

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

35-2020

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: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Peter McManamon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; EMA Staff Member, Doug Hart and visitor, Dean Fluke. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the following individuals were present via GoToMeeting: Treasurer, Susan Harry and 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 October 6th 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 item was consideration of approval to award Phase 2 Small Business and Non-Profit CARES Act Funding. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes). The second item was the acceptance of election volunteer Sara Thompson. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Under announcements, Commissioner Sather announced that an advertisement requesting heating oil bids will be in the Daily News on October 13th, 15th, and 17th. Bids should be for 10-12,000 gallons of heating oil to be delivered between October 30, 2020 and October 30, 2021. Bids must be submitted to the Commissioners' Office by Friday, October 23rd at 4:00PM in a sealed envelope marked "fuel oil bids." The sealed bids will be opened at the public meeting on October 27th.

Under Public Comments, Dean Fluke commented on an article published in the Daily News about the first round of grant applications. He would like to know how many accountants were hired and what their names were. He commented that the Commissioners would usually name the accountants and disclose the amount of the contract. Commissioner Thomas responded that this information has been repeatedly publicized and thanked Mr. Fluke for his question. Dean Fluke further asked where the money to pay the accountants was coming from. Commissioner Sather responded that the money is from the CARES Act funding. We are permitted to use up to 2% of the funding for administrative fees.

There were no Matters addressed by the solicitor

Under new business, Joe Thompson provided an update on the County's COVID-19 response. In the past week or so there has been a significant increase in cases both in the county and across the state. Unfortunately many of these cases are in our long-term care facilities. Huntingdon County has had 573 positive cases to date. This past Saturday was the third largest daily increase since the beginning of the pandemic. We have seen 64 new cases just in the last three days. There are also a few cases among the staff and inmates at the local prison. They have taken a lot of steps to reduce their risk. The hospital now has a few inpatient cases of COVID. The EMA Office has helped with PPE distributions and we are coordinating responses between our community and state agencies. A mass vaccination clinic plan is drafted so that we are prepared if a vaccine becomes available. We are providing support for the election as well. The pandemic could be ramping up and we should prepare for it to get worse.

Commissioner Thomas asked Mr. Thompson's opinion on wearing masks. He has been urging the public to wear them. We can help get this under control simply by wearing a mask. Mr. Thompson commented that the public should be wearing their masks, washing their hands and practicing physical distancing. This is a respiratory illness and it is highly contagious. I know individuals who have tested positive that did not even know they were sick and I have also known two people that have been on life support as a result of this illness. It can affect people in different ways but it just takes one encounter to set off a chain reaction. Commissioner Sather commented that we have to do the right things. At the County Offices we follow the CDC guidelines and we urge others to do the same. Commissioner Walls thanked the EMA office for their hard work and a job well done. Mr. Thompson commented that he wanted to make sure that it is understood that he is not trying to place blame but he wants to emphasize the impact that maybe us not doing everything we can could have to others. Doug Hart commented that there are many people who are asymptomatic that go out and spread this illness around. That is why it is important for everyone to wear masks. Commissioner Walls offered his thanks to our first responders. Commissioner Thomas also extended his thanks to essential workers. They are wearing their masks to protect you. You need to wear yours to protect them. Our community is very lax about wearing masks and we are seeing the impact of those choices. Joe Thompson shared another impact that the spread of COVID-19 is having on our community. As the infection rate increases, how the schools are required to operate changes. If there is anything that we can do to keep these educational institutions open and running as a community we need to do it.

Consideration of approval was given to award the Phase 2 Small-Business and Non-Profit CARES Act Funding. This will provide funding for 19 additional small businesses and non-profits in the amount of \$140,207. Commissioner Thomas commented that it is great to see these small businesses getting much-needed help. Commissioner Walls commented that previously \$257,000 had been approved in Phase 1. Commissioner Sather reminded the public that the auditors and accountants working on this project are Susquehanna Accounting and Consulting and Zelenkofske Axelrod. Commissioner Walls reiterated that their fees are paid out of the 2% admin fees allowed from the CARES Act funds. Kylie Hawn asked if a list of businesses who will receive funding will be posted. Commissioner Thomas commented that that is something that we can look into. Solicitor McManamon recommended that the Commissioners ask Zelenkofske Axelrod if that is allowable since they are familiar with the requirements of the Act. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to accept the volunteer election worker, Sara Thompson. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

There were no Matters for Action, Information, and Discussion.

There were 2 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Deputy Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary