

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, November 30, 2021

43-2021

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: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Deputy Chief Clerk, Tracey Rhodes; Solicitor, Larry Newton; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; EMA Administrative Assistant, Doug Hart; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere and Daily News Reporter, Kylie Hawn.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Tracey Rhodes 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 November 16th 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 no additions to the agenda.

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas encouraged everyone to get their COVID shot or booster. Commissioner Sather reminded everyone to be careful in their travels. Commissioner Walls announced that there are prepared gift boxes supporting local businesses available through HCBI.

There were no public comments.

Under matters to be addressed by the solicitor, Solicitor Newton noted that he has followed up with everyone who was supposed to receive a TAN RFP letter. They have all received them. We will be opening the bids next Tuesday. Solicitor Newton also commented that he has provided the Commissioners with a lease addendum for First National Bank for their review.

Under new business, Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval to hire Jayann Leibley as a full-time Assistant Community Development Administrator. The salary range for this position was set at the Salary Board meeting in October at \$35,000-43,500. He is requesting to set salary at \$38,500 with a tentative start date of December 6, 2021. Commissioner Sather commented that approval can only be given for hiring at this meeting. Salary Board will have to approve the requested salary. The next Salary Board meeting will be held on December 7th. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Jim Lettiere requested consideration of approval for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Public Assistance Grant Program Agreement relative to the two bridges damaged by Tropical Depression Ida. This was bridge number 5 and 20. This is an agreement between the

Commissioners and PEMA for the two claims that are being processed. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Director, requested consideration of approval for the US Department of Homeland Security Federal Fiscal Year 2021 State Homeland Security Grant Program Agreement. This is for funding of the South Central Mountain Regional Task Force. This is a federal grant that is provided through PEMA. The grant amount is \$450,804 from September 2021 to November of 2024. There is no match funding required for this grant. Although we do not receive any of this money directly in Huntingdon County, Huntingdon County does greatly benefit from the work of the Task Force. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Doug Hart, EMA Administrative Assistant, gave an update on COVID-19. There has been a significant upward trend in cases. The seven day period ending November 27th we had an average of 26 new cases per day. The week ending November 20, that average was 19. Now reinfections are being counted on those daily numbers. SCI Smithfield had 19 positive inmates. SCI Huntingdon had 14 positives among staff and no positives among inmates. There is nothing significant to report from the schools. Broad Top Medical Center is working with the school districts at the discretion of the school districts. At least one district has signed on with them to have kids go to their centers for vaccinations. The Department of Health reports that Huntingdon County had a total of 13 cases among school-aged children during the week of November 16 to November 22. Juniata College had 2 positives in the week ending 11/19. Penn Highlands reports a total of 9 in-house patients. 5 of them are in the ICU. The ED is still running at or above capacity at almost all times. Beds are full. They have not had any diverts in the past week. COVID hospitalizations for the state stand at 3,734 currently. This is a significant increase from my report two weeks ago. This is perhaps the most concerning thing to report today. Hospitalizations are skyrocketing. The incident rate for the county is 275 per 100,000. This has doubled from two weeks ago when the reported incident rate for the county was 133 per 100,000. The state's incident rate is 255 per 100,000 up from 189 two weeks ago. The PCR for the County is 8.4%, up from 6% two weeks ago. The State PCR is at 12.1%. There is nothing concerning to report from the long-term care facilities. The total number of people partially or fully vaccinated stands at 22,073 which represents approximately 48.9% of the population of Huntingdon County. Boosters administered stand at 4,646, which represents about 23.1% of fully vaccinated individuals. We are keeping a close eye on the Omicron variant. One of the things that we are seeing is that some other countries have started to impose travel restrictions. There is definitely concern around the world about this variant. There is not a lot of solid information yet. Pfizer has made a statement that they believe their vaccine is effective against this variant but may not offer the same level of protection as it does against previous variants. We will continue to keep an eye on this situation as it evolves. Commissioner Thomas reemphasized the importance of vaccines, noting that a large unvaccinated population is what allows COVID to mutate. Commissioner Thomas asked if they are still unsure of how this variant compares to others. Mr. Hart responded that that is correct. He noted that he has seen reports claiming that the symptoms aren't as severe but other places are saying it could be a lot worse. It is still too early to really tell how this thing is going to affect people. He also noted that each time a virus mutates it is getting stronger and better at surviving.

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 Walls to adjourn the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary