

February 10, 2022

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

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Sarah Dedmon, Machias Valley News Observer
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.

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:35 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on January 13, 2022. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided written reports from the Treasurer's Office and Sunrise County Economic Council. The reports were accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

Captain Rich Rolfe stated that he and RCC Director Josh Rolfe have had a conversation in regards to part-time entry wages for Corrections Officers and Emergency Communications Specialists. On behalf of both departments, Rich is requesting the Commissioners approve the starting wage be increased to \$17.79. Rich stated there will be no negative effect on the budget.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to increase the starting entry wage for part-time Corrections Officers and ECS to \$17.79 per hour effective this pay period.
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

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(Amended at the March 10, 2022 meeting: This rate is adjusted to \$17.95 to reflect the budget increases for 2022 for the starting wage for all part-time employees.)

Commissioner Gardner asked Probate Registrar Carlene Holmes to give an update on the proposal to transfer Probate Court from County control to the control of the State judicial system. Ms. Holmes explained that she has been tasked with gathering the information needed to conduct an analysis of the cost to make such a transfer. Commissioner Gardner stated the proposal was discussed by the Maine County Commissioners Association. Commissioner Gardner reported the MCCA unanimously came out against such a move to the district court system. Commissioner Gardner recognized the need for improvements such as having a full-time Probate Judge. Commissioner Cassidy noted there are situations today that cause the need for more time from a Judge in the Probate Office. Ms. Holmes agreed there are improvements needed within the system. Ms. Holmes pointed out all sixteen counties need to be more uniform. Commissioner Gardner stated the County Commissioners will stand against the transferring of control to the state.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

By consensus the Commissioners discharged Amy Premier as full-time Buildings and Grounds Maintenance effective 01/26/22. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated Amy did not successfully complete her introductory period.

By consensus the Commissioners accepted the resignations of John Beach and Carilla Fritz as part-time Corrections Officers. The resignation of John Beach is effective 11/01/21. The resignation of Carilla Fritz is effective 01/28/22.

***MOTION* Commissioner Gardner moved to reclassify Elmer Farren from part-time to full-time Patrol Deputy effective 02/20/22.
(Gardner / Cassidy, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on County Tax Tabulation

The County Tax Tabulation was presented to the Commissioners for signatures. Commissioner Gardner stated the 2022 mill rate is .00165230260. Commissioner Gardner reported the amount of taxes to be

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collected from the municipalities based on the 2022 State Valuation

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and the 2022 mill rate is a total of \$6,621,520. Commissioner Gardner listed the six highest taxes due from municipalities from highest to lowest. They are: 1) Unorganized Territories, \$671,661; 2) Baileyville, \$557,817; 3) Milbridge, \$358,054; 4) Lubec, \$331,535; 5) Steuben, \$326,743, and 6) Calais, \$300,967. Commissioner Gardner noted the Unorganized Territory has the largest amount of land. Baileyville has the Mill and Calais is a commercialized area. The coastline is the biggest driving factor for the tax base of the municipalities of Milbridge, Lubec and Steuben. Sarah Dedmon asked for the tax amount for Machias. Commissioner Gardner responded a copy of the County tax tabulation will be forwarded to Ms. Dedmon. The tax amount for Machias is \$256,355. The Commissioners signed the County Tax Tabulation as presented. (See attached)

AGENDA ITEM: County Policy Amendment

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald presented a previously discussed policy regarding an opt-out of the insurance offered by the county if an employee can demonstrate proof of equivalent health insurance coverage through a spouse's policy. After further discussing the proposed policy to Department Heads, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated the Department Heads agreed the language was acceptable. The amended policy reads "to eliminate the scenario of receiving a double subsidy for health insurance, county employees already eligible to be covered by the county health insurance in their own right, may not also receive the weekly payment of \$100.00." Betsy requested the Commissioners to ratify the county policy amendment. Paula Johnson Rolfe stated she has a different proposal that she would like to be considered. By consensus, the Commissioners tabled the decision for more time to review both proposals.

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion-Elementary School Extra-Curricular Activities

Commissioner Gardner voiced his concerns surrounding mandates and quarantines put in place by the CDC, Health and Human Services and Department of Education in the school setting. Commissioner Gardner stated there are developmental concerns. Commissioner Gardner stated protocols such as mask mandates and limiting friends and family at school activities may have been put in place with the best of

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intentions. Commissioner Gardner noted severe developmental issues have been caused by these protocols. Commissioner Gardner suggested a letter urging a compromise on behalf of the children is an

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appropriate action. Commissioner Cassidy was in complete agreement. By consensus, Commissioner Gardner, as Chair, will pen a letter to address these concerns.

AGENDA ITEM: Donation of Totaled Cruiser to CWCIT

Sheriff Curtis reported that one of the cruisers received extensive damage. The insurance company has paid their share of the claim. Due to the cost of the repair and the number of miles on the cruiser, Sheriff Curtis is requesting that this vehicle be donated to the automotive program at the Coastal Washington County Technical Institute in Columbia.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the donation of a cruiser to CWCIT per recommendation of the Sheriff. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Sheriff's Office Purchase of Two Vehicles

The Sheriff's Office is needing to purchase new cruisers. Due to the shortage of available new vehicles across the nation, the Sheriff's Office has looked for other options. Sheriff Curtis is requesting approval to purchase two low mileage used vehicles for the Pleasant Point Police Department. The vehicles can be purchased for \$8,000 each and already have some of the equipment necessary. A portion of the funds will come from the current budget. The remaining amount will come from the insurance money received from the damaged cruiser.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to authorize the Sheriff to purchase two vehicles from the Pleasant Point Police Department. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

Commissioner Gardner stated the purchase is a tremendous deal. Commissioner Gardner gave thanks to the Pleasant Point Police Department for working with the Sheriff's Office.

AGENDA ITEM: Building Committee Update

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County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated she is waiting for more Requests for Qualifications. There have been two qualifications received from Architectural and Engineering design firms. Betsy stated she is expecting to receive three more qualifications. Commissioner Gardner stated the use of ARPA funds has been discussed at the MCCA meeting. Commissioner Gardner reported it appears that

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all counties are leaning towards using the funds to invest in brick and mortar. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners have made no formal decisions; other ideas have been proposed but the Commissioners are still leaning towards building a public safety building. Commissioner Gardner noted the board is still willing to listen to other proposals.

Commissioner Gardner stated the Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) will need to be dealt with sooner than the next scheduled Commissioners' meeting. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners normally accept the recommendation of the Treasurer. Commissioner Gardner suggested the Commissioners authorize the Treasurer, upon the Chair's review, to award the TAN as soon as possible.

MOTION **Commissioner Cassidy moved to authorize the Chair to review and accept the Treasurer's recommendation on the TAN bid award. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

ADJOURNMENT

5:10 p.m.

ATTEST: _____

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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