

January 9, 2025

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held January 9, 2025
in the Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

Attending the meeting were:

**Commissioner David C. Burns
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Billy Howard
Renée Gray, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Paul Sylvain, MVNO
Tammy C. Gay, Deeds
Heather Green, Deeds
David Bibber, Charlotte
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Lisa Hanscom, EMA
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer
Joshua Rolfe, WCSO / RCC
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Rich Rolfe, WCSO / Jail
Dennis Perry, WCSO / RCC
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office
Megan Huffman, Finance
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Darlene Perry, Probate**

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:16 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on December 12, 2024. (Crowley / Howard, 3-0)

Commissioner Howard noted his concern with the lack of current audits. He stated the County must get a grip on the situation.

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

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

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom noted her written report was a year in review. Lisa reported on the highlights.

January 9, 2025

4

- Storm Recovery efforts for:
 - December 18, 2023 Storm
 - January 10-13, 2024 Storm
- Training and Exercises for:
 - 2024 Synergy Challenge
 - AWR-317 Radiological Emergency Preparedness Training
- Planning Initiatives:
 - Washington County Extreme Temperature Response Plan
 - Hazard Mitigation Planning
 - Working with individual towns to write their Emergency Response Plan

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Michael Cromer as full-time Corrections Officer effective 12/01/24.
(Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

By consensus, the Commissioners ratified the promotion of Chad Preston to Corporal in the Corrections Division effective 12/22/24.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to discharge Shawn Donahue, Jr. as full-time Corrections Officer effective 12/30/24.
(Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe stated Shawn did not successfully complete his six-month probationary period.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to hire Nathan Bean as full-time Patrol Deputy effective 01/01/25.
(Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

It was noted Nathan is filling a vacancy within the patrol division.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Keaton Luce as full-time Corrections Officer effective 01/12/25.
(Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificates

A ninety-day extension on Sarah Ferguson's six-month introductory period was recommended by RCC Deputy Director Josh Rolfe. By

January 9, 2025

consensus, the extension was granted.

5

**AGENDA ITEM: Set Overlay and County Tax Interest Rate,
Treasurer Jill Holmes**

Treasurer Jill Holmes provided history of the overlay for the previous three years and percentage charged for interest. (See attached) The overlay was set at 0.5% for 2021, 2022 and 2023. The interest rate for late tax payments has been set at 5% for the previous three years. Commissioner Howard requested further explanation of the setting of the overlay and county tax interest rate. Jill stated the County can charge up to 2% for the overlay. The overlay is added to the amount each town is taxed. Jill also noted the interest rate is customarily set at 5%. Commissioner Howard asked if these rates are set each year. Jill responded that the rates must be set by the Board of Commissioners each year after the budget is approved. Jill recommends the Board of Commissioners' set both overlay and percentage charged for interest at the same rate as the previous years.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to set the overlay at 0.5% and the percentage charged for interest at 5% for 2025 as recommended. (Crowley / Howard, 3-0)**

Commissioner Howard asked about the few towns that he understood to have previously been behind in paying their taxes. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated the issue was taken care of through arbitration. Commissioner Burns inquired if there are any outstanding taxes due at this time. Jill responded there are no outstanding taxes due at this point.

AGENDA ITEM: Adjustment to Travel Reimbursement Rate

County Manager Renée Gray stated that the County traditionally adjusts the travel reimbursement rate to the federal mileage rate. The federal rate increased to \$0.70 per mile January 1st. Commissioner Howard asked what is the current state of Maine travel reimbursement rate. Jill Holmes responded the State travel reimbursement rate is currently \$0.54 per mile.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to increase the travel reimbursement rate to \$0.70 per mile.
(Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

January 9, 2025

6

AGENDA ITEM: 2025 Committee and Board Appointments

County Manager Renée Gray requested nominations for Committee and Board Appointments to be represented by the Commissioners. The following is the 2025 Committee and Board Appointments:

Maine County Commissioners Association and Risk Pool Board -
Commissioner Burns as Primary
Commissioner Howard as Secondary

Sunrise County Economic Council Board Member -
County Manager Renée Gray

Northeast County Workforce Investment Board -
Commissioner Howard

Washington County Council of Governments Board of Directors -
County Manager Renée Gray

WCCOG Brownfield Advisory Committee -
County Manager Renée Gray

*Renée Gray is to be proxy if there is no Commissioner available.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to approve all Committee and Board Appointments as presented. (Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Review of Updated Safety Manual

County Manager Renée Gray reported the Safety Committee has been revitalized. The Committee members are: Josh Rolfe, Chair, Darlene Perry and Heather Green. The Committee has reviewed the Safety Manual. Renée asked that the Commissioners review the manual and plan to discuss it at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion of Audits

Commissioner Howard stated his concern regarding audits being in

January 9, 2025

arrears. He suggested bringing in an individual specifically to gather information needed by the auditor to streamline the process and bring the audits up-to-date. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated the auditor is working on the 2021 audit presently. She noted Stephen Hopkins is very thorough. She stated Mr. Hopkins had 85 questions as part of the audit, and her staff is working to answer those questions as quickly

7

and efficiently as they can. Jill noted Mr. Hopkins plans to complete two years of audits within this year. Commissioner Howard still suggested having another person come in and work with the auditor. Renée commented that as Mr. Hopkins continues to work on the County audits, things will become more streamlined. Jill noted grant funds do tend to complicate things and slow down the process. Commissioner Burns asked Jill if she was familiar with the practice of bringing in an outsider to work with the auditor. Jill responded that she was not and that she works with the auditor. She stated the auditor usually comes on-site for at least a week. Commissioner Burns suggested that the conversation continue as to how to get the audits up-to-date.

AGENDA ITEM: County Manager's Report

County Manager Renée Gray submitted a written report. (See attached) Renée reported that she and Sheriff Curtis attended a meeting in Augusta conducted by the Maine State Police. The presentation included the rural patrol coverage issues. The Maine State Police proposed a plan to have the counties that do not have state police rural patrol coverage to recruit and hire state police. There has been a bill prepared to go before the legislature. Commissioner Burns stated each county will have to make their own case for rural patrol coverage.

Renée reported the elevator repair is still on hold as KONE is still waiting for parts.

Renée stated she continues to serve as Chair of the Washington County Development Authority. She reports that WCDA is working with a developer for the Cutler Navy base. Renée noted this consumes a lot of time.

AGENDA ITEM: Building Committee Update

County Manager Renée Gray reported the Building Committee continues to meet every Tuesday. Renée stated progress on the new Safety Building

January 9, 2025

is going well. Renée noted the project lead is now the owner of Sheridan, and he keeps the operation running smoothly. Masonry work has begun, and the cleaning date is set for the first of April.

AGENDA ITEM: Commissioner Issues and Comments

Commissioner Howard stated he had recently been given a tour of the facilities. Commissioner Howard noted there are several buildings and

8

grounds issues that should be taken care of, and he is very disappointed in short-sightedness of these issues not being addressed.

Commissioner Burns stated he would like to have a more in-depth Freedom Of Access Act training than the county now requires. He stated the training should be more comprehensive. Commissioner Burns noted transparency is important.

Commissioners' meeting dates were discussed. Commissioner Burns asked if keeping the Commissioner's meetings on the 2nd Thursday of the month works well. There were no other recommendations. Treasurer Jill Holmes asked that the February meeting take place in the third week of February so that the TAN can be complete and ready for the Commissioners' approval. By consensus, all other meetings dates will remain the same as previous years.

***MOTION* Commissioner Howard moved to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Crowley seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 5:06 p.m. (Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

***MOTION* The Commissioners declared themselves to have closed the Executive Session. It was 5:20 p.m. (Howard / Crowley, 3-0)**

No decision.

ADJOURNMENT

5:20 p.m.

ATTEST: _____

January 9, 2025

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.