

April 11, 2024

Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held April 11, 2024
in the Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine

Attending the meeting were:

Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Renée Gray, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Reid Albee, County Wide
Jill Holmes, Finance
Dean Preston, U.T.
Lupo Soto, Perry
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Heather Green, Deeds
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Timothy Cote, D.A.'s Office
Bob Granger, District Attorney
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA
Matthew McIntyre, District 18
Alicia Thompson, FEMA IGA
Michael White, FEMA IA
Mark McCalman, FEMA IGA
Dave Bathke, FEMA Division Supervisor
Chris Geissel, FEMA OPS. BD
Dennis Dorsey, WCSO
Josh Rolfe, WCSO / RCC
Rich Rolfe, WCSO / Jail
Brett Newman, WCSO / Jail
Darlene Perry, Probate
Dennis Perry, RCC
Christine Day, EMA
Charles Rudelitch, SCEC

Commissioner Christopher Gardner was not present.

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

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Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on March 14, 2024. (Crowley / Cassidy, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided written reports from the County Manager, the Treasurer's Office and SCEC. The reports were accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

County Manager Renée Gray gave an update on the elevator that has had a major mechanical breakdown. She has submitted an insurance claim to the Risk Pool and has contacted the State regarding sharing the repair costs. Renée stated she is still waiting to hear back from Kone.

Renée reported there is a drainage pipe in front of the 24 Center Street building that needs to be repaired. She stated an RFP will be published for the installation of a waterline and drain pipe repair. There is no estimate of this cost yet.

Renée stated the County has entered into a *Maine Commercial Customer Net Energy Billing Tariff Rate Agreement* with Maine Community Solar. The County should recognize a 15% savings on electricity bills.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

Bob Granger was present to introduce Timothy Cote and explain his intentions of requesting Sheriff Barry Curtis to Commission Timothy as a Patrol Deputy in Washington County. Bob explained that Timothy is working for the Hancock D.A.'s Office as an investigator. Bob explained that there are times when the investigation does extend into the Washington County area. Therefore, he is requesting Timothy be Commissioned by Sheriff Curtis. Treasurer Jill Holmes asked if Timothy would need to be hired as a part-time patrol deputy to also be Commissioned by the Sheriff. There was some discussion on this matter. Bob stated Timothy does not need to be employed by Washington County to be a Commissioned Deputy. Sheriff Curtis stated Timothy would be hired as an employee and be Commissioned but not get paid. Although Timothy will only be working for the Hancock District Attorney's Office at this time, it was decided that Timothy be added to the part-time roster. With the recommendation of Sheriff Curtis,

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Timothy Cote as part-time**

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Patrol Deputy effective 03/12/24. (Crowley / Cassidy, 2-0)

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Bob stated he may be seeking funding in the next budget cycle for a similar position in the District Attorney's Washington County Office.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Taylor LeBlanc as full-Patrol Deputy effective 03/31/24.
(Crowley / Cassidy, 2-0)**

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Brett Newman as full-time Corrections Officer effective 04/14/24.
(Crowley / Cassidy, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificate

Six-month certificates for Lynn Dwelley, Cody Eaton and Marc White were signed as presented.

AGENDA ITEM: Award 24 Center Street Sprinkler System Bid

County Manger Renée Gray stated a Request for Proposals was published to install a sprinkler system to comply with the fire and life code at 24 Center Street. Two bids were received: one from Eastern Fire of Auburn, Maine to install a complete wet and dry system for a bid of \$52,900.00, and one from Maine Fire of Bangor, Maine for the installation of a wet pipe sprinkler system for a bid of \$41,750.00. Renée explained that 24 Center Street did not require a sprinkler system previously as it was used for a private business. Now occupied by the District Attorney's Office, this is considered a public building. As such it falls under a different guideline with the State Fire Marshall and installing a sprinkler system will bring the building into compliance. The Fire Marshal suggested the County employ a planner for different options to comply with the fire code, but Renée suggested the best use of the money would be to put it into the project. Commissioner Cassidy agreed with Renée. Commissioner Crowley asked where the funds will come from to pay for the project. Treasurer Jill Holmes responded the funds will come from ARPA money like all other project relating to the relocation of the D.A.'s Office.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to award the RFP to install a sprinkler system at 24 Center Street building to Maine Fire**

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of Bangor for an amount of \$41,750.00.
(Crowley / Cassidy, 2-0)

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AGENDA ITEM: Sheriff and RCC Issues

Sheriff Curtis stated a crisis situation is arising in the Regional Communications Center. He stated that during last year's budget process, four additional Emergency Communications Specials were requested. The Budget Advisory Committee approved only two additional positions. Sheriff Curtis explained the reason additional ECS were requested and are still needed is the same reason the Sheriff's Division is short-handed; the withdrawal of the Maine State Police (MSP) in Washington County has left a void that must be filled. Not only is more coverage needed in Patrol, but the loss of MSP coverage has affected the workload on the RCC as well. Sheriff Curtis stated dispatchers are experiencing burn-out. He also noted there is still an impact on the budget due to overtime pay. Sheriff Curtis emphasized this is an issue that needs to be addressed now; it cannot wait until the next budget year. RCC Director Josh Rolfe stated the issue is not just the number of calls. The severity of calls has grown. Calls also used to be able to be transferred and handled by the MSP but are now handled by WCRCC dispatch. Dispatcher Dennis Perry spoke on what dispatchers are dealing with on a daily basis. Dennis stated there is a definite concern of losing employees due to burn-out. Commissioner Cassidy asked about the increase in workload is since the loss of MSP coverage. Dennis responded the load has increased from two-thirds to 100% coverage by RCC. Dennis concluded his report by stating RCC is in crisis mode. Chief Crabtree added that it is not just fielding a call that used to take 2 to 3 minutes. These calls can no longer be transferred to Bangor for the MSP to take over; the dispatcher now finds themselves on the other end of the emergency call for up to 45 minutes. Sheriff Curtis stated action cannot wait for one more month to be addressed at the next Commissioners' meeting. Commissioner Cassidy stated the Board of Commissioners would not be able to deal with this issue at this time; statistics will be needed. Commissioner Crowley also noted a request for funds for additional dispatchers above and beyond what was approved for the 2024 budget would need to be brought back before the BAC. Commissioner Crowley noted the Treasurer will need to organize a special meeting with the BAC to address the concerns and request more funds. Josh asked if there are extra funds in the 2024 budget, can

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they be used without going back to the BAC. He reiterated that the issue is at a critical point and action needs to be taken before next year. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated she would need to explore the options but noted she does not know where such funds could be taken. Treasurer Jill Holmes suggested starting with a meeting between

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Administration, Finance, Sheriff's Office and RCC to determine what is needed for funds to relieve this issue. Commissioner Cassidy directed the County Manager to organize a meeting as suggested by the Treasurer. Commissioner Cassidy asked Renée to keep the Commissioners informed of all Sheriff / RCC concerns and issues.

AGENDA ITEM: Building Committee Update

County Manager Renée Gray submitted a written report. See attached. Renée noted a Team Meeting with the Construction Manager has been scheduled for April 24th at 10:30. The meeting will take place on site. The neighbor adjacent to the County parking lot has been invited to attend.

AGENDA ITEM: EMA / FEMA information for Washington County

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom invited FEMA to attend the Commissioners' meeting to inform the County Commissioners and the public about their efforts to assist those that were affected by the January storms and flooding.

FEMA Division Supervisor David Bathke stated FEMA will be setting up a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) at the University of Maine at Machias. A Disaster Assistance Team will be available for those who experienced either major or minor damage as a result of the January storms. Residents can get help at the DRC to receive funds for eligible losses.

Michael White stated he will also be available at the college. As part of FEMA's Individual Assistance Team, he will assist residents with the application process, check on records and make sure there is no missing information on the application. Mr. White noted that if a resident is unable to visit the DRC in person but would like to speak with a FEMA representative for assistance, they can call 1-800-621-3362 or visit the website at www.disasterassistance.gov. Mr. White also noted the TTY phone line is 1-800-462-7585. He stated

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there are FEMA representative working out in the field to spread the word about the disaster survivor assistance that is available.

Mark McCalman of FEMA Governmental External Affairs explained his department is the contact for all elected officials. He further explained External Affairs is responsible for news reports and guidance in the recovery process. Mr. McCalman introduced Alica Thompspon. Mrs. Thompson works for FEMA in Governmental External Affairs.

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Commissioner Cassidy asked if there would be any other Disaster Recovery Centers set up in Washington County. Mr. McCalman responded that the Disaster Recovery Center is only in Machias. He explained Machias was chosen because it is central to damage reports. Mr. McCalman stated they do have a list of towns considered priority areas. The Disaster Survivor Assistance have been visiting all those areas.

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom stated there were two disaster declarations; one in December 2023 and one in January 2024. The disaster declaration from the storm in January was approved for individual assistance by the Federal Government. This means anyone who experienced damage can receive direct assistance. U.T. Supervisor asked how the word is getting out to the public about the individual assistance. Lisa responded the following ways are being used to distribute the information: social media, emails, newspapers, town office announcements and MEMA announcements. Mark McCalman noted he will be reaching out to all county representatives. Commissioner Cassidy noted it is important to use the three local papers to share the information. David Bathke state FEMA's goal is to leave no one behind. Michael White stated the registration deadline for recovery assistance is May 20th, 2024.

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom noted the whole FEMA team has been wonderful to work with and thanked them all for coming to the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Commissioner Issues and Comments

County Manager Renée Gray stated she wanted to bring the Pembroke Tidal Power Project to the Commissioners' attention. She reported a notice was received of the preliminary permit application and the public comment period. The proposed project would be located at the mouth of Cobscook Bay near the Town of Pembroke.

