

May 8, 2014

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting held
May 8, 2014
in the Commissioners' Conference Room
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton E. Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administration
Nancy Oden, Jonesboro
Joseph McPhail, Dennysville ATV Club, Edmunds Twp.
Josh Rolfe, RCC
Ian Emery, Cutler, Ice Arena
Ken Daye, SCEC
Will Tuell, Downeast Coastal Press
Crystal Hitchings, Washington County Council of Governments
Sharon D. Strout, Registry of Deeds
Michael F. Hinerman, EMA
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer
Judith Alexander, Treasurer's Office
Charles Rudelitch, SCEC, Harrington**

Commissioner Gardner called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM: Ice Rink Proposal

Ian Emery of Cutler informed the Commissioners that there is a growing interest in the area for an Ice Arena. The nearest ice rink is in St. Stephens where he has transported his son for several years to participate in a hockey league. Informational packets were given to the Commissioners to review. Mr. Emery stated that he has begun collecting data pertaining to the cost of building and operating an ice rink. He has also reached out to the local high schools, the University of Maine at Machias and organizations within the community to assess the interest level. Both indoor and outdoor rinks have been considered and eight different sites have been considered as possible locations for the structure. Darren Prout of the "By Us" Company, has

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offered the use of the Fairgrounds. Machias High School and UMM have also shown an interest in having the location of the rink on their property. Mr. Emery inquired as to whether the Rte. 192 County-owned property could be a location consideration. Commissioner Crowley stated that at one time, Machias had plans for an ice rink to be constructed on the Rte 192 County property and site work was done. Mr. Emery asked if the site is currently available. Commissioner Gardner stated that the County currently is in a Land Use Agreement with the Downeast Coastal Conservancy but an ice rink may dovetail well with DCC's mission to encourage recreational opportunity for the community. An ice arena would expand opportunities for youth. Mr. Emery asked about fund availability from planning grants or the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) fund. Commissioner Gardner stated that County funds are limited to none, and there are very strict guidelines as to where TIF funds can be used. TIF funds can only be used for projects that are located in the Unorganized Territories. Commissioner Gardner suggested that Mr. Emery check on the availability of property in the U.T. and to make contact with TIF Administrator Ken Daye. Mr. Emery noted that he had looked at a property in Trescott. He also pointed out that a covered facility would be able to be utilized for other sports other than ice hockey. During the off-season of winter sports, artificial turf could be put down for soccer, baseball, softball and football. Mr. Emery thanked the Commissioners for their time and input.

Commissioner Gardner asked if there were any public comments. Nancy Oden of Jonesboro stated that the suggested plan for an ice rink was not the "highest and best use" of the County-owned property. She stated that an agricultural use should be considered priority over using the property for sports. In response, Ian Emery acknowledged that food sources are very important but a sporting arena would not require the entire parcel of land. He saw both initiatives being able to co-habitat on the same property.

Commissioner Gardner concluded the presentation noting that this was not a meeting to discuss the use of the Rte 192 County property.

With no further public comment, Commissioner Gardner yielded the floor to the next presenter.

AGENDA ITEM: Suggestions on management and Allocations of TIF funds

Nancy Oden of Clean Earth Farms in Jonesboro presented suggestions to the Commissioners on management and allocations of TIF funds. (See attached report) She stated that she would like to meet with the TIF

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Committee to discuss a proposal for raised-bed gardens for needy people in Washington County. Ms. Oden considers the TIF funds to be unfairly allocated according to the current guidelines. Her request to the Commissioners is to "change the TIF rules for the betterment of Washington County's people". Commissioner Gardner stated that TIF fund allocation and guidelines is a Maine Constitution issue. The Commissioners have given great effort to seek changes in the guidelines for the use of TIF funds, but changes can only be made through the Maine Constitution. Ms. Oden also had issue with the administration of TIF funds. She suggested a new committee be appointed for the application and review process of grant and loan distribution. Appointing one person from each Commissioners district would be a more democratic way of screening applicants according to Ms. Oden. Commissioner Gardner defended the current recruitment and application process by explaining that a mailer was sent to every home in the U.T. Mailers were not sent county-wide because TIF funds are not county-wide funds. He also explained that the present TIF committee does, in fact, review applications and make recommendations for TIF allocations, however; the final decision on TIF grants and loans rests solely on the Commissioners who are elected by the voters. Ms. Oden also had concerns that there should be more emphasis on micro grants and/ or loans. Commissioner Gardner explained that the program guidelines have been review recently and have undergone changes. One of those changes has been to encourage the use of TIF funds through micro-loans as opposed to the distribution of funds through grants. Commissioner Gardner thanked Ms. Oden for her input and stated that her concerns will be given due consideration.

Adjournment 4:50 p.m.

Attest: _____
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer
Judith Alexander, Treasurer's Office
Heron Weston, Unorganized Territory
Charles Rudelitch, SCEC, Harrington**

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

**Approval of the April Regular meeting minutes
(April 10, 2014) (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

**Approval of the Emergency meeting minutes
(April 15, 2014) (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

**Approval of the Special meeting minutes
(April 28, 2014) (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

Commissioner Gardner stated for the record that the Special meeting was held for the purpose of a final presentation on the courthouse expansion / renovation project.

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided monthly reports in their meeting packets. (See attached)

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Register of Deeds Sharon Strout reported that the Registry of Deeds has moved to the new space, and the Deeds Office will be open for business on Monday.

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificate

The six-month certificate for Jessy Timpe was signed.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Status Change Notices

By consensus and without prejudice, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Mary Stubbs as part-time Corrections Officer effective 04/18/14.

Also by consensus and without prejudice, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Ann Hayward as full-time Administrative Assistant for the Sheriff's Office effective 04/25/14.

A request to reclassify the position of Dennis Worcester from full-time to full-time temporary effective 05/03/14 was presented. Commissioner Gardner asked for the reason of the reclassification and if there was any conflict with the union in doing so. With no one present from the Sheriff's Office to give the reason, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated that she believed Deputy Worcester agreed to cover the position until his position was filled. By consensus, the Commissioners tabled the payroll change request.

By consensus, the Commissioners approved the transfer of Corporal Patrol Deputy Gregory Sawyer to MDEA Task Force Investigative Agent effective 05/04/14.

By consensus, the Commissioners approve Sheriff Smith's recommendation to promote Deputy Christopher Donahue to the rank of Corporal within the patrol division effective 05/11/14.

There was a request for a new hire for the Sheriff's Department. Blaine Silk was recommended for hire as a full-time patrol deputy effective 05/25/14. It was unclear as to who the new hire would be replacing. After some discussion,

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to authorize County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald to approve the reclassification of Deputy Worcester and subsequent hire of Blaine Silk if it is found that this would be in compliance with the number of deputies**

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allowed per the union contract. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM: DCC Proposal for Use of County Land on Route 192

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald passed on apologies from Downeast Coastal Conservancy Executive Director Rich Bard. He was unable to make the meeting do to a schedule conflict. Although Mr. Bard was unable to make the meeting, a letter was presented to the Commissioners with a proposal for the county land on Route 192 to be used to graze livestock by a local farmer. Washington County entered into a Landowner Management agreement with DCC in November of 2013. The agreement states that DCC may manage the parcel for agricultural initiatives, among other uses. Commissioner Gardner stated that the proposal to graze livestock is a departure from the "spirit" of said agreement. Discussions on the use of the County land had been more along the lines of a parking area for hiking trails and other recreational uses. It was not the intention of the Commissioners to have the land used to pasture animals. Commissioner Gardner stated that they may not be able to approve the proposal as is. He also noted that the leadership has recently changed which may explain the misunderstanding. Commissioner Gardner suggested that the proposal be tabled until further discussion.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to table the proposal for further discussion. Commissioner Cassidy 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 5:28 p.m.**

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to come out of Executive Session. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 5:56 p.m.**

There were no motions or decisions made after Executive Session.

Adjournment 5:56 p.m.

**Attest: _____
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.**

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