

February 20, 2025

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Regular Meeting  
held February 20, 2025  
in the Probate Courtroom  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner David C. Burns  
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.  
Commissioner Billy Howard  
Renée Gray, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant  
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO  
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office  
Rachel Worcester, D.A.'s Office  
Tammy Gay, Deeds  
Heather Green, Deeds  
Regina Grabrovac, Healthy Acadia  
Megan Huffman, Finance  
Jill C. Holmes, Finance  
Sondra Small, Finance  
Barry Curtis, Sheriff  
Tim Tabbutt, WCSO  
Paul Sylvain, MVNO  
Lynn Dwelley, D.A.'s Office**

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Executive Department business was called to order at 3:50 p.m.

**AGENDA ITEM: Award TAN**

Treasurer Jill Holmes presented a summary of the bid opening for the TAN. She stated a request for a Tax Anticipation Note in the amount of \$5,679,800.00 was published in local papers. One bid was received from Machias Savings Bank with a 5.02% rate based on 360-day year for interest in the amount of \$247,901.18. Jill recommended the County Commissioners award the bid to Machias Savings Bank.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Crowley moved to award the TAN to Machias Savings Bank as recommended by the County Treasurer as presented. (Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

**AGENDA ITEM: Healthy Acadia Presentation**

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Regina Grabrovac was present to give the Board of Commissioners a report and update on Healthy Acadia. Regina is the Food Programs Manager for Healthy Acadia. She offered an informational brochure that summarizes the work and projects of Healthy Acadia. The Downeast Restorative Harvest is one such project. Regina explained that the DERH, a community-corrections farm, is located at 73 Broadway in Machias on county-owned land. The project works cooperatively with the Washington County Jail to address the lack of vegetable growing in Washington County, to help improve nutrition for individuals that are incarcerated, to improve food security for all, and to create a community-centered, educational space for farm and gardening skills. Regina reported that 2024 was the first growing season and was considered very successful. She reported most of the harvest went to the Jail and the remainder went to food pantries. Regina asked the Commissioners to consider giving Healthy Acadia approval to build a barn on the property. This plan includes possible living quarters. Looking to the future of the DERH program, Healthy Acadia feels it would be advantageous to have a barn on the property. Commissioner Howard expressed his concern of the County allowing a structure to be built on county leased land. Regina responded that their hope is that the program will work well enough that the County will be agreeable to continue the lease after its' original lease term ends. Commissioner Burns stated he would like to see the site. Rich Rolfe noted the project has worked out well. Regina stated the Jail Cook has been wonderful to work with. Commissioner Burns stated it has taken many years to make this community-corrections project happen. He asked where the funding comes from for the project. Rich Rolfe responded grant money supports the project, and further explained that part of the grant criteria is based on the inmates' learning skills while under supervision. Commissioner Burns stated there may be issues with building a structure on leased land with grant funds. By consensus, the Commissioners are supportive of Healthy Acadia's request to build a barn structure on the county-owned leased land.

**Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on January 9, 2025. (Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

**AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports**

The Commissioners were provided written reports from the District Attorney's Office, Emergency Management Agency, Administrative Office, Treasurer's Office, Buildings and Grounds, Registry of Deeds, Probate

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Court Office and the Sheriff's Division. The reports were accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

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County Manager Renée Gray asked if any departments had any additional information to report. Assistant District Attorney Paige Bebus stated the back log of cases is beginning to dwindle. Commissioner Burns stated the Commissioners appreciated all the reports submitted by the departments.

**AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices**

By consensus, the Commissioners ratified the original hire of Keaton Luce as part-time Corrections Officer effective 01/05/25. Keaton was promoted to full-time Corrections Officer effective 01/12/25.

By consensus, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Paige Sprague as part-time Corrections Officer effective 01/09/25.

The Commissioners approved the discharge of Kaitlyn Brooks as part-time Corrections Officer effective 01/29/25. This discharge was approved by consensus and with the recommendation of Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe.

By consensus, the Commissioners ratified the promotion of Adam Imhoff to Shift Supervisor in the Regional Communications Center effective 03/02/25.

**AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificates**

Six-month certificates for Heather Hanson and Gordon Faulkingham will be presented next month for Commissioners' signatures.

**AGENDA ITEM: Update on Town Patrol Coverage**

Commissioner Howard stated he had some concerns he was bringing from his constituents regarding town patrol coverage. Commissioner Howard stated he had been informed of a letter received by municipalities that have their own police departments. He said the letter was informing those municipalities that the Washington County Sheriff's Office would no longer cover their area. Commissioner Howard expressed his dismay stating this information should have been available when the budget was being discussed and passed. Sheriff Curtis responded to Commissioner Howard's concerns with an explanation

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of the letter. Sheriff Curtis stated the letter did not say there would be no coverage given to those municipalities. He clarified that the letter stated the Sheriff's Office will continue to cover all areas of Washington County including those with their own police

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departments; however, any non-emergency situation in towns with police departments will not be covered immediately. Sheriff Curtis further explained that there is already a strain on his department but they are doing the best they can. Commissioner Crowley agreed the Sheriff's Department must cover priorities first. Commissioner Howard concluded the discussion by stating all law enforcement agencies are short-handed.

**AGENDA ITEM: Signature on M.O.U. with Town of Jonesport for Selective Enforcement Effort**

Sheriff Curtis presented an M.O.U. for the Board of Commissioners to review and to be signed by the Commissioners Chair. The agreement between Town of Jonesport and the Washington County Sheriff's Office is associated with selective enforcement efforts. For this additional coverage, the Town of Jonesport agrees to pay up to \$27,500.00 for the 2025 calendar year. The M.O.U. was signed as presented.

**AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Sick Time Policy**

Rich Rolfe requested to have a discussion on the County sick time policy. Rich gave an historical report for the new Commissioners information. Rich stated that in 2018 a request was made to the Commissioners for non-union employees to be able to sell back sick time. He noted that unions do have this benefit. After a lengthy conversation at that time, Commissioner Gardner recommended a comprehensive study and gather other Counties' policy for sick time. It was decided by the board with a 3-0 decision "to undertake a comprehensive review of the County sick-time policy as it pertains to non-union employees. Until such time disposition of any and all employees' hours will remain on the books". At the end of 2024, while processing carry-over for employees leave accruals, sick time above and beyond 600 hours was removed from any employees balances per the current county policy. County Manager Renée Gray responded that she followed the current policy. She stated that policy is included in the Commissioners' packets. Renée also pointed out that she has made an attempt to gather input from other counties regarding this policy. Rich countered that employees were told they would be allowed to

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accrue sick leave until a comprehensive study was done. Rich pointed out the study has not been done. He stated Renée overstepped her authority. Paula Johnson-Rolfe noted that "we (referring to Rich and herself) have been conscientious of our time and are being penalized for it." Commissioner Burns stated the Commissioners will need time

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to review the policy and the request to accrue sick leave. By consensus, this subject will be addressed at the next Commissioners' meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM: Review Storm Day Policy**

Commissioner Burns requested a review of the storm day policy for the County Offices. The policy, as it is now, allows for exempt (salaried) employees to be granted a paid absence if there is a storm day and if it is determined that the court system in Machias and/or Calais is closed. Non-exempt (hourly), non-essential County employees may decide to use personal leave, vacation leave, or accrued compensatory time in hourly increments or the employee may choose to come in or to remain at work at their regular hourly rate of compensation. Commissioner Burns stated this policy seems unfair. He stated his concern is also that employees are made to make a decision between taking their own leave time or commuting in hazardous conditions. Commissioner Burns stated he is looking for feedback. Those present did not express concern about using their own personal time if a storm day is declared. Commissioner Howard stated he is fine with the policy as is. By consensus, the Commissioners agreed to leave the policy as it is at this time. It was noted that if the Commissioners make a decision to close business for inclement weather, all employees will be granted a paid absence.

**AGENDA ITEM: County Manager's Report**

County Manager Renée Gray submitted a written report. (See attached)

Renée reported that the County was awarded a safety grant in the amount of \$1,608.08. These funds were used for safety gear for the Buildings and Grounds crew to improve work place safety.

Renée stated she traveled to August on January 22<sup>nd</sup> to provide testimony of LD 16. The bill is being put forth by the Washington County delegates to establish a 9<sup>th</sup> prosecutorial district; Washington

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County would have its own District Attorney, and not share one with Hancock County.

Renée reported the elevator repair is still on hold. The elevators have been inspected by the State, and the State is concerned that the repair has not been done yet.

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Renée noted the Building Committee is still meeting weekly. The cleaning date is set for April 1<sup>st</sup> then the moving-in process will begin. Relocation of the U.T. and EMA Offices will need to be discussed. Renée reported the project is still within budget.

Renée stated she traveled to Augusta on February 4<sup>th</sup> to deliver an introductory report for Washington County Development Authority to the Committee on Economics and Development. The attention on this subject was due to the spill in Brunswick.

**AGENDA ITEM: Commissioner Issues and Comments**

Commissioner Burns, speaking on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, expressed his support for LD 183. LD 183 is sponsored by Representative Billy Bob Faulkingham. The bill would limit publicly owned land area in the State of Maine to be no more than 50 percent of any county. This bill was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. Commissioner Burns noted all Commissioners signed a letter of support for LD 183 that went to that Committee.

Commissioner Burns stated he will be giving testimony at a public hearing in August on Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup> in support of LD 461. This bill is "an act to fund rural patrol services in Washington County". Commissioner Burns requested the support of the Board of Commissioners to speak on their behalf. He stated the Commissioners should make their own case in support of this bill. Commissioner Burns noted the Sheriff is supportive of LD 461 which would provide four more law enforcement officers to cover Washington County.

**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Crowley moved to allow Commissioner Burns to testify on the Boards' behalf in support of LD 461. (Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

Heather Green asked the Board of Commissioners for their approval of

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the recently reviewed Safety Manual. Commissioner Burns stated the Commissioners will review the manual at the next Commissioners meeting.

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Howard moved to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 4:35 p.m.  
(Howard / Crowley, 3-0)

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**\*MOTION\*** The Commissioners declared themselves to have closed the Executive Session. It was 5:18 p.m.  
(Crowley / Howard, 3-0)

No decision.

**ADJOURNMENT**

5:18 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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