

November 9, 2023

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Regular Meeting
held November 9, 2023
in the Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Renée Gray, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA
Scott Hanscom, Roque Bluffs
Reid Albee, County Wide
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Paul Sylvain, MVNO
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office
Megan Huffman, Finance Office
Michael Crabtree, WCSO
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Ricky Holmes, East Machias
Dean Preston, U.T.
Heather Green, Deeds
Darlene Perry, Probate
Josh Rolfe, RCC/WCSO**

Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. was absent

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:09 p.m.

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on October 12, 2023. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

Approval of the minutes for the Public Hearing held on October 16, 2023. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

Commissioner Gardner stated the purpose of the Public Hearing was to gather as much input as possible from the public regarding the proposed budget for FY 2024. Commissioner Gardner noted the Budget Advisory Committee and the Board of Commissioners had hoped to have a more robust turn out. Commissioner Gardner concluded that the low

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turn-out was either due to apathy or the fact that taxpayers are happy with the current situation and how the County is funding the services that can be provided.

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided a written report from the Treasurer's Office. The report was accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

Sheriff Barry Curtis presented a recommendation to donate two Sheriff's Office vehicles to local programs for educational purposes. Sheriff Curtis stated the 2005 Ford F150 is no longer able to pass the State of Maine inspection, and the 2012 Chevrolet Tahoe is mechanically failing. It was noted that both vehicles have over 100,000 miles. Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe added that both vehicles have no trade-in value.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the donation of the 2005 Ford F150 (VIN# 1FTVX12545NA80235) to Coastal Washington County Institute of Technology as recommended. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the donation of the 2012 Chevrolet Tahoe (VIN# 1GNLC2E05CR170323) to Washington County Community College as recommended. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

By consensus, the Commissioners' ratified Jared Sutton's voluntary resignation of his rank of Corporal in the Corrections Division effective 10/22/23.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to hire Grant Parmer as full-time Corrections Officer effective 10/29/23. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to hire Jan Luis Ramos Arroyo as full-time Corrections Officer effective 10/29/23. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Six-Month Certificates

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A six-month certificate for Brody Border was signed as presented.

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AGENDA ITEM: Hazard Mitigation Planning Services RFQ

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom stated the current Hazard Mitigation Plan expired at the beginning of October 2023. She explained EMA was unable to move ahead on the plan update because EMA was waiting for grant funding to pay for it. Lisa reported a grant has now been awarded in the amount of \$10,200.00 with \$1,800 in-kind from the County. Lisa stated a Request for Qualifications for a County Hazard Mitigation Planner has been published with a deadline of November 29, 2023. Lisa noted it is an aggressive timeline. She explained that since the county plan expired, towns are unable to apply for hazard mitigation and BRIC grants in January 2024. Commissioner Gardner asked what is HMP Services. Lisa explained that HMP planning reduces loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters. It identifies natural disaster risks and vulnerabilities that are common in the local area. Lisa gave an example of culverts being replaced to guard against flooding. The County provides the plan and towns must participate. County Manager Renée Gray added that this pays for someone to guide the process of developing a long-term plan to prepare for natural disasters. Lisa stated the County Manager can facilitate awarding the RFQ.

AGENDA ITEM: Award Bid for EMA Vehicle

EMA Director Lisa Hanscom stated the current EMA vehicle is a 2015 Ford Expedition. She noted the need for a new vehicle has been in discussion for about one year. Lisa stated she published an RFP for a new EMA vehicle with a deadline of November 7, 2023 at 1 p.m. Three bids have been received. Lisa recommends the Commissioners accept the bid from Varney Chevrolet GMC with a bid of \$40,259.00. Lisa noted EMA has funds of up to \$44,259.00 available to spend on a vehicle. Commissioner Gardner questioned if it would be worth considering keeping the current EMA vehicle. Several options for the use of the vehicle if retained were discussed. Commissioner Gardner also asked if waiting to make a decision was an option. Commissioner Cassidy noted prices of vehicles will only keep going up. Commissioner Gardner recommended researching trade-in vs. retaining the current vehicle and make a final decision next month. Lisa stated grant money is a part of the funds that are available and she does not want to lose that funding. Lisa noted there is a wait time of several months

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for delivery of new vehicles. Commissioner Gardner directed Lisa to tentatively accept the bid from Varney's and find out when a vehicle

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would be available. Commissioner Gardner directed Lisa to keep the County Manager informed.

MOTION Commissioner Gardner moved to authorize EMA director Lisa Hanscom to negotiate a conditional acceptance of the bid from Varney's Chevrolet GMC as low bid barring an unreasonable delivery date of the vehicle.
(Gardner / Cassidy, 2-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Approval of Transfer of Forfeited Assets

Maine statute 15 M.R.S.A. §5824(3) requires that, before any forfeitable item may be transferred, the governmental body of that entity must publicly vote to accept the item or items. The Commissioners were presented with an approval form for the transfer of forfeited assets from State v. Jean Carlo Mena Vera and State v. Kevin A. Robinson. The forfeited assets were for \$10,710.00 US Currency for each criminal case. The transfer of fifty percent of the assets for each case is based on the grounds that the Washington County Sheriff's Department did make a substantial contribution to the investigation of this or a related criminal case.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to accept the forfeiture assets of \$5,355.00 for State of Maine v. Jean Carlo Mena Vera, defendant in Rem. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to accept the forfeiture assets of \$5,355.00 for State of Maine v. Kevin A. Robinson, defendant in Rem. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)

Chief Deputy Crabtree stated the assets can only be used for certain purposes such as ammunition and equipment. The funds can not be used for wages.

AGENDA ITEM: Meal Reimbursement Discussion

Treasurer Jill Holmes reported there is an issue with requests for reimbursement for meals being over the current allowance level. Jill

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recommended the allowances for meals be increased. Jill's recommendation is to increase breakfast from \$10.00 to \$15.00; lunch from \$14.00 to \$20.00; and supper from \$23.00 to \$25.00.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the increase in the Meal Reimbursement allowances as recommended by the Treasurer. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

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It was asked if the tip should be covered by the County and included in the limit of allowable reimbursement. Commissioner Gardner recommended the tip be included. He stated management will convene and decide on a tip percentage. Department heads were asked to be mindful of meal allowances and were reminded any reimbursement request must include receipts and still needs approval.

AGENDA ITEM: Building Committee Updated

County Manager Renée Gray reported that 24 Center Street is almost ready for the District Attorney's Office to move into the space. Consolidated Communications still has to install phone lines. The install date has not yet been determined but the Consolidated Communications team anticipates installation will be done the second week of December.

Renée stated the District Attorney's Office has been working on selecting a moving company. Susan Sullivan noted they must be diligent in the requirements of the State regarding the moving of confidential files. Susan questioned if the moving company must be bonded. Commissioner Gardner stated he would defer to the District Attorney concerning a bond for the movers. It was stated that once the move date is set, public will be notified of the office closing during the move.

Renée reported the Fire Marshall returned 12 items of discrepancies. The discrepancies were reviewed with the Buildings and Grounds Department, determined to be minor and will be corrected.

Commissioner Gardner gave praises to the Buildings and Grounds for all their work to prepare 24 Center Street for the D.A.'s Office. County Manager Renée Gray stated the Building Committee met with the architect today. She gave kudos for the whole team and noted how much has been accomplished. Commissioner Gardner stated the Commissioners are satisfied with the progress. He noted his biggest concern is to have the Talbot Building and Safety Building completed within budget.

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Commissioner Gardner asked that as the project moves through the milestones, the Board of Commissioners are kept informed in real time of any budgetary concerns.

AGENDA ITEM: Commissioner's Issues

Commissioner Gardner stated the formal return of the Washington County Budget for FY 2024 to the Board of Commissioners will be done during

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the December meeting. He asked Treasurer Jill Holmes to report the figures on the final budget that will be presented. Jill stated the total budget is \$11,296,676.00. The amount to be raised by taxation is \$8,083,261.83. That is a net increase of 11.3%. Commissioner Gardner stated, for the matters of the public, the budget increase was due to the need and responsibility of Public Safety falling back on the County. Commissioner Gardner noted the County has a good working relationship with the State Police. The withdrawal of the State Police from rural areas is of no fault of their own; they are facing many difficulties. Commissioner Gardner pointed out the reality is that someone must answer the calls. Local municipalities and the County will have to step further into that responsibility. Commissioner Gardner noted RCC has to be manned to answer emergency calls. The original budget request for RCC were four additional positions; two were added. The Sheriff's Office requested two additional positions; one was added. Buildings and Grounds asked for one additional position; they were approved for one part-time position. Commissioner Gardner stated the BAC had an impossible task. The BAC had to balance the need for public safety and a large increase in taxes for Washington County citizens. Commissioner Gardner noted the State is responsible for this problem. Commissioner Gardner stated there must be continued conversations on how to better fund rural coverage areas. He concluded the increase of 11.3% is too much but still not enough to meet the mission. Commissioner Cassidy agreed the BAC worked hard.

Chief Deputy Crabtree suggested there may be ways to help bridge the gap for funds required to provide public safety. Mike stated taxes on such items as cigarettes and alcohol could be earmarked for the purpose of funding public safety instead of those funds going to the state. Commissioner Gardner commented that unfortunately those funds all go into revenue sharing. Commissioner Gardner noted we need to find a way to raise money for public safety that does not raise property taxes. Commissioner Gardner stated the County will work with

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the State to solve the problem.

County Manager Renée Gray stated that at a previous Commissioners' meeting, clarification was asked to whom the contracted IT Consultant reported. It was also noted that clarification was need as to who supervises the two part-time IT Consultants as they are County employees. The contracted IT Consultant is not considered their designated supervisor. Sheriff Curtis spoke to this question. He stated Dennis Dorsey is a contracted vendor but works under the Sheriff's direction. Sheriff Curtis stated the Sheriff's Office keeps

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track of the IT projects. Dennis reports to the Sheriff; in turn, Dennis assigns projects to the part-time IT Consultants through the Sheriff.

MOTION **Commissioner Cassidy moved to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Gardner seconded the motion which passed 2-0. It was 5:12 p.m.**

MOTION **The Commissioners declared themselves to have closed the Executive Session. It was 5:30 p.m. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

Due to the exhaustion of FMLA and as recommended by Jail Administrator Rich Rolfe,

MOTION **Commissioner Cassidy moved to discharge Ricky Holmes as full-time Corrections Officer effective 11/09/23. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

ADJOURNMENT

5:32 p.m.

ATTEST: _____

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Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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