

July 10, 2025

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held July 10, 2025
in the Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner David C. Burns
Commissioner Hammond
Commissioner Billy Howard
Renée Gray, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Paul Sylvain, MVNO / Machias
Sondra Small, Deputy Treasurer
Lisa Hanscom, EMA
Tammy C. Gay, Deeds
Heather Green, Deeds
Rich Rolfe, Jail
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Mike Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Josh Rolfe, WCSO / RCC
Darlene Perry, Probate**

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:20 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on June 12, 2025. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)

Approval of the minutes for the Special Commissioners' meeting held on June 30, 2025. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Old Business

- D.A.'s Office Monitoring System
 - County Manager Renée Gray stated there have been no bids received for proposals to monitor the sprinkler system. Renée noted she still expects to receive quotes from Minuteman Security/Alarms System and Johnson's Control System. However, at this time the project has been put on hold. It was noted RCC should be able to monitor the sprinkler system.

July 10, 2025

73

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided written reports from the Department Heads. (See attached)

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom reported there have been some significant changes occurring at FEMA. She noted in her written report that the current administration has reduced personnel and training. The anticipation is that there will be changes in both the funding processes and the disaster response program. The shifts suggest a growing expectation that counties and local communities take a larger share of emergency responsibilities. Lisa explains that this means the County must begin preparing now to increase local and county-level resilience. Lisa pointed out that the newly released planning guide, CPG 101, emphasizes local responsibility. According to the guidance, federal assistance will only be available after exhausting local, county, neighboring county, state and neighboring state resources. Commissioner Burns asked if having to exhaust all resources before federal assistance would be available is a change. Lisa responded that it is a change. Lisa reported the total dollar figures associated with storm events of 2023 and 2024, and the amounts that were received by both FEMA and State to cover these losses. Lisa stated "without that support, those communities would have faced financial strain". Lisa explained the process that took place to capture the amount reported for storm loss. She noted there was a tight turn around and not all communities that experienced loss reported it. Lisa noted this caused a missed opportunity to reach the disaster declaration threshold. Lisa also gave the Commissioners an update on the program funding and next steps needed for the RAVE Panic Button. Lisa stated that due to a slow rollout of RAVE, the program has still not been initiated and the initial one-year subscription funded through a grant is ending in July. Lisa reported the annual renewal cost for this program is \$8000.00. Lisa asked the Board of Commissioners if they would like her to continue to try to fund this program. By consensus, the Commissioners would like Lisa to continue to explore ways to fund and continue the RAVE Panic Button program.

Commissioner Burns recognized the Buildings and Grounds staff for their work.

County Manager Renée Gray thanked Finance Manager Sondra Small for preparing a document for the Commissioners to show what the County has

July 10, 2025

received for taxes to date and what is still owed. (See attached)

74

Commissioner Burns noted it is imperative for collaboration with towns and for the towns to pay their county taxes as soon as possible. He noted the sooner payments are received, the less interest will be needed to pay on the TAN. Sondra reported that Columbia and Columbia Falls have started making payments. She also pointed out that usually Passamaquoddy is the first to pay but nothing has been received to date from them.

Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe stated he has received a quote for the perimeter door from the jail to the second floor of the current Sheriff's Office. The quote is \$38,624.00. Commissioner Burns directed Rich to hold off on the door at this time.

Commissioner Burns reported the meeting with Charles Rudelitch of SCEC to discuss TIF and the Community Benefit Agreement with Downeast Wind went well.

All other Department Head reports were accepted under the gavel.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

Due to the necessity to fill the position in the Machias District Attorney's Office for a VWA,

MOTION **Commissioner Hammond moved to hire Crystal Cushing as full-time Victim-Witness Advocate the Machias District Attorney's Office effective 07/14/25.
(Hammond / Howard, 3-0)**

MOTION **Commissioner Howard moved to reclassify Jill Holmes as a Consultant for the remainder of 2025 effective 07/13/25. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

Commissioner Burns stated this reclassification is based on an agreement between the Treasurer and the Board of Commissioners. As part of the agreement, the Treasurer will resign as of December 31, 2025. She agrees to defer any salary but will continue to receive full benefits as payment for her consulting services. Commissioner Burns thanked Jill for her work for the County to this point, and for her agreement to help the Finance Office for the remainder of the

July 10, 2025

year. Commissioner Burns asked that the letter detailing this agreement be included in the record.

75

MOTION **Commissioner Howard moved to reclassify Sondra Small from Finance Clerk to Finance Manager effective 07/13/25. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

A stipend of \$5,000.00 will be paid to Sondra in bi-weekly payments for the remainder of 2025. Commissioner Burns noted that Sondra has also been appointed as Deputy Treasurer. Commissioner Burns thanked Sondra for being willing to step up at such dire times.

Due to the increased work load on the Finance department due to the absence of the Treasurer,

MOTION **Commissioner Hammond moved to increase the wage for Megan Huffman effective 07/13/25. (Hammond / Howard, 3-0)**

MOTION **Commissioner Hammond moved to accept the resignation of Anna Strout as full-time Patrol Deputy effective 07/26/25. (Hammond / Howard, 3-0)**

Patrol Deputy Anna Strout will remain as a part-time Patrol Deputy.

Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe asked that an exception be made in the hiring freeze and recommended a part-time Corrections Officer be hired. Rich noted there is no benefit package for part-time employees and the part-time position will help save money when filling shifts needing coverage. Commissioner Burns stated he was agreeable.

MOTION **Commissioner Howard moved to hire Braylynn Peabody as part-time Corrections Officer effective 07/13/25. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

It was asked if the County Manager can continue to pre-approve hires. Commissioner Burns stated the Commissioners prefer to have all hires come through them at this time.

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-month Certificates

July 10, 2025

None.

AGENDA ITEM: Approval of Sheriff's Bonds

As per the annual process as required by the provision of 30-A M.R.S.A. § 372 (2) the Sheriff's bonds are reviewed to determine their

76

sufficiency. District Attorney Granger provided the necessary documents to confirm that the member coverage of the Maine County Commissioners Association self-funded risk management pool provides sufficient coverage to the Sheriff, Chief Deputy and the Sheriff's deputies.

MOTION Commissioner Hammond moved to approve the Sheriff's bond, the Chief Deputy's bond and the Sheriff's deputies' bonds as presented. (Hammond / Howard, 3-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Consideration of Dates and Times to Hold Caucuses for Budget Advisory Committee Members

Commissioner Burns stated the schedule has been made for the annual caucuses in accordance with MRSA Title 30-A, §900-B to elect members to the fiscal year 2026 Washington County Budget Advisory Committee. Commissioner Burns announced the schedule as follows:

District 1 (Comm. Howard) at the Calais City Hall, July 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. to elect one member to a three-year term.

District 2 (Comm. Burns) at the Washington County Commissioners' Office in Machias, August 7, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. to elect one member to a three-year term.

District 3 (Comm. Hammond) at the Columbia Town Hall, July 29, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. to elect one member to a three-year term.

AGENDA ITEM: County Manager's Report

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

Renée reported there have been three budget workshops with the Commissioners and department heads. She stated she has been working with the Finance Office to have the FY 2026 budget draft ready for the

July 10, 2025

August meeting.

Renée gave an update on the progress of the new Sheriff's Office building. She stated we are still waiting for telephone lines to be run under the road to the new building.

Renée reported the auditor is working on the 2022 audits for both the County and Unorganized Territories.

77

Renée stated she met with the TIF Grant Committee on July 2nd. She noted the Commissioners will meet with Charles Rudelitch to discuss the Community Benefit Agreement and other TIF related issues.

Renée reported she worked with the Treasurer, Commissioners, Machias Savings Bank and the law firm to coordinate the additional TAN that was approved and is now in place.

Renée stated salt bids are going out the end of July, and fuel oil and propane RFP's will be sent out in early August.

Renée noted she attended both the Maine Association of County Commissioners and the Maine Association of County Manager's and Administrators meetings via Zoom.

Renée stated she attended the Wesley exercise held by Washington County and Hancock County EMA's. She noted it was a really wonderful experience.

Renée reported that Commissioner Burns attended the confirmation hearing for Christopher Gardner's appointment to the Land Use Planning Commission on July 9th. She noted the nomination goes in front of the Senate for final confirmation.

AGENDA ITEM: Commissioner Issues and Comments

- Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) Update
 - None.

- MCCA Risk Pool Update
 - None

Commissioner Burns announced the August Commissioners' meeting has been rescheduled from August 14th to August 21st. He stated there will be a Public Hearing immediately following that meeting to discuss the

July 10, 2025

County financial situation. Commissioner Howard acknowledged the press was present and asked that the press report the dire financial situation of the County.

ADJOURNMENT

5:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.