

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

11-2020

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioners Meeting Room with the following present: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Solicitor, Peter McManamon; EMA Director, Joe Thompson; Elections Coordinator, Tammy Thompson; Elections Intern, Toby Hollertz; News Reporter, Kylie Hawn and visitors, Dean Fluke and Ralph Park.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather, followed in prayer led by Commissioner Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag led by Commissioner Sather.

Dean Fluke addressed concerns over how the meeting content is being documented in the Daily News. He feels that minutes published in the paper are not complete. Commissioner Thomas noted that the Commissioners do not control what is published in the Daily News and that any complaints should be addressed to their office. Commissioner Walls further noted that the newspaper does not publish minutes. It is a summary of the meeting written by Daily News staff. The official meeting minutes are prepared by the Chief Clerk and published to the County website.

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the March 10th 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 Elections Coordinator will provide an update on the elections and the Commissioners received a request for revision of a date of resignation for a CYS employee.

Commissioner Walls announced that Emergency and Fire services will likely be cancelling many of their fundraising events in the near future. He has asked that residents keep that in mind and support local emergency service providers. Commissioner Sather announced the passing of former long-term Chief Clerk Louella Koonz.

Under public comment, Dean Fluke reiterated his concern about how the meetings are being documented in the newspaper. He noted that last week it was his understanding that the Commissioners authorized a grant with a \$250,000 match. He noted that the Commissioners would be responsible for \$250,000 but wanted to know who was responsible for the match. Commissioner Sather clarified that the County is not responsible to pay any of the funding for the grant in question and the matching funding is being paid by the Center for Community Action. Ralph Park, General Manager of Parks Garbage Service, sent information to the Commissioner's Office regarding Parks Transfer Station renewing its permit. He is asking for the Commissioners support for the 10 year renewal. Commissioner Thomas noted that the Commissioners are in the middle of working through the solid waste program right now and have hired a consultant. He noted that he hopes to continue working with Parks Garbage Services as they have always treated the County great. Solicitor McManamon asked about the time frame for submittal. Mr. Park responded that he should have it submitted by the end of April. It is currently being advertised in the newspaper and appropriate notifications are being made.

There were no matters to be addressed by the solicitor.

Under new business, Joe Thompson, Emergency Manager, provided a public situation report on the COVID-19 outbreak. The Emergency Management Office began active monitoring of the situation last week. Yesterday the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Office was escalated to "enhanced watch level," meaning someone will be assigned to that task during all working hours and will be monitored remotely by individuals during non-business hours. Governor Wolf announced yesterday his expansion of mitigation efforts state-wide. He has asked all non-

essential businesses in Pennsylvania to close for the time being. There have not been any updates this morning. There are currently 76 confirmed cases in the state with no cases in Huntingdon County. There is also concern that the seasonal flu risk in our area is also at an elevated level now, which is already putting stress on our healthcare facilities. Commissioner Thomas noted that they received information from the Governor's Office last night and will be posting the information on business closings to the County Website. Mr. Thompson further noted that the Commissioners signed a Declaration of Disaster Emergency yesterday. The Courts have also issued a Declaration of Judicial Emergency. An Emergency Declaration for Public Assistance and Emergency Protective Measures was declared for all Pennsylvania Counties to cover eligible costs associated with emergency protective measures from COVID-19 virus. This would offer 100% reimbursement for expenses we may incur as part of our response to this situation.

Joe Thompson also discussed an emergency personnel concern for his department. The EMA department had hired a temporary staff member, Douglas Heart, through a CareerLink program, but CareerLink has temporarily shut down in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Emergency Management Office needs additional help at this time and Mr. Thompson is asking that Mr. Heart be hired on an emergency part-time temporary basis at 35 hours per week with no benefits during the suspension of his CareerLink position. Commissioner Thomas noted that the hire would only last for as long as the declaration of emergency was in place. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Commissioner Thomas commented that County Offices will remain open but is asking that the public please conduct business via phone, email, and website to the best of their ability. Please refrain from coming to the offices in person if you have a means of conducting your business otherwise.

Tammy Thompson, Elections Coordinator, provided an update on elections. She is monitoring guidance from the Department of State. No changes related to the current pandemic have passed yet. Mail-in ballots are a viable alternative to going directly to the polls. You do not have to provide a reason for your application to receive a mail-in ballot. You can apply online at votespa.com or call the office for an application. Currently, the last day to register to vote before the Presidential Primary is April 13th. The last day to apply for a mail in or absentee ballot is April 21st. The last day to return a voted absentee or mail in ballot to the elections office is April 28th, election day. The ballots must be received in the office by 8pm and postmarks no longer count. If the ballot is being returned in person, the voter must return it themselves. You cannot return a voted ballot for someone else. Commissioner Thomas also noted that voter registration can be done online as well and is asking members of the public to please refrain from coming to the office in person. Commissioner Walls commented that he has heard that the Governor's Office is thinking about potentially suspending in-person elections and going to a mail in only system for this election. He asked if our elections office had been contacted by the Department of State for input. Ms. Thompson noted that an email was received in the elections office on this matter. Commissioner Thomas asked for Ms. Thompson's opinion on the new election equipment. Ms. Thompson responded that she is excited for the new equipment and thinks it will be a smooth transition for poll workers and voters. The new equipment is very similar to the equipment that we were using before. It will not be connected to the internet and we will still be using paper ballots.

Chris Stevens, 911 Director, submitted a request for consideration of approval for a maintenance of operations agreement for the 911 Emergency Communications Center. This agreement is for January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023. Huntingdon Borough will house and staff the 911 Center at the Borough Building. Commissioner Thomas noted that funding for this agreement comes out of PEMA funds as long as PEMA has funding. Commissioner Sather noted that this agreement is well ahead of schedule and thanked the 911 Director for his work. Kylie Hawn asked for clarification on the division of costs. Commissioner Sather conformed that the County owns the equipment and it is housed and staffed by Huntingdon Borough. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Keller Engineers submitted a proposal for bridge approach repairs for County bridges 16, 18, and 20 located in West Township, Barree Township, and Juniata Township. The total cost of the contract is \$19,810. Commissioner Thomas noted that this is something that needs to be done. Commissioner Walls added that these funds come from the Liquid Fuels account provided by PennDOT. No general fund dollars will be used on this project. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

The Commissioners received a request from Shannon Walborn, CYS Director, and Heather Hicks, Caseworker, to move Ms. Hicks's resignation date to March 30, 2020. 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 no Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary