

February 10, 2022

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
Held February 10, 2022
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Susan Hatton, SCEC
Sarah Dedmon, Machias Valley News Observer
Regina Grabrovac, East Machias
Katie Freedman, Healthy Acadia
Dean Preston, U.T.
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Carlene M. Holmes, Probate**

Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. was not present.

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

Regina Grobrovac presented a proposal on behalf of Healthy Acadia. The proposal is to establish a community-corrections gardening program utilizing county-owned property. Ms. Grobrovac distributed a map of the county-owned property off Broadway in Machias. Ms. Grobrovac stated the proposal is a request to use land owned by the county to produce vegetables and other crops to be used by food security organizations as well as by the jail's kitchen. Ms. Grobrovac noted Healthy Acadia has been working with Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe to develop the Recovery Coaching Program. Ms. Grobrovac pointed out that Healthy Acadia has had success in other community gardening projects, and has partnered with University of Maine Cooperative Extension. The many benefits of a community garden program were noted by both Ms. Grobrovac and Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe. Gardening is therapeutic and teaches valuable life skills. Inmates would be given relevant educational opportunities provided by UMaine Cooperative Extension

February 10, 2022

12

staff and master gardener volunteers. The garden would also provide healthy food for incarcerated individuals as well as for food security organizations. Ms. Grobrovac requested the Commissioners to consider a possible 10-year lease on the land, noting that to properly invest in the program, it is important to look at long-term use of the land. Ms. Grobrovac stated Healthy Acadia would secure all funding for the program. Commissioner Gardner stated the idea of a community-corrections gardening program has been discussed in the past, and the Commissioners would be in favor of the project. The Jail Administrator agreed the program has many benefits to consider. Rich did suggest another site for the garden. The site of the garden will be discussed further. Ms. Grabrovac stated the first step will be to do soil testing. If the test results are favorable, they could begin clearing and preparing the land. The first food plantings would be planned for 2023. Commissioner Gardner stated the Commissioners are in favor of reconstituting the "Sheriff's Garden". Commissioner Gardner directed Ms. Grabrovac to work with the County Manager for access to the land for the soil testing and other necessary preparations. Commissioner Gardner requested that the Board of Commissioners are given another look at the proposal after the concept has been developed.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the use of county property to establish a community-corrections gardening program. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

The regular meeting of the Unorganized Territories proceeded at 4:15 p.m.

Approval of the U.T. regular meeting minutes of January 13, 2022 (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston's monthly report was submitted. (See attached)

Dean reported he has spoken with Fiscal Administrator of the Unorganized Territories Nancy Bodine. They discussed bridging and taxes. Dean is still waiting for notice of the hearing on the 2022-2023 U.T. budget.

February 10, 2022

13

Dean stated the U.T. office has been contacted by Town of Vanceboro with a request to provide ACO services to their town. An agreement has been sent for the Town of Vanceboro to review. Dean also noted Vanceboro has stated they are considering de-organizing. Dean stated the U.T. office now provides ACO service to six towns.

Dean noted there are ongoing 2021 highway maintenance projects continuing into the 2022 season. Dean also plans to assess and evaluate the condition of County roads that will need repair due to winter damage.

Dean reported on several special projects. Dean stated the U.T. office has communicated with the Edmunds Elementary School regarding partnering with the school to build an outside classroom. Dean has also communicated with the Town of Dennysville regarding partnering with the town on a project at the old tennis courts. Commissioner Gardner asked Dean about support for the Dennysville Library. Dean stated the Dennysville Library already receives a third-party allocation from the U.T. budget.

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update

A report was submitted and is attached.

Ms. Hatton presented a request for a TIF Grant. Nickey Dubey, dba Ben's Dive Shack, is requesting a nature-based tourism grant in the amount of \$10,000. Ms. Hatton gave a summary of the business. Ben's Dive Shack has been in business since 2016. Ms. Hatton stated the business originally purchased three used compressors. The compressors are now 30 years old and in need of replacement. The grant would eliminate all the old equipment. Their business currently is 70 percent fishing industry and 30 percent tourism. Without new equipment, the dive shop will have to close. This would cause a great burden for fisherman. The shop also serves the Lubec Fire Department, hobbyists and tourists. Ms. Hatton stated that Ms. Dubey believes that with Maine's new initiative to promote the tourism industry, tourism customers will increase. Ben's Dive Shack currently has three part-time employees and plans to hire two additional part-time people. The Grant Committee recommends approval of this grant application

February 10, 2022

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the grant request, #2202-02-NBT, in the amount of \$10,000.00 to Nickey Dubey, dba Ben's Dive Shack, as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

14

Ms. Dubey is also requesting a TIF loan but has not fully completed the loan application. Ms. Hatton asked the Commissioners to consider approval of a loan pending the review of the Loan Committee. Commissioner Gardner asked if Ms. Dubey has checked into other funding options. Ms. Hatton stated that Ms. Dubey has checked other funding options but is not eligible. Commissioner Gardner asked about the collateralization of the requested loan. Ms. Hatton stated the Loan Committee will be reviewing the details of the loan request and assured the Commissioners there would be reasonable collateralization of the loan.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to provide approval of the loan request to Nickey Dubey, dba Ben's Dive Shack, subject to a positive recommendation by the TIF Loan Committee. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

Ms. Hatton presented a spreadsheet of the Washington County UT TIF Program funds. The spreadsheet gives a historical view of fund allocation and awards. The recommendation for the 2022 allocation of funds is:

➤ TIF-EDI Grant	0%	\$0
➤ TIF-EDP	24%	\$18,435
➤ TIF-NBT	24%	\$18,435
➤ TIF-LOAN	52%	\$39,942
➤ COUNTY MATCH		\$25,000
➤ ADMINISTRATION		\$60,000

Commissioner Gardner reviewed the new account totals. Ms. Hatton noted the Maine Revenue Service abatement payment amounts were deducted from the accounts in which the amounts originally were posted. (See attached)

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the 2022 TIF fund allocations as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

Ms. Hatton reported Jim Robinson of Dennys River Tractor has sold his business. Dean Preston will be checking with Mr. Robinson in regards to the contracts Mr. Robinson has with the U.T.

February 10, 2022

AGENDA ITEM: **Public Comment**
None.

15

ADJOURNMENT
4:35 p.m.

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

February 10, 2022

16