

October 13 2021

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

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton E. Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administration
Nancy Oden, Keep Earth Cool
Michael Crabtree, Sheriff's Office
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, WCSO
Josh Rolfe, WCSO
Dennis Dorsey, WCSO
Lisa M. Hanscom, EMA
Tammy Gay, Deeds
Carlene Holmes, Probate
Jill C. Holmes, Treasurer**

Executive Department business was called to order at 4:25 p.m.

Approval of the Public Hearing on FY 2022 County Budget minutes held on September 9, 2021. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)

Approval of the minutes for the Regular Commissioners' meeting held on September 9, 2021. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

Approval of the minutes for the Public Hearing on LD 272 held on September 15, 2021. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

Commissioner Gardner stated he was dismayed and disappointed with the response by Governor Mills to the Board of Commissioners appeal for support for LD 272. Commissioner Gardner stated the bill appeared to have full support going into the legislature and there should have been no issues yet it did not get moved off the table. Commissioner Gardner reiterated that if the only thing that kept the bill from passing was \$23,000 funding in a state budget of \$7-8 billion dollars, the Board of Commissioners agree they would find a way to fund the \$23,000. Commissioner Gardner stated it appears the LD 272 has been

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shut down. Commissioner Gardner noted it does not look like there will be any support from Governor Mills.

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly and Quarterly Reports

The Commissioners were provided a written report from Emergency Management Agency. The report was accepted under the gavel. (See attached)

Treasurer Jill Holmes reported two part-time employees have exceeded the 130-hour average per month. In accordance with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the county must now offer the health insurance benefit to these employees. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated this will now need to be added to the budget. Director Josh Rolfe stated the two employees are part-time dispatchers, and one of those employees is being promoted to a full-time position. Director Josh Rolfe stated he knew the employees were getting close to the 130-hour level, but he does not track the part-time employees' hours. Commissioner Gardner stated the hours worked by part-time employees must be tracked. Commissioner Gardner noted the reason we must keep track of the hours is due to the cost factor of adding benefits for a part-time employee. Commissioner Gardner asked Treasurer Jill Holmes how long must the county offer the health insurance. Treasurer Jill Holmes reported a part-time employee who has worked an average of 130 or more hours per month must be offered the same health insurance as a full-time employee for the full year following the open enrollment that the threshold has been exceeded. Treasurer Jill Holmes noted that is a fiscal impact of approximately \$15,000.00 per employee. Josh Rolfe stated COVID emergency calls have added to the workload and have added to the issue. Commissioner Gardner acknowledged there is no changing what is already done. Commissioner Gardner stated tracking the part-time employee hours must be done to ensure this does not happen again. Commissioner Gardner asked if ARPA funds could be used in the form of a bonus in lieu of insurance coverage. Treasurer Jill Holmes stated ARPA funds cannot be used for budget purposes. Commissioner Gardner advised Jill to look into bonus options. Commissioner Gardner stated it was best to find a way to absorb the cost of insurance coverage from the 2021 budget rather than the 2022 budget.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to authorize the Treasurer to account for the insurance cost due to the part-time hours overage issue. (Cassidy / Crowley 3-0)**

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Register of Probate Carlene Holmes inquired about the wage scale study noted during the budget meeting. Commissioner Gardner stated he was interested to see a wage study as well, and asked County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald if there had been any progress in that regard. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated there has been no progress. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners are mindful that budget time is a good time to look at wages of elected and non-union positions and square up any inequities at this time.

AGENDA ITEM: Payroll Change Notices

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the hire of Christopher Marshall as full-time Corrections Officer effective 09/19/21. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to reclassify Jeremy Towne from part-time to full-time Jail Cook effective 09/26/21. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to reclassify Michele Johnson from full-time to part-time Emergency Communications Specialist effective 10/09/21. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to hire John Beach as part-time Corrections Officer effective 10/10/21. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

MOTION Commissioner Crowley moved to hire Tyler Look as part-time Corrections Officer effective 10/10/21. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)

Commissioner Gardner noted standard part-time provisions apply to both John Beach and Tyler Look's position.

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to reclassify Kimberly LeBlanc from part-time to full-time Corrections Officer effective 10/10/21. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on six-month certificates

Six-month certificates were signed for Nicole Graves and Ethan Stevens as presented.

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AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Lodging and Meals Expense Policy

An amendment to Article X, Travel, Lodging and Meals Expenses, was made to allow for Department Heads and Commissioners to exceed reimbursement limits. Those limits are defined as "reasonable" costs depending upon specific situations and circumstances.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to adopt the amendment to the policy as so presented. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on National Correctional Employees Union Contract

Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners are in agreement to sign the NCEU contract presented during the September meeting with the changes agreed upon during negotiations. Treasurer Jill Holmes commented she wanted to make sure it is understood that the NCEU negotiated to change to a specific MainePERS special retirement plan, and that all employees in that bargaining unit must participate in that plan. Commissioner Gardner acknowledged NCEU will participate in one specific plan per the union agreement.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the NCEU contract as so presented. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Signatures on Fraternal Order of Police Union Contract

A contract for the FOP was finalized and presented for signatures. The FOP negotiated to change to a specific MainePERS special retirement plan. Again, all employees in that bargaining unit must participate in that specific plan.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to sign the FOP contract as so presented. (Cassidy / Crowley, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Reappointment of Charles Rudelitch to Downeast Community partners Board of Directors

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated the Board of Directors of DCP recommend the re-appointment of Charles Rudelitch to the Board of Downeast Community Partners. Nancy Oden asked why the Commissioners

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have anything to do with the appointment of a board member to Downeast Community Partners. Betsy explained the Board of Directors for the

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agency is composed of eighteen individuals, nine from each Washington and Hancock County. When the community agency was established, the legislation required that one-third of the Board of Directors include representatives from government. It was decided that the County Commissioners of each County were the appropriate body to appoint the government component of the Board. Charles fills the open seat by appointment of the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to reappoint Charles Rudelitch to the Downeast Community Partners Board for an additional three-year term. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Building Committee Update

County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald reported that the closing on the Talbot building on 24 Center Street is on Thursday, October 14th. Commissioner Cassidy asked if ARPA funds will be used for the purchase. It was confirmed that ARPA funds will be used to purchase the building.

***MOTION* Commissioner Crowley moved to authorize County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald or Treasurer Jill Holmes to sign closing documents for the 24 Center Street property. (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

Commissioner Gardner stated the MMA legal team is still working on clarification on ARPA funds being used for building a new facility. The case can be made that a new facility is needed in order to better serve the public. Commissioner Gardner stated we must get serious and formalize some sort of process. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners are still hearing proposals on broadband. Commissioner Gardner noted this administration leans strongly towards the broadband piece and it is likely additional funds will come for that purpose. Commissioner Gardner noted the county is focusing in on two possibilities; building a new facility or broadband. Commissioner Gardner stated the advantage to building a new facility is that it will lower taxes over maintaining an older facility. Dean Preston stated it takes a certain amount of work to gather information for both of these options. Commissioner Gardner questioned if the County should invest funds for someone to design a building plan. By

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consensus, the Commissioners agreed there must be some semblance of the next stage and an action plan by the next Commissioners' meeting.

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Commissioner Gardner addressed the COVID mandate issue and the memo that was sent to employees. The memo explained Governor Mills issued a mandate that any health care facility, federal employees, and employers with 100 or more employees, must require their employees to get the COVID vaccination. The memo also stated there is not enough guidance available yet to say whether Washington County employees will be impacted by this mandate. Commissioner Gardner stated the issue was discussed at the MCCA meeting. At this time, the recommendation of the Risk Pool is to wait for further advisement and for clarification on the Executive Order given by Governor Mills. The Board of Commissioners agreed this is not an anti-vaccination issue; it is more an issue of people being able to make their own medical choices. By consensus, the Commissioners agreed there will be no formal action at this time.

AGENDA ITEM: Informational Materials

There were no questions or comments.

ADJOURNMENT

5:10 p.m.

ATTEST: _____

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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