

June 10, 2021

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held June 10, 2021
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
Jill Holmes, Treasurer
Tammy Gay, Registry of Deeds
Dean Preston, Unorganized Territories
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, Sheriff's Office
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Wayde Carter, Sheriff's Office
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Mike Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Robert A. Simpson, Whiting
Jessy Melowicz, Machias**

Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. not present.

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:13 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on May 13, 2021. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

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

Treasurer Jill Holmes asked the Board of Commissioners what their current position is on the request previously made by the State to return over-payment of TIF funds. During the May meeting, Treasurer Jill Holmes explained an over-payment was made to the county due to an over-assessment of the First Wind turbines. The State then requested the county to return the difference of the allocations received from revenue from First Wind and the abatement amount. Treasurer Jill

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Holmes reported the remaining balance the State is requesting to be reimbursed is \$89,502.09. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners still stand by their previous decision to not return any of those funds. Commissioner Gardner also stated the Board of Commissioners will be willing to take the challenge to the State.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to refuse the reimbursement payment of \$89,502.09 to the State for the over-payment of TIF funds for First Wind. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

By consensus, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Lynn Dwelley as part-time EMA Director effective 05/14/21.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the hire of Heather Lee as full-time Secretary/Clerk for Deeds effective 05/14/21. (Gardner / Crowley, 3-0)**

Commissioner Gardner requested the records reflect the transition of Heather Lee from full-time Buildings and Grounds to full-time Secretary/Clerk for Registry of Deeds. Commissioner Gardner also stated that, for the purpose of clarity, Heather's transfer was not a reclassification within the same unit. Heather's transfer from one department to another should be considered a new hire. Heather's years of service will be counted towards her longevity of county service.

The Commissioners recognized the following promotions in the Corrections Division:

- Allen Rolfe to Corporal effective 05/23/21
- Amanda Barnard to Corporal effective 05/23/21
- Bryan Albee to Sergeant effective 05/23/21

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the hire of Jessy Melowicz as part-time Probate Clerk effective 05/24/21. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

***MOTION* Commissioner Gardner moved to approve the hire of Robert Wayne Carter as part-time Patrol Deputy effective 06/11/21. (Gardner / Cassidy, 2-0)**

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On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, Commissioner Gardner regrettably accepted the resignation of Sharon Strout to retire as Register of Deeds effective 06/30/21. It was noted that Sharon has a long history with the County having served as Register of Deeds since 1987. To commemorate Sharon's years of service, a gathering will be held in the Courthouse on June 29th from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. Sharon Strout stated Deputy Register Tammy Gay has been nominated to complete her term ending in 2022. Sharon stated Tammy has worked as Deputy Register for 13 years and is prepared to accept the duties of Register.

***MOTION* Commissioner Gardner moved to approve the reclassification of Tammy Gay from Deputy Register to Register of Deeds effective 07/01/21. (Gardner / Cassidy, 2-0)**

By consensus, the Commissioners accepted the resignation of Karl Pingree as full-time Buildings and Grounds Maintenance effective 07/06/21. County Manager stated Karl has decided to retire. Betsy informed the Commissioners that an advertisement has been posted to fill the position and she has begun the interview process. Betsy stated she is now needing to fill two positions for Buildings and Grounds; the position Heather Lee previously held and the position Karl is now vacating. Commissioner Gardner directed Betsy to put a hold on the hiring of one of the positions until there is a chance to see how the budget will be looking for FY 2022. Betsy reminded Commissioner Gardner that the State reimburses the County for 1.5 positions for the maintenance done on the State side of the building.

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Purchase and Sale Agreement for Center Street Building

The opportunity to purchase the Talbot building on Center Street was discussed during the May meeting of the Commissioners. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald had informed the Commissioners of the offer by the Talbots for the County to have first refusal of their office space. Betsy reported the asking price was \$155,000.00 and includes the office furniture. After a discussion of the possible uses of the Talbot building and the budget concerns, it was decided and the motion was made to authorize County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald to negotiate and draw up a Purchase and Sale agreement for the Commissioners to review and sign at the June meeting. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated she had a Purchase and Sale agreement for signatures as so directed. Commissioner Cassidy stated there should be more discussion before the

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County enters into the agreement. Commissioner Cassidy stated there are still budget concerns with the likely possibility of inflation. Commissioner Cassidy stated it is not clear where the funds for the purchase would originate. Commissioner Cassidy also stated the Talbots need to know the Board of Commissioners are not in complete agreement. Commissioner Cassidy noted he is not ready to sign the agreement today and suggested, with the absence of Commissioner Crowley, the signing of the agreement should be postponed until the full Board of Commissioners are present. Commissioner Gardner stated that although he can appreciate Commissioner Cassidy's concerns about the budget and funding of the purchase, he still upholds his decision to move forward. Commissioner Gardner stated the purchase of the Talbot building is an investment that will save the County in the future. Commissioner Gardner noted the Talbot building is in much better shape than the office space currently being used by the District Attorney's office staff. Commissioner Cassidy agreed with that statement, but does not want to give the Talbots the false hope of a definite purchase if the County is not able to raise the funds. Commissioner Gardner pointed out that by signing the Purchase and Sale Agreement and payment of \$1000.00 deposit to the Talbots, it would give the County 120 days to look at all options. Commissioner Cassidy reluctantly agreed to sign the agreement with the assurance that the Talbots will be made aware the County is very interested in the purchase of the building but must still figure out the funding. Commissioner Cassidy noted that if the current District Attorney's Office building was to be sold, the revenue should go towards the purchase of the Talbot building. Both Commissioner Gardner and County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald assured Commissioner Cassidy that is the plan.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the Purchase and Sale agreement between the Inhabitants of the County of Washington and William and Nancy Talbot with proper notice to the Talbots regarding the funding of said purchase.
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Request from Town of Roque Bluffs and Reschedule Tax Abatement Hearing for Chambers Point Owners Association vs Town of Roque Bluffs

A tax abatement hearing for Chambers Point Owners Association vs Town of Roque Bluffs has been rescheduled for July 8th at 3 p.m.

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County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated the Town of Roque Bluffs sent a written request to the Commissioners asking for \$226,000.00 in financial support. The request signed by the Roque Bluffs Board of Selectmen states the Town of Roque Bluffs is needing financial support to enable Roque Bluffs' broadband project to proceed. The Board noted the request for \$226K could come from American Rescue Plan funds allocated to Washington County for infrastructure costs related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners are not prepared to begin allocating the ARP funds. Commissioner Gardner noted the ARP funds will need to be distributed in a way that benefits people of this county equally. Commissioner Gardner also stated the funds should be used to bend down the cost curve as the funds ultimately will be coming from every taxpayers' pocket. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald was directed to notify the Town of Roque Bluffs of the Board of Commissioners position and decision for the request.

AGENDA ITEM: Schedule Tax Abatement Hearing for Costa vs Town of Perry

Betsy stated it had been questioned as to whether the Town of Perry has a Board of Appeals and if the Commissioners should hear the tax abatement request by Robert Costa. Betsy reported she has had a conversation with the selectmen in Perry and they do not have a Board of Appeals. A tax abatement hearing for Costa vs. Town of Perry has been scheduled for July 8th at 2 p.m.

Paula Johnson-Rolfe asked for an update on the APEX Wind project. During the May Commissioners' meeting the Commissioners stated APEX Downeast Wind will be put on notice that the original motion to support APEX Downeast Wind is officially withdrawn until there is clarification given on the revaluation of turbines. In answer to Paula's question, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated that she has spoken with representatives of APEX and informed them of the Commissioners decision to withdraw their support.

Bob Simpson asked the Board of Commissioners for the current status of the plans for the American Rescue Plan funds for Washington County. Commissioner Gardner stated the Maine County Commissioners Association is still receiving guidance from the Treasury as to what are

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reimbursable expenses and eligible projects. Commissioner Gardner noted the Governors' office notified the MCCA that they would like to

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meet with the counties to help figure out how to spend the ARP funds. Commissioner Gardner reported there was a bipartisan vote to refuse that request.

ADJOURNMENT

4:47 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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