

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

30-2021

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; Planning Director, Jim Lettiere; EMA Staff, Doug Hart; Probation Director, Len Hahn 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 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 no additions to the agenda.

Under announcements, Commissioner Sather announced that fair week was very successful last week. Commissioner Walls commented that he had a meeting recently with people from out of town who complemented Huntingdon County on the great county fair.

There were no public comments.

There were two matters to be addressed by the solicitor. The first is a lawsuit against Bethany Christian Services, Inc. He is prepared to draft a complaint on behalf of the county. CYS has used their services to place foster children and there was a problem getting appropriate clearances with this organization. As a result the county lost \$31,919.15 and we are seeking that money back. I would like authorization to proceed with the lawsuit. Commissioner Walls asked if there were any issues with care of children. Attorney Newton responded that there were not. There was an issue in a foster home with a child that reached the age of majority. When you reach age 18 you have to get all of the required clearances. They neglected to do so and because the clearances weren't seen it affects our reimbursement. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes). The second item Mr. Newton discussed was related to the agreement between Mifflin County, Juniata County and Huntingdon County for the block grant program for Juniata Valley Behavioral and Developmental Services. We have received three agreements. One was dated August 2nd, one August 8th and the final was August 13th. The agreements are pretty much the same, although the latter two contained insurance coverage that we already have. Mr. Newton was concerned about the last agreement because there was a fill-in section indicating that all requests for reimbursement shall be made no later than August 13th. Since this is August 17th we will need to address that. Commissioner Thomas commented that we are going to address that at the next JVBDS meeting in September. Commissioner Sather commented that part of this process with the block grant is there is a 5% allowance within that. That takes effect now until October. Commissioner Thomas corrected that the meeting is actually in October. He further commented that they have already filed for an extension because this is the first year reporting on a block grant. A lot of the services there was a struggle with because of the pandemic. Solicitor Newton said that maybe we can work this out in a work session sometime. Commissioner Thomas agreed.

Under new business, Len Hahn, Probation Director, requested consideration of approval to hire Kachira Cross for the position of Adult Probation Officer effective August 23, 2021. The agency is now fully staffed. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Jim Lettiere, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for statement of interest proposals for the Great Trough Creek Bridge (aka New Fording Bridge) Project. In early February PennDOT advertised for statements of interest for engineering design for replacement or rehabilitation of this bridge in Todd Township. The deadline for submission was March 3rd and we received 20 engineering submissions. This bridge is on the Southern Alleghenies Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in the amount of \$1,529,773. 80% of this will come from the Federal Highway Administration, 15% from the State and the

remaining 5% will come from the County. The approximate completion date will be October 2025. The top three ranked firms from the submission to this project were Macan Engineering out of Dauphin County, the second is TRC out of Dauphin County, and the third is Keller Engineers out of Huntingdon County. Consideration of approval was given to forward the top three candidates to PennDOT for review. Commissioner Thomas commented that we also do have money from the liquid fuels set aside to pay the 5% contribution. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to accept the contract between the Huntingdon County Commissioners and the Independent Corrections Officers of Pennsylvania, Lodge No. 3. This is the union representing the employees at the Jail. This agreement is effective January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Doug Hart, EMA Staff Member, provided a monthly COVID-19 update. We are unfortunately seeing numbers creep back up due mostly to the delta variant of the virus as it appears to be more contagious. Huntingdon County is now back in the substantial level of community transmission for the first time since early last spring. PCR positivity rate in Huntingdon County is 4.2%. The state rate is 6.0%. For the week ending 8/7, there were 21 new cases in the county, for an average of 3 new cases per day. The week ending 8/14 there were 31 for an average of 4.5 per day. Fortunately, we have not seen any new deaths related to COVID in over a month. What I am seeing in my daily tracking is that hospitalizations are continuing to increase at a rate even larger than the new case counts. There are no significant issues that we are aware of at any of the correctional facilities in the county. At SCI Huntingdon there are currently 10 inmate COVID cases and one staff case. In terms of schools, so far the schools are maintaining the safety plans that they already have in place. Yesterday the PA Department of Health announced that they have a vendor that will be working with school districts throughout PA to provide free vaccine and testing clinics as requested by school districts. In terms of vaccination rates, Huntingdon County is not doing great. The rate is just under 42% in terms of the overall population, or about 55% of adults. Weis Market and both Rite Aides continue to offer vaccines and testing. Commissioner Thomas asked if there is a particular age group that is getting hit hardest right now. Mr. Hart commented that it is currently people from 35-55 that are getting hit hardest right now by COVID. We are also seeing more children contracting it. Commissioner Thomas commented that they are currently recommending booster shots at 6 months for immune compromised people and they are considering recommending boosters for everyone. Mr. Hart commented that if everyone would get vaccinated we could get rid of COVID. Commissioner Sather asked if the counts today included numbers from the SCI facilities. Mr. Hart responded that he does not believe those are being added to our total anymore. Kylie Hawn asked if numbers from the retirement facilities are also being excluded from the totals for the county. Mr. Hart and Commissioner Thomas commented that they believe those numbers are still being counted in our totals. Ms. Hawn asked what the difference is between counting the numbers from the retirement facilities and counting the numbers from the corrections facilities. Commissioner Sather responded that individuals in continuing care facilities may be traveling. They are not confined to the facilities like inmates are. Ms. Hawn commented that the staff leaves the facilities and may be in the community. Commissioner Sather responded that those numbers are being included in our counts, but there are also guards that are not Huntingdon residents so their home counties will be the ones that will seem included in their counts. Ms. Hawn asked if SCI Smithfield is the only one being excluded from the Huntingdon County counts or is it both of the SCIs. Mr. Hart responded that it is both.

There were no matters for action, information and discussion, Commissioner Thomas thanked Lieutenant Governor John Fetterman for visiting the County Fair on Saturday.

There were no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

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

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary