

January 13, 2022

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
Held January 13, 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
Sarah Strickland, Greater East Grand Region Economic Council
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Josh Rolfe, WCSO
Susan Hatton, SCEC
David Bibber, Charlotte
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Marlene Sprague, Deeds
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA
Darlene Perry, Probate
Carlene M. Holmes, Probate**

Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. was not present.

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 4 p.m. Betsy requested nominations for a chairman for the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Gardner was elected as Chairman of the Washington County Commissioners for 2022. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

Approval of the Public Hearing minutes for the FY 2022-23 UT Budget of December 9, 2021. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

Approval of the U.T. regular meeting minutes of December 9, 2021 (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

January 13, 2022

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

In Dean's absence, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald highlighted items of interest from Dean's written report.

- A report has been given to Mr. Kady who attended the December meeting of the Commissioners. Mr. Kady had concerns about a specific road in the U.T. and had requested a written plan to correct the issues.
- The Unorganized Territories 2022-2023 final budget has been submitted to the Fiscal Administrator of the U.T. Dean plans to attend the public hearing and workshop for this budget in Augusta.
- Dean has interviewed two individuals for the Animal Control Officer position. Dean will be recommending both as part-time ACO's to fill the position of Stephen Seavey. Stephen Seavey plans to resign his position as ACO.
- The U.T. has renewed its agreement with the Small Animal Clinic to serve as a shelter for animals needing the service from the animal control program.
- Dean is currently writing the annual Shellfish Conservation report for the 2021 season.
- The U.T. has entered into an agreement with Downeast Institute. The mutual understanding documents the project scope, goals and responsibilities for joint research conducted in the U.T.'s intertidal zone. The purpose of the project is to establish a soft-shell clam recruitment network along the Maine coast. The agreement term is May 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023.
- Highway maintenance projects continuing into the 2022 season were noted. Dean will assess and evaluate the condition of County roads in all townships/territories; prioritize the projects, develop cost estimates and schedule work to be done.
- Dean received calls of concern regarding conditions of roadways on Route 169 in Twp 8 R4. Dean has scheduled visits to the road to assess the situation.

January 13, 2022

- It was noted that Dean's recommendation to hire Tony Bennett and Jessica Lewis as ACO's will be acted on during the Executive Department section of the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update

A report was submitted and is attached.

Ms. Hatton presented a request for a TIF Grant. The Economic Development Planning grant is requested by Greater East Grand Economic Council (GEGEC). Citizens Organization for Rural Education (CORE) was a recipient of a \$10,000 TIF Planning Grant in 2019 to address rural decline in this area. It was noted that high speed broadband is a mandatory infrastructure requirement for economic development in this region. GEGEC was established in 2021 as the next step in the region's economic and community development planning. The mission of GEGEC is to advance the economic development goals and priorities of this region. GEGEC is now requesting a TIF Grant in the amount of \$10,000.00. The total project budget is \$42,000.00. The purpose of the grant application is to seek funding for Phase 2 Broadband Feasibility Planning in the Greater East Grand Region. Phase 1 Planning was completed in early 2021. Phase 2 Planning includes an RFP process to all broadband providers in the region; cost analysis of the infrastructure proposals; and extensive meetings with town leaders, UT commissioners and citizens about the best ownership model and financing opportunities for the infrastructure build-out and ongoing operations. The Grant Committee recommends approval of this grant application.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the grant request, #2201-01-EDP, in the amount of \$10,000.00 to GEGEC as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

Susan Hatton stated that Nickey Dubey, dba Ben's Dive Shack, has reported some difficulties she is experiencing. Susan stated a compressor has broken down and Ms. Dubey is having a difficult time getting it serviced. Ms. Dubey is unsure if she can invest the money needed to get the repairs done and continue the business. Susan stated this would be a great loss for the area. Susan noted the agriculture and fishing businesses depend on the services provided by Ben's Dive Shack. Susan stated Ms. Dubey may need a TIF loan

January 13, 2022

immediately to continue the business, and may be unable to wait for an approval of a TIF loan for the next Commissioners' meeting. Susan reported that Ms. Dubey makes her current loan payments on time. Commissioner Gardner noted Ben's Dive Shack is a rare business that fulfills a great need. Commissioner Gardner stated Ben's Dive Shack is a vital business and the County is invested. Commissioner Gardner asked how the Commissioners could be of help. Susan stated a portion of the business is based on tourism; a grant through the Nature Based Tourism TIF funds may fit. Commissioner Gardner recommended Susan work with Ms. Dubey to find some funding options. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners would look favorably on such a request. Commissioner Gardner stated that if Ms. Dubey is in need of funding before the next meeting, Susan should contact County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald so the funding request could be acted upon in advance of the February meeting.

All other TIF updates were accepted under the gavel.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment

None.

ADJOURNMENT

4:12 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

January 13, 2022