

April 8, 2021

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Regular Meeting  
held April 8, 2021  
in the Superior Courtroom  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner  
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant  
Jill Holmes, Treasurer  
Lisa M. Hanscom, WNEMA  
Christine Day, WNEMA  
Josh Rolfe, RCC Director  
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy  
Barry Curtis, Sheriff  
Sharon D. Strout, Deeds  
Carlene Holmes, Probate  
Brian Smith  
Robert Simpson**

**Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. was not present.**

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Executive Department business was called to order at 4:15 p.m.

**Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting of February 11, 2021. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

**Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on March 11, 2021. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

**AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports**

The Commissioners were provided a written report from the Treasurer's Office. The report was accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

**AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-Month Certificate**

The six-month introductory period certificate for Madelyn Gardner was signed as presented.

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**AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices**

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the hire of Jeremy Towne as part-time Jail Cook effective 03/21/21.  
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

By consensus, the Commissioners approved the reclassification of Nicole Graves from full-time Secretary to full-time Victim Witness Advocate in the District Attorney's Office in Machias effective 03/22/21.

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald recommended the hire of Lisa Hanscom as full-time Emergency Management Director effective 03/29/21. Lisa has sat on the board of the Budget Advisory Committee in the past. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald confirmed Lisa was hired through a hiring process.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the hire of Lisa Hanscom as full-time EMA Director effective 03/29/21.  
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the hire of Elmer Farren as part-time Patrol Deputy effective 04/08/21.  
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

Commissioner Gardner stated standard part-time provisions apply. Commissioner Gardner noted that Elmer Farren worked as a State Trooper for 25 years and has previously worked for the Sheriff's Office.

The Commissioners accepted the resignation of Whitney Bassett as full-time Corrections Officer effective 04/09/21 by consensus and without prejudice.

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald recommended the reclassification of Christine Day from part-time to full-time EMA Administrative Assistant effective 04/12/21. Commissioner Gardner asked for justification in making this position full-time. Betsy stated the EMA has been overwhelmed with COVID issues, such as distribution of PPE, coordinating vaccination clinics and being a source of information to all things related to COVID. This is all in addition to the daily activities of the EMA Office. Commissioner Gardner asked how the extra cost of funding a full-time position would be covered. Betsy

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stated there is funding through the stimulus package for pandemic relief. Christine Day also noted the County receives reimbursement funds from FEMA and 25% of her salary is reimbursed by the LEPC. Commissioner Gardner requested the Commissioners be provided with a break-down of where all the funds come from to cover the Administrative Assistant's salary. Commissioner Gardner suggested the reclassification be approved for the remainder of 2021 with further discussion needed at budget time. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated she will be prepared to make a case for the position to stay full-time at that point.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the reclassification of Christine Day from part-time to full-time as EMA Administrative Assistant effective 04/12/21 with the stipulation that the position will be reassessed at budget time. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

**AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on letter to Calais City Council Regarding Cell Phone Service**

During the March meeting, the Commissioners were presented with a letter from the Mayor and Members of the City Council of Calais regarding the quality of cellular telephone coverage in the Calais area. The letter expressed Calais' concern of the poor cell phone service, and the impact it has on the safety of their residents. The letter indicated that this issue is needing the attention of the State Attorney General and the FCC. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald was directed to draft a letter to the Mayor and the City Council of Calais stating the Commissioners have no jurisdiction over wireless network providers. The letter was drafted and presented for the Commissioners signatures. After reviewing the letter and further discussion, it was decided it would be more appropriate to craft a letter addressed to all carriers expressing the concerns of the public. Commissioner Gardner stated the service companies are not responsible for public safety. However, service companies are responsible to deliver what they advertise which is reliability. Commissioner Cassidy stated all communities should send a letter to carriers with their concerns of poor cellular coverage. Commissioner Gardner noted that the Board of Commissioners represent communities within the county, but it would be more effective to come from the communities. By consensus, it was agreed the letter should be revised addressing all service companies providing cell service in Washington County.

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**AGENDA ITEM: Signature on Northeastern Workforce Development Board Agreement**

The Commissioners were presented with a Memorandum of Agreement for the Northeastern Workforce Development Board. The mission of the Northeastern Workforce Development Board (NWDB) is to engage and promote workforce development in Penobscot, Hancock, Piscataquis, Aroostook and Washington Counties. Commissioner Gardner stated this is a standard agreement.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the Northeastern Workforce Development Board Agreement as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

Brian Smith asked to speak representing Machiasport. Mr. Smith expressed his concern about the increase in Machiasport's county taxes for 2021. Commissioner Gardner stated the county passed a flat-line budget for 2021. Commissioner Gardner explained the town valuation may change but the valuation is set by the Maine Revenue Service. Commissioner Gardner stated that services provided to towns must also be considered. The individual towns have the responsibility and authority to make the decisions as to what services they get from the County. The County Commissioners try to find the most efficient way to provide those services. Commissioner Gardner stated the one of the services provided that has become the biggest concern is the need for law enforcement. Low morale, the increasing scarcity of those wanting to work in law enforcement and average pay of those in law enforcement has caused great concern. Commissioner Gardner's opinion is the County needs to continue to invest in law enforcement. Commissioner Gardner noted the Maine State Police have not increased their road contingency since the 70's. Commissioner Gardner stated that if we want law enforcement coverage, we will have to pay for it. This need will drive the County budget next year. Other services may need to be cut.

Brian Smith asked the Commissioners' thoughts on Machiasport becoming a sanctuary town supporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. Commissioner Gardner replied that the Commissioners are reserving any actions at this time.

Register of Deeds Sharon Strout announced her intentions to retire. Sharon plans on retiring in June and stated her Deputy Register Tammy Gay is willing to step up into the position of Register. Sharon asked what steps need to be taken to appoint the Deputy Register to the

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position of Register. Commissioner Gardner asked to what political party the Deputy is registered as the person to be appointed must be of the same political party as the present elected official. Sharon confirmed the Deputy was of the same political party. Commissioner Gardner stated the Governor must appoint an elected official in the middle of a term. The recommendation of the Board of Commissioners is taken for the appointment. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated she has been appointed twice in the middle of a term and was appointed by the Governor. Commissioner Gardner is not sure if the process is the same so some research will need to be done. Commissioner Gardner asked Sharon how many years she has been the Register of Deeds. Sharon stated she began working full time in 1987 and was elected to the position of Register of Deeds in 1989. Commissioner Gardner acknowledged the years of service and the changes Sharon has witnessed. Commissioner Gardner stated "you have done a tremendous job and have certainly earned your retirement". County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald was asked to research the process of appointing an elected official during a term.

Commissioner Gardner made an inquiry of U.T. Supervisor Dean Preston's involvement on the TIF Loan Committee. County Manager stated Dean is on the TIF Loan Committee and attends TIF meetings whenever possible. Commissioner Gardner wants to ensure that Dean is on all committees for TIF.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**4:51 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

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