August 26, 2026

Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Special Meeting
held August 26, 2026
in the Washington County Commissioners' Office
Machias, Maine

Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner David Burns
Commissioner Courtney Hammond
Commissioner Billy Howard
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office
Paul Sylvain, MVNO
Leigh MacKeen, Whitneyville
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Josh Rolfe, RCC / WCSO
Charlene Hammond, Columbia Falls
Ellie Hammond, Jonesport
Aidan Hammond, Jonesport
Ashton Hammond, Cherryfield
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Darlene Perry, Probate
Robert Granger, D.A.

Commissioner Burns called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Commissioner Burns stated there are only two items on the agenda but there may be more items addressed that he will ask the board to take action on.

AGENDA ITEM: Motion to Address Issues in Litigation

MOTION **Commissioner Burns moved to rescind the termination of Renée Gray as County Manager effective immediately and to return to her position as such. This motion is made and intended to comply with the temporary restraining order issued by the Superior Court and pending litigation between Ms. Gray and the County. (Burns / Howard, 3-0)**

Commissioner Burns stated there will be limited discussion on this matter based on council's advice. He noted the motion does not mean the County Commissioners agree or disagree with the order but is in

recognition of the court order and it is to comply with this order.

Any other discussion of the suspension or termination will be after consultation with council in compliance with the law.

Commissioner Burns stated the next item on the agenda is for a budget workshop. Commissioner Burns stated he would like a motion to address several other items that have come up that should be considered before the next regular meeting on September 10th.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to address other items for action that are not on the agenda. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

ACTION ITEM: ZOOM Link for Commissioners' Meetings

Commissioner Burns stated due to the inappropriate content that interrupted the regular Commissioner's Meeting of August 13th, a recommendation has been made to change the process for participants to join by ZOOM. EMA Director Lisa Hanscom suggested that the link not be posted but to have participants request the link. Access to the link will be given to participants with the ability to listen but not participate. Commissioner Hammond stated that sounds appropriate. Commissioner Burns noted it is important the public has access but to keep the access secure. By consensus, the Board of Commissioners agree on this new process for on-line access to Commissioners' meetings.

ACTION ITEM: Perch Agreement Issue

Commissioner Burns asked Financial Director Jenny Windsor to explain an issue that has been discovered with an agreement with Perch. Jenny stated that in late 2024 the County entered into an agreement with Perch (formally Altus). Jenny stated the intent was to save money on electric bills. She explained the County has paid a fee to the company to participate in solar farms per the agreement; in turn the County would receive a discount on the electric bills. Jenny stated this turned out to not be the case, and she reported the County has not saved. Commissioner Howard stated he has read the agreement and it does not give a break-down of any type of savings. Jenny requested the Commissioners give her permission to end the contract with Perch. She noted there is a 90-day waiting period for the contract to end.

***MOTION* Commissioner Hammond moved to give the Finance Director**

permission to give Perch notice of the termination of said the contract. (Hammond / Burns, 3-0)

ACTION ITEM: Cruiser Repair

Commissioner Burns stated there is an immediate need for a cruiser repair. Financial Director Jenny Windsor reported there is a K-9 back-up cruiser that is in need of repair as well as a second cruiser that is in the garage that was in an accident. Repairing the back-up cruiser is urgent to get the Patrol Deputy back in a cruiser. Jenny stated the estimated cost for repair is $1800.00. She noted this repair would cause the Vehicle and Repair line to go over budget. Jenny noted there are other lines in the Sheriff's Office budget that could cover this cost. She stated she is not suggesting funds be transferred but just noting there are funds to cover the cost. Commissioner Burns stated there is only one estimate and asked if the Sheriff could get others. Sheriff Curtis stated he would try to get a few more. Rich Rolfe pointed out there are funds in other lines that are needed for other expenses but the cruiser repair is a priority. Commissioner Howard stated he did not like the idea of using funds from other lines. Commissioner Burns noted it is important to get the Patrol Deputy back in a cruiser.

***MOTION* Commissioner Burns moved to approve the repair to the back-up cruiser as presented. (Burns / Hammond, 3-0)**

Commissioner Burns stated he would like the Sheriff to obtain a second estimate. It was also noted the cruiser that sustained damage in an accident will be repaired with insurance funds.

Having acted on other immediate action items, Commissioner Burns stated the Board of Commissioners will resume with the next item on the agenda.

AGENDA ITEM: Finance / Budget Workshop

Commissioner Burns stated this will be a review of the budget that will be presented to the Budget Advisory Committee on the September 10th meeting. Commissioner Burns stated each Commissioner has had an opportunity to review the proposed budget built by the Finance Department based on input by the Department Heads. This proposed budget reflects an overall increase of 44.56%. It was noted that departments need to look at their individual budgets and decide what

they have to have, what is needed and what they can live with. Josh Rolfe stated the County has been treading water for over a year. He acknowledged a 40% increase is huge but stated the County needs to budget for the services provided. Each Commissioner had a different view point of what adjustments should be made to the proposed budget.

After a lengthy discussion between the Board of Commissioners, the Finance Office and Department Heads, the Commissioners did not come to a consensus for any changes to the proposed budget. It was decided the proposed budget will be prepared as is for the Public Hearing to be held on September 10th.

Commissioner Burns stated there is a need for an efficiency expert to help guide the county with its operational structure. He recommended it would be helpful to have the County hire an independent, non-bias party. He stated Maine Municipal Association may be able to guide the County with this.

MOTION **Commissioner Howard moved to have the County Commissioner Chair David Burns gather information for the process of hiring an efficiency expert to guide the County in its operational structure needs. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

ADJOURNMENT
10:44 a.m.
ATTEST: _____
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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