

March 9, 2017

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held March 9, 2017
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administration
Nancy Oden, C.E. Farms
Michael R. Brown, Machias Valley News Observer
Dean A. Preston, U.T.
Mike Hinerman, EMA
Joshua Rolfe, RCC
Jill Holmes, Treasurer
Lee A. Bourget, Jail
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Mike Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Carlene Holmes Probate**

Commissioner Gardner called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Paul Williamson, development manager of APEX Clean Energy, from Charlottesville, Virginia, was introduced. Mr. Williamson was given the floor to report APEX's intentions of creating a wind farm in Washington County. If the planning and permitting are approved, wind turbines will be built in Cherryfield, Columbia, Harrington, Township 18 and Township 19. The turbines are expected to generate between 90 to 100 megawatts of renewable electricity. Mr. Williamson stated APEX Clean Energy currently has 60 projects under construction and 12 working projects. Linda Belfiore, a local resident of Columbia, was also present. Ms. Belfiore is employed by APEX to work in the Columbia office branch. Mr. Williamson listed the many benefits the \$106 million dollar investment the wind farm project will bring to the region:

March 9, 2017

- Power for approximately 40,000 homes;
- Diverse income for blueberry owners;
- \$35 million dollars of local spending;
- 67 direct local jobs; and
- New wage generation.

During the development process APEX will be working with the local communities. There will be creative exploration through the University of Maine for blueberry pollination and discussions on how disturbed areas will be affected. Studies will be done to create a habitat for bees to thrive and grow. APEX plans to work closely with landowners and the University. The foundations of the towers cover approximately one quarter of an acre of land. This displaces the blueberries but does not affect the area around the foundation. During construction, berries will be transplanted. The goal will be to reduce the impact on the landowners. Commissioner Gardner inquired as to how many blueberry growers the project would affect. Mr. Williamson responded that the project would affect Cherryfield Foods and twenty other landowners. Commissioner Gardner asked what percentage of the property affected is in the Unorganized Territories. Mr. Williamson stated two-fifths of property will involve Unorganized Territories.

APEX also plans to work with the emergency response community as part of the development process. A meeting has been scheduled for next week to facilitate and develop an emergency plan.

Ms. Belfiore has been working with the local business owners. As construction begins, it will be encouraged to use local contractors whenever possible.

Mr. Williamson concluded his presentation with an opportunity for questions from the public. There were no questions.

Chairman Commissioner Gardner called the regular meeting to order at 5:13 p.m.

Approval of the regular Commissioners' meeting minutes for January 12, 2017 (Crowley/Cassidy, 3-0)

Approval of the Public Hearing meeting minutes for January 30, 2017 (Crowley/Cassidy, 3-0)

March 9, 2017

Approval of the Notice of the Commissioners' meeting for February 9, 2017 (Cassidy/Crowley, 3-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided reports in their meeting packets. All reports were accepted under the gavel.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved hire Chelsea Moore as part-time Corrections Officer effective 01/29/17 not to exceed 30 hours per week except for training or emergency purposes. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0.

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Jared Sutton as part-time Corrections Officer effective 01/29/17 not to exceed 30 hours except for training or emergency purposes. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to hire Jared Crowley as part-time ECS effective 01/15/17 not to exceed 30 hours except for training or emergency purposes. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0.

Sheriff Curtis requested a wage increase for the Sheriff's Office Manager Paula Johnson-Rolfe. By consensus the Commissioners approved the wage increase to be effective January 1, 2017.

Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe requested the Commissioners change Corrections Officer Bourget's status from paid leave to suspended without pay, and to schedule a date for a termination hearing. By consensus, the request was tabled for executive session.

By consensus, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Neal Sawick. Corrections Officer Sawick is retiring after 29 years of service to the County of Washington. Commissioner Gardner praised Corrections Officer Sawick as an employee he has had the pleasure to work with. Commissioner Gardner noted CO Sawick was "always the go-to guy" and that he had the "perfect demeanor for a Corrections Officer". Corrections Officer Neal Sawick will be missed.

March 9, 2017

The Chief Deputy requested approval to promote Ryan Murry as a full-time patrol deputy. The Commissioners expressed concern that Deputy Murry did not complete the Maine Justice Academy course during his previous full-time employment. Satisfactory completion of Academy training is a requirement to be a full-time patrol deputy. Commissioner Gardner noted the cost that was incurred for the time Patrol Deputy Murry already spent at the Academy. Commissioner Crowley asked if there was any guarantee that Patrol Deputy Murry would not quit. Sheriff Curtis stated Patrol Deputy Murry understands his completion of the Maine Justice Academy is very important. Chief Deputy Crabtree stated Patrol Deputy Murry will not be able to attend the Academy until August. With the recommendation of Sheriff Curtis;

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to promote Ryan Murry as full-time Patrol Deputy effective 03/12/17. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0.**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificates

Six-month certificates were signed as presented for John Preston, Lauren Sabattus and Jennifer Weaver.

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on County Taxes for 2017

Treasurer Jill Holmes presented the County Taxes for 2017 for the Commissioners review and signatures. The document provides a complete list of assessments upon the estates of the municipalities and upon the Unorganized Territories in Washington County. Commissioner Gardner noted the total tax amount formally committed on January 12, 2017 is \$5,773,591.00 plus an overlay amount of \$28,724.00. The tax rate is 0.001651154 per dollar. Commissioner Gardner listed the four municipalities with the highest State Valuation amount. Listed from highest to lowest, those municipalities are: 1) Unorganized Territories; 2) Baileyville; 3) Lubec; and 4) Milbridge.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the County Taxes for 2017 as presented. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0.**

AGENDA ITEM: Award TAN

Treasurer Jill Holmes presented a summary of the bids received by her office for the Tax Anticipation Note. (See attached summary)

March 9, 2017

Treasurer Holmes explained the TAN is short-term note to borrow funds until the County taxes are paid. Bids were received by six banking institutions. The highest bid offered an interest rate of 1.38% and the lowest offered an interest rate of 1.09%. Treasurer Jill Holmes recommended the Commissioners award the bid to Machias Savings Bank as low bidder.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to award the TAN bid to Machias Savings Bank as low bidder. (Cassidy/Crowley, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Reappoint Betsy Fitzgerald to WHCA Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Washington Hancock Community Agency recommended to the Commissioners the reappointment of Betsy Fitzgerald to the Board for another three-year term. It was stated in the letter of nomination from Executive Director Mark Green that Betsy is a mainstay of the Board of Directors and current President.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to reappoint Betsy Fitzgerald to the WHCA Board of Directors for a three year term. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0.**

AGENDA ITEM: Schedule Tax Abatement hearings

The Commissioners were informed of three tax abatement appeals pending. It was decided by consensus to schedule one tax abatement hearing one hour prior to each of the next three scheduled Commissioners meetings. The scheduled hearings are as follows:

- Tardiff vs. Town of Lubec - Thursday, April 13, 2017
- Legris vs. Town of Lubec - Thursday, May 11, 2017
- G. Deblois vs. Town of Marshfield - Thursday, June 8, 2017

AGENDA ITEM: Signature on SCEC Contract

Sunrise County Economic Council Executive Director Charles Rudelitch presented a contract renewal for the Commissioners' consideration. The contract is a three-year contract between Washington County Board of Commissioners and SCEC to provide economic development activities on behalf of the County of Washington. Nancy Oden asked that the contract be read aloud so the public could be informed as to what actual services are being provided for the contacted amount. Commissioner Gardner obliged. After the contract was orally reviewed,

March 9, 2017

Ms. Oden stated her concern for lack of reporting available to the public from SCEC. Executive Director Charles Rudelitch stated reports are available to the public. Ms. Oden commented the reports were ambiguous. Commissioner Gardner stated Ms. Oden's concerns are not unfounded. Commissioner Gardner recognized the great work that SCEC accomplishes. Commissioner Gardner stated SCEC does not promote their work enough. There needs to be more outlet to the public. Sharing more information about the work being done will help justify the money spent for the services provided. Commissioner Gardner is in favor of continuing the contract for special services with SCEC with the understanding that there is more outward focus proving what the funds are doing for the County. Executive Director Charles Rudelitch agreed that communication and public awareness is important. Mr. Rudelitch reported SCEC is in the process of hiring a new person to work on communications. Commissioner Gardner acknowledged the great work-load done for the modest amount of \$24,000.00. With the specific request to build on communication and reporting to the public,

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the contract with Sunrise County Economic Council for a three-year period for services rendered not to exceed \$24,000.00 per year. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0.

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to go into Executive Session pursuant to Title 1 MRSA § 405-A 6 A (3) to discuss a personnel issue. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 5:40 p.m.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to come out of Executive Session. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 5:47 p.m.

A termination hearing date was scheduled Tuesday, March 21st, 2017 at 10 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

5:48 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.