

May 13, 2021

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held May 13, 2021
in the Superior Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Josh Rolfe, RCC Director
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, Sheriff's Office
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Sharon D. Strout, Deeds
Robert Simpson, Whiting
Carlene Holmes, Probate
Jill Holmes, Treasurer**

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:15 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on April 8, 2021. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0-1)

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

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

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-Month Certificate

The six-month introductory period certificate for Patrick McDonald was signed as presented.

May 13, 2021

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

The following promotions for the Corrections Division were processed and recognized by the Commissioners:

- Michael Perkins promoted to Corporal effective 04/18/21.
- Jared Sutton promoted to Corporal effective 04/11/21.

By consensus, the Commissioners approved the reclassification of Zackary Atkinson from full-time to part-time Corrections Officer effective 05/03/21.

By consensus, the Commissioners approved the reclassification of Darlene Perry from Secretary for Registry of Deeds to Secretary for the Machias District Attorney's Office effective 05/03/21. Commissioner Gardner asked for the details of the reclassification. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated the position for the District Attorney's Office was posted in-house and the transfer was within the clerical union. Betsy stated the vacant position for Deeds has been posted in-house. Betsy stated she anticipates payroll changes will be presented at the next meeting for Deeds, Buildings and Grounds and Probate Court.

***MOTION* Commissioner Gardner moved to approve the hire of Brandon Allard as full-time Corrections Officer effective 05/09/21. (Gardner / Crowley, 3-0)**

The Commissioners accepted the resignation of Benjamin Fritz as full-time Corrections Officer effective 05/14/21 by consensus and without prejudice.

The Commissioners also accepted the resignation of Joshua Murray as full-time Corrections Officer effective 05/20/21 by consensus and without prejudice.

AGENDA ITEM: Possible Purchase on Center Street

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald informed the Commissioners that the owners of a building located on Center Street had contacted her. William and Nancy Talbot plan to sell their building and wanted to

May 13, 2021

offer the County first refusal. Betsy stated the asking price is \$155,000.00 and includes the office furniture. Commissioner Gardner proposed that the County purchase the building. The purchase of the Talbot building would allow the County to liquidate the present D.A.'s office building. Commissioner Crowley stated his concern about the funding of the purchase for the Talbot building. Commissioner Cassidy suggested the County take the time to research the possible options available to fund the purchase. Commissioner Gardner stated the layout of the Talbot building is much more conducive to serve the public than the present space of the District Attorney's Office. With that in mind, Commissioner Gardner suggested funds from the American Rescue Plan could be used. Commissioner Gardner asked for guidance from County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald and Treasurer Jill Holmes. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated the tax anticipation note funds are quickly depleting and had no input as to where funds could be taken from to make this purchase. Treasurer Jill Holmes did ask all department heads to be cautious of spending at this time. Paula Johnson-Rolfe stated that a purchase and sale agreement might be a good idea to show the Talbot's the County is serious.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to authorize County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald to negotiate and draw up a Purchase and Sale agreement for the Commissioners to review and sign at next months' meeting. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)**

Commissioner Gardner did note that he has a concern that the rate of inflation could cause major cuts in the budget but believes this to be a legitimate purchase as the Talbot facility does have a better set-up for public interactions.

AGENDA ITEM: Schedule Tax Abatement Hearing

A tax abatement hearing for Chambers Point Owners Association vs Town of Roque Bluffs has been scheduled for June 10th at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Grand Lake Stream Seasonal Contract

Chief Deputy Michael Crabtree presented a seasonal law enforcement contract for Grand Lake Stream Plantation. Chief Deputy Crabtree stated the contract remains the same as the past four years except the hourly rate has been increased from \$55.00 to \$60.00 per hour. The term of the contract is June 1, 2021 through September 6, 2021.

May 13, 2021

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the contract between the Washington County Commissioners, the Washington County Sheriff's Office and Grand Lake Stream Plantation for 2021 as presented. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on letter to Cell Phone Service Providers

Commissioner Gardner stated there needs to be more discussion on safety issues in regards to cell phone service. Commissioner Gardner noted the public has expectations of service reliability based on the advertising of the cell phone service providers. By consensus, the signatures on the letter were tabled and it was agreed that the revised letter will be signed by just the chairman of the Board of Commissioners.

AGENDA ITEM: Steps to Prepare to Receive Federal Funding

Commissioner Gardner reported that on March 11, 2021 President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act. The ARP covers \$65.1 billion in direct federal aid to America's counties. Commissioner Gardner stated Washington County is in the process of opening a portal to receive those funds. Commissioner Gardner expressed his dissatisfaction of the Government issuing such exuberant amounts of tax payers' money. Commissioner Gardner added that the use of the money spent will be monitored and need to be spent as the Government sees fit. Commissioner Gardner exclaimed this is an absolute travesty. The executive summary states that "the fiscal recovery fund was established to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery." Commissioner Gardner listed the five primary ways outside of the lost revenue allowance that the counties may invest funds:

- Support public health response,
- Address negative economic impacts,
- Replace public sector revenue loss,
- Retroactive pay of additional compensation of up to \$13.00 per hour for both county workers and essential workers in the community, and
- Water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

Commissioner Crowley noted the County will need to spend money to get the funds. Commissioner Gardner stated the County will receive 50 percent of the funds immediately, then the remainder within the next 12 months. All funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and all

May 13, 2021

work must be completed by December 31, 2026. Commissioner Gardner stated many counties are in the same boat right now. Commissioner Gardner noted that the need is in jails and law enforcement. Commissioner Gardner quantified that this is generational money and should, at least, be used for something lasting. Commissioner Gardner expressed concern that the County also has issues with its facilities; the District Attorney's Office is old, and 28 Center Street is an old building that houses RCC, EMA and U.T. The offices of EMA and U.T. are very small. Commissioner Gardner stated the County needs to find a way to build a new public safety building; consolidating the public safety offices of the Sheriff's Office, RCC, EMA and U.T. It was noted the purchase of the Talbot building may change those plans in some way. Commissioner Gardner noted most counties are encountering the same problem; finding ways to use the federal funds that are not useless within the set guidelines is the challenge. With the deadline to obligate funds by December of 2024, Commissioner Gardner stated the County needs to act quickly and establish certain steps moving forward. Steps that should be considered are:

- Establish a Building Committee that can compile a list of needs. Josh Rolfe stated he would like to have some input and stated he already has some ideas. Commissioner Gardner stated all Department Heads should be on the committee, and that participants should also not be limited so all ideas can be on the table. It was noted that it cost approximately \$8.3 million to build the new addition onto the courthouse in 2014. The cost of inflation is a huge concern.
- Engage in spending funds for purposes outlined in the guidance. Commissioner Gardner stated two years is a reasonable amount of time to accomplish the goal if tasks are lined up and executed in a timely manner.
- Consider advertising for the position of Funds Coordinator. Commissioner Gardner noted that Penobscot County has hired an individual to oversee the compliance, coordination and reporting of funds.

Chief Deputy Crabtree asked if an evaluation done previously to address the needs of the Sheriff's Office could be used. Commissioner Gardner replied that particular evaluation was done before the pandemic so it may not address the safety issues. Sheriff Curtis noted that if office spaces are relocated, consideration should be given to moving the D.A.'s office into the Courthouse. Commissioner Gardner concluded the discussion by stating we need something that checks off all the needs.

May 13, 2021

Commissioner Gardner stated there has been a lot of discussion recently on the 2nd Amendment and municipalities becoming sanctuary cities for gun owners. Commissioner Gardner stated that if the federal government takes a more aggressive stance in denying gun owner rights, the Board of Commissioners may consider becoming a sanctuary county.

MOTION **Commissioner Crowley moved to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed 3-0. It was 5:10 p.m.**

MOTION **The Commissioners declared themselves to have closed the Executive Session. It was 5:20 p.m.**

There was no motion.

ADJOURNMENT
5:20 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.