

April 13, 2017

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Regular Meeting  
held April 13, 2017  
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner Christopher Gardner  
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.  
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administration  
Michael R. Brown, Machias Valley News  
Dean Preston, Unorganized Territories  
Lora Whelan, Quoddy Tides  
Mike Hinerman, EMA  
Joshua Rolfe, RCC  
Michael Crabtree, Sheriff's Office  
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, Sheriff's Office  
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer  
Dr. Whalen, Machias**

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Commissioner Gardner called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m.

Dr. James Whalen was given the floor. He was present to address his concerns for the future of the Machias Airport. Dr. Whalen began explaining some of the work recently done to the Airport area; trees have been cleared, the area has been bush-hogged; and the lounge has been improved. There are some significant issues facing the airport however. Dr. Whalen explained the runway is too short. It is squeezed between Route 1 and the Machias River. The runway would need to be at least a 5000 foot runway for any commercial activity and heavy enough for jet aircraft and helicopters. Dr. Whalen made the observation the airport could play an important economic role in the area if it was upgraded from its present condition. Dr. Whalen stated the Machias taxpayers cannot carry the whole financial burden. Dr. Whalen stated without a unified effort to make the Machias Airport the regional airport of Washington County it will always be a hobby or light aircraft runway. Dr. Whalen stated the Airport Committee is looking for a place for a regional airport. Commissioner Gardner responded by noting the County is too big for the Commissioners to choose what town or municipality a regional airport should be placed.

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The County Commissioners cannot play a role in influencing that economic benefit to one area. Commissioner Gardner concluded by stating the Board would like to be of substantial help but the Airport Committee must go to the surrounding towns to solicit support for a regional airport.

**Approval of the regular Commissioners' meeting minutes for March 9, 2017 (Crowley/Cassidy, 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**

Captain Rolfe presented two promotions in the Corrections Division. Commissioner Gardner inquired if there was a hiring process. Captain Rolfe stated there were two openings and he received two applications. Captain Rolfe stated he checked with the NCEU. The Union had no issues with the promotions. By consensus, the Commissioners recognized the promotion of Joshua Murray to Corporal in Corrections effective 03/19/17 and the promotion of Bryan Albee to Corporal in Corrections effective 03/26/17. Commissioner Gardner asked that Captain Rolfe obtain something in writing from the Union acknowledging they have no objection to the process used for these promotions. Captain Rolfe agreed to contact the Union for that documentation. Commissioner Gardner stated the promotions will need to be revisited if Captain Rolfe is unable to obtain documentation from NCEU.

Supervisor Josh Rolfe requested the termination of Travis Oakes as part-time ECS effective 04/07/17. Supervisor Rolfe explained that Mr. Oakes has not worked for RCC for some time. By consensus, the Commissioners released Travis Oakes as a part-time ECS.

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston requested the Commissioners hire Katelyn Mitchell for his summer maintenance crew. Dean has needed to fill the position due to turn-over.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Katelyn Mitchell as part-time U.T. Summer Maintenance Crew effective 04/16/17. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0.**

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U.T. Supervisor Dean Preston stated the summer crew typically works 30 to 35 hours per week for a nine week period.

**AGENDA ITEM: Fire Frequency Communication Equipment Upgrade Proposal**

RCC Supervisor Josh Rolfe presented a proposal to upgrade fire frequency communication equipment in northern Washington County for \$3000.00. (See attached) The proposal is from PCT as a sole provider. An upgrade was discussed last fall. The upgrade was going to be very expensive. PCT can now do the upgrade at a much lower cost due to existing radio equipment provided by the new BIDP. Commissioner Crowley asked if the funds were in the budget. Josh replied that he has verified with the Treasurer there are funds available.

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Crowley moved to accept the proposal for \$3000.00 from PCT as presented. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0.

**AGENDA ITEM: Reappoint Betsy Fitzgerald as LUPC Commissioner for Washington County**

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Crowley moved to reappoint Betsy Fitzgerald as LUPC Commissioner for Washington County.  
(Crowley/Cassidy, 3-0)

**AGENDA ITEM: Tax Abatement Decision for Donovan vs. Unorganized Territories, Twp. 25**

The tax abatement request for Donovan vs. Unorganized Territories, Twp. 25 was heard on March 9, 2017. The Board of Commissioners' denied request for a tax abatement.

**AGENDA ITEM: Reschedule Tax Abatement hearing for Tardiff vs. Town of Lubec**

The tax abatement hearing for Tardiff vs. Lubec has been rescheduled for Thursday, July 13, 2017 at 3 p.m.

Commissioner Gardner reported Chief Deputy Crabtree has provided the Board of Commissioners with very sobering statistics related to the drug epidemic in Washington County. (See Attached) Chief Deputy Crabtree noted the troubling statistic that Washington County has the

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most number of overdoses in the State of Maine for the past ten-year period. Chief Deputy Crabtree stated that what the County has been doing to combat the drug epidemic is not working. Commissioner Gardner acknowledged the problem has hit Washington County the worst; mainly due to the influx of drugs. Education, treatment and enforcement are needed to battle the problem. Commissioner Gardner stated on behalf of the Board of Commissioners that the need for more resources is recognized. MDEA has been a resource for enforcement but more help is needed. The Washington County budget does not have enough funds available to add more Patrol Deputies. Chief Deputy Crabtree also pointed out the new element adding to the problem is not only drug users, but drug dealers. Commissioner Gardner remarked that adding to the drug use issue is drug rehabilitation allows treatment by using a different drug which does not fix the problem but renames it. RCC Supervisor Josh Rolfe reported that as sobering as the statistics are, RCC receives calls every day that deals with overdoses but those overdoses are not reportable as the end result was not a fatality. Commissioner Cassidy stated the drug problem is a national issue as well. Chief Deputy Crabtree stated Washington County also leads the way on the national level. Commissioner Gardner noted Washington County may lead in the statistics because "we" talk about it and do not try to hide the problem. In order to find solutions, people must admit there is a problem and face it. Commissioner Gardner stated the drug problem impacts the budget for the Regional Communications Center, the Jail and the Sheriff's Office. This impact may show in the next budget season. Commissioner Gardner proclaimed "We are being invaded and we must arm ourselves"! Chief Deputy Crabtree concluded the discussion by pointing out the drug epidemic is a public safety and public health issue.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**5:15 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

**Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.**