

Huntingdon, PA

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

42-2021

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 Administrative Assistant, Doug Hart; Probation Director, Len Hahn; Sheriff, Jeff Leonard 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 Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Sather.

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 was one addition to the agenda: consideration of approval to advertise for fuel bids. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to add this items to the agenda.

Under announcements, Commissioner Sather announced from the Elections Office that a state-wide recount has been ordered for the office of Judge of the Commonwealth Court. The Huntingdon County Board of Elections will conduct logic and accuracy testing of all of the voting equipment that will be used in the recount on November 17th at 10AM in the Bailey Building Ballroom. The Huntingdon County Board of Elections will commence the recount on November 17th at 2:00PM in the Bailey Ballroom. The Board of Elections will reconvene on November 18th at 8:30AM if necessary. This is a state-wide recount that is mandatory if the difference in results is less than a half of one percent. Commissioner Thomas encouraged residents to thank veterans every day, and not just on Veteran's Day. Commissioner Walls announced that there will not be a public meeting next week due to the CCAP Conference. He also noted that CCAP has various committees with 12-15 people on them. The Commissioners have been appointed to sit on some of these committees. Commissioner Walls sits on the Energy, Environment and Land Use Committee (EELU) and the Agriculture Committee. Commissioner Thomas is Chair of the Taxation and Assessment Committee and sits on the Human Services Committee. Commissioner Sather sits on the Governance Committee and the PCoRP Board. Commissioner Walls suggested providing a public report at a later date from these committees.

There were no public comments.

There was one matter to be addressed by the solicitor. On Friday a request for proposals for the TAN was mailed out. Bids are due on or before Monday, December 6th at 4:00 PM. They will be opened at the public meeting on December 7th at 9:30AM.

Under new business, Len Hahn, Probation Director, announced that the JJC Juvenile Probation Service Grant has been awarded. He requested consideration of approval to sign the award notification for the award of \$50,036. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to advertise for fuel oil bids. Bids are due on or before close of business on Monday, December 6th. Bids will be opened at the public meeting on December 7th. Sealed responses to this RFP should be marked "Fuel Bids" and submitted to the Commissioner's Office. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Doug Hart, EMA Administrative Assistant, gave an update on COVID-19. Mr. Hart noted that when he checked the numbers over the weekend, he was taken aback by the drastic increase in COVID cases. Usually on Saturday the numbers for the State are around 4 to 6,000. This Saturday it was 21,226. The numbers kept going up so he reached out to his liaison at the State for more information on what happened. She pointed to a press release that came out on Monday that explained why the numbers jumped up like they did. The state-wide cumulative case count also includes 15,414 reinfection cases from the 66 counties outside of Philadelphia County. This includes older cases that occurred throughout the course of the pandemic. This brings the state-wide cumulative total to 1,648,285. The 15,414 is being included because the national case definition was revised in 2021 and is being implemented in PA this month. Under the new definition an individual who tests positive more than once at least 90 days apart would be counted more than once. I do not think we will see a jump like that again because we have now accounted for reinfection cases since the beginning of the pandemic. For the 7-day period ending November 6th the average was 16 cases. The week ending November 13th the average was 36, but that is due to the additional reinfection cases. SCI Smithfield has 15 inmates and 3 staff positives. SCI Huntingdon has 0 inmate and 2 staff positives. There is nothing significant to report from the schools. There is now a pediatric vaccine available for children aged 5-11. I am still waiting to hear back from Broad Top Medical about their survey of interest from the school districts. The following notice was placed on the Juniata Valley School District's website. "The state has filed an appeal to last week's court ruling that voided the masking order. The appeal places a stay on the order which keeps the mandatory masking order in place. As of yesterday, school districts will be able to determine masking requirements beginning January 17th. The Pennsylvania Department of Education Secretary has notified the schools to continue with the inside masking order until the order is lifted." What that means is that as of January 17th school districts will be able to make their own rules about masking. The Department of Health is reporting 12 cases among school-aged children from 11/3-11/9. Fewer than 5 in children 4 and under. Juniata College had 7 positive cases over the past week. Penn Highlands is reporting 7 in-house COVID patients. None are in the ICU. The emergency department continues to run at capacity on a daily basis. Thursday into Friday of last week they have had to go on full divert. COVID hospitalizations for the state went up slightly last week. Currently there are 2,694 up from 2,475 last week. The incident rate per 100,000 for Huntingdon County is 133. The state incident rate per 100,000 is 189. PCR is at 6%, slightly up from last week which was 5.2%. The state PCR is 10.3%. Long-term care facilities are stable. The total number of people partially or fully vaccinated in the county stands at 21,351 which is about 47.3% of the total population. 3,029 have received the booster. Commissioner Thomas commented that the one thing that stands out to him from the report is that the number of deaths continues to rise. There rate of new infections is slowing down but there seems to be more people than ever dying of COVID. I don't want people to become unconcerned about this. The death rate now is higher than what it was a year ago. Mr. Hart commented that that is correct and is something that he has discussed with the coroner as well. What surprised me is that he does not know about the majority of these deaths. They are not reported to him. Hospitals and other facilities are not required to report COVID deaths to him. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Hart for his consistent and detailed reporting. Kylie Hawn noted that it seems like when you compare Huntingdon County's numbers to other counties, it seems like we have a lower rate of infection. Do you think that could change now that they calibrated it for reinfections? Mr. Hart responded that it is possible. We may see a slight increase in daily averages because they are now adding them and will continue to do so.

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 9:52 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather N. Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary