

May 19, 2022

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
Held May 19, 2022
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Elizabeth Powers, Jonesboro
Andrea S. Hill, Jonesboro
Tammy C. Gay, Deeds
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Robert Simpson, Whiting
Carlene Holmes, Probate
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA**

Commissioner Vinton Cassidy was not present

Commissioner Gardner called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Gardner stated the scheduled 4:00 p.m. presentation on the Flagpole for Freedom Park would take place after the Unorganized Territories business.

**Approval of the U.T. regular meeting minutes of April 14, 2022.
(Crowley / Gardner, 2-0-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

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

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald highlighted Dean's report in his absence.

The annual Shellfish Committee meeting was held on April 28th.

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Several paving projects are at risk due to the cost of pavement. Those projects are Big Lake Road in Big Lake Twp. and Bunker Hill Road in Edmunds Twp.

Only one of eleven snow removal contracts are scheduled to be renewed this year.

The U.T. Office is currently writing the annual report for the U.T. septage spreading site for the 2021 season. The report will be submitted by the end of this month. The application for renewal of a septage land application site license is also being prepared. The current license expires June 27, 2022.

Dean continues to meet and work with Wireless Partners regarding opportunities for a project to improve cell phone coverage and broadband in Washington County.

Dean has been investigating the status of the Haycock Harbor Road in Trescott Twp. Dean needs to determine if the unmaintained portion needs to be abandoned or revitalized and maintained. Betsy reported Dean would like guidance from the Board of Commissioners in regards to the underutilized portion of this county road. Commissioner Gardner stated that giving up county road ways would be going backwards. Commissioner Gardner stated it would make much better use of public funds to reclaim the roadway and make it useable.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to authorize Dean to further investigate and reclaim the underutilized portion of the Haycock Harbor Road in Trescott Twp. (Crowley / Gardner, 2-0-0.)**

Betsy noted Dean is recommending two new employees to be hired for the U.T. Summer Public Works Crew. The request to hire the two new employees will be taken under consideration in the Executive Department section of the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update

A report was submitted and is attached.

Ms. Hatton stated there were no action items.

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AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on TIF Agreement for Special Services

A TIF Agreement for Special Services was presented for renewal. The agreement is between Sunrise County Economic Council and Washington County. Commissioner Gardner stated the contract proposes a payment of \$59,780.84 in year one. Years two and three will be adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The agreement lists the services that will continue to be performed by SCEC. SCEC will administer all activities and programming of the Washington County Unorganized Territories Tax Increment Finance District grant and loan programs. SCEC will also carry out economic development activities on behalf of the County of Washington TIF District of the Unorganized Territories. Commissioner Gardner stated the funds to pay for these services do not come from County tax money. The U.T. pays for the services and the funds come from the TIF itself.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the TIF Agreement for Special Services between SCEC and Washington County as presented. (Crowley / Gardner, 2-0-0.)**

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment

It was asked how the money is collected for the TIF Program. Commissioner Gardner stated when a developer enters into a TIF agreement with the State, 60% of the property taxes the developer pays is returned back to the developer; while 40% go to the TIF funds. The U.T. property taxes paid by real estate owners fund municipal services. The remaining tax dollars go to the State. Commissioner Gardner explained that in the case of a TIF, all funds are retained locally. The TIF funds cannot be used for everything; there are guidelines for specific uses for the funds. Commissioner Gardner stated SCEC administers the TIF funds. TIF funds are distributed as business loans and grants for economic development in the Unorganized Territories of Washington County. A TIF allows the County to have more control of the use of those funds. Commissioner Gardner noted it is a better use of the county's money to have SCEC administer the TIF funds.

The U.T. Business portion of the meeting concluded at 4:10 p.m.

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The presentation on the Flagpole for Freedom Park proceeded at 4:14 p.m.

Commissioner Gardner introduced Morrill and Rob Worcester. The

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Worcester's were present to give details of their vision of Freedom Park and the Flagpole.

Commissioner Gardner noted he had been briefed and was part of the launch announcement which took place earlier in the month.

Rob began the presentation with stating the family's mission is to connect people with the history of the United States of America. Their hope is to create unity and pride in this country. A video presentation was given with the details of the Worcester's ideas and goals disseminated throughout the presentation.

Rob stated the park and flagpole plans are in the early stages. He noted the Worcester's are still in the input stage; gathering ideas and support. The plan is to have a grand opening of the Flagpole on July 4, 2026 to celebrate the 250th birthday of this country.

Rob explained the inspiration of Freedom Park and the flagpole came from Wreaths Across America. Wreaths Across America was an initiative that Morrill Worcester began in 1992. The Wreaths Across America's mission is to honor all who passed away defending this Country. Wreaths are placed on the graves of veterans. From that mission came the idea to make a destination for all veterans to be remembered and honored.

The park itself will be on 2500 acres of personally owned property of the Worcester's. The park will have 8 miles of road connecting remembrance walls, halls of history and the "Village of Old Glory". The largest flag pole in the world will stand at 1776 feet tall and will be the first flag in the United States to get the sun. Rob explained that all the details including the height of the pole has significance. The flagpole will also be a building that has five sections. The flagpole building will include exhibits, a museum, retail shops, and an observation deck at 330 feet high. The observation ball will have a 360-degree panoramic view within a 100-mile radius. The flag will be made of specialized material and will be lit during the dark hours.

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Rob stated most importantly that the Remembrance Park will include a section to represent each and every State. Morrill Worcester noted, to their knowledge, this will be the only place to memorialize every single veteran.

Rob stated there will be no charge to enter the park and see the

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Remembrance Walls and to enjoy miles and miles of hiking. Rob noted 10% of the park will consist of ticketed experiences. The sales of the ticketed experiences will help to manage and maintain the park.

All aspects of the park were very well detailed by both the visual presentation and added side notes by Rob Worcester. Rob gave details for the plans of each section of the park; the Remembrance Walls, the Village of Old Glory, the Halls of History, the Roots of America Hall, the Independence Hall of the Revolutionary War, the 19th Century Hall; the Greatest Generation - World War I & II; the Korea & Vietnam Hall; and the Wall of Honor - War on Terrorism. Morrill Worcester stated their objective for the park is to have it be a world-class, best constructed and best thought-out space to teach the history of our Country for generations to come. It was noted the Independence Hall of the Revolutionary War will include local history such as the first U.S. Naval battle of the Revolutionary War and the capture of the *Margaretta*.

Rob stated there are two big funding initiatives. The first initiative is to gain support and funding from Corporate Partners and venue sponsors. The second initiative is funding through Park Founders. Park Founders will be individual families and veterans who give to the campaign. Rob explained that Park Founders will enjoy benefits such as lifetime free entry to the whole park, access to VIP lounges and discounts. Founder costs range from \$600 to \$1800. Morrill Worcester added that individuals can be Park Founders by making installment payments. Rob noted they are about to launch their national campaign.

Commissioner Gardner thanked the Worcester's for the opportunity to hear about the Flag Pole for Freedom Park. Commissioner Gardner noted there will be many questions going forward. Morrill Worcester stated they plan to keep the County Commissioners and the Sheriff informed of the progress. Sheriff Curtis stated he wants to be involved in the progress. Commissioner Gardner asked what the county responsibility will be from a safety standpoint. Morrill replied the park will have

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its own fire department and police station. Morrill stated the safety and emergency services will be discussed at the August Columbia Falls meeting. Commissioner Gardner stated he anticipated the plans have already included safety details but wanted it noted. Commissioner Gardner observed the park will become its own community but will spill out to other communities. Commissioner Gardner noted the fall out and overflow will be on the County. Commissioner Gardner stated that going forward the County should be part of the planning. Paula

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Johnson-Rolfe also noted the spill over will affect the hospital and the jail. Rob Worcester noted there will be a growing and adjustment period. Commissioner Gardner stated it is understood that no one has all the answers today; the Commissioners have no concerns but wanted the public to be aware that part of the planning includes the safety aspect.

By consensus, the Board of Commissioners fully support the Worcester Family's endeavors to build the Flagpole for Freedom Park.

ADJOURNMENT

5:10 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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