with the state to collect water quality data that goes into the state database. He had to complete several exams and certifications to be able to do this. He completed water quality monitoring throughout the county. All of these programs that we have talked about are aimed at keeping soil on the fields and productive and keeping our streams clean. He looked at the macroinvertebrates, the tiny insects and crustaceans that live in our streams, as an indicator for how the water quality is improving after all of these projects. In one site, in Warrior's Mark Run, a watershed in the northern part of the county where we have done a lot of conservation work, he saw an improvement of 30 points in the stream score over the course of 15 years. It is incredible to see how all these measures that we are taking are showing signs of recovery in these watersheds that we're working in. He also identified a stream that has potential to be upgraded to exceptional value. We have several streams in the county that are rated as high-quality cold-water fisheries. That is some of the best water quality that you can get. One segment of the upper part of Standing Stone Creek is eligible to be upgraded to exceptional value which is the absolute highest water quality. We do not currently have any exceptional value streams designated in Huntingdon County. He has put that forth to the Department of Environmental Protection for consideration. If it does meet the eligibility, it has to go through a process with DEP in order to receive that designation. It is important to do this conservation work and it is exciting to see that it is changing the water quality in our county.

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for three appointments to the Planning Commission. The individuals requesting approval have all served before and are requesting renewal of their four year terms. The new terms will begin on January 1, 2021 and end on December 31, 2024. Individuals for consideration are Larry Mutti, Philip Cahill and Lawrence Biemiller. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes). Commissioner Sather commented that this has been a year of many accomplishments for Mr. Lettiere. A very big accomplishment from this year is the Mount Union wall project. Commissioner Sather requested an update on that project. Mr. Lettiere commented that the Mount Union wall project is terminated for the winter season. They made significant progress on the wall. Approximately 450 linear feet of the wall has been completed. We are going through the invoicing process so that we can cover the invoices for three payouts. DCED was provided with an update through Keller Engineers and were pleased with the progress of the project. We anticipate completion of the project in a timely manner before the end of July. They are expected to resume construction activities sometime in the spring, likely in April. Commissioner Sather commented that the work on this project is appreciated.

Dave Smith, District Attorney, requested consideration of approval for the SAVIN Maintenance and Service Agreement Contract. This is a notification system for victims of personal injury crimes. It is an excellent program and there are no charges for services that the County is responsible to pay. Commissioner Thomas asked if this contract is being moved to a different vendor. Mr. Smith commented that he will have to look into it.

Commissioner Thomas commented that this is a good program and thanked Mr. Smith for bringing it to us. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given for Resolution 1-2021 for the 2021 Tax Anticipation Note (TAN). This resolution authorizes borrowing in anticipation of tax funding coming in. The 2021 TAN will be through Farmers and Merchants Trust (F&M Trust) and is a tax exempt loan. Commissioner Thomas commented that every year we have a balanced budget, which means that we basically are left with \$0 at the end of the year. Tax revenues do not start coming in until roughly April. This money helps bridge the gap and is repaid before the end of every year.

There were no 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 10:06 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary