

September 3, 2025

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Special Meeting  
Held September 3, 2025  
in the Washington County Commissioners' Office  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner David C. Burns  
Commissioner Courtney Hammond  
Commissioner Billy Howard  
Renée Gray, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administrative Asst.  
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator  
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO  
Lowell Morse, Machiasport  
Paul Sylvain, MVNO  
Bed Edwards, Machias  
Amanda Smith, Beals  
Barry Curtis, Sheriff  
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy  
Josh Rolfe, RCC/WCSO  
Tammy Gay, Deeds  
Rachel Worcester, D.A.'s Office  
Susan Sullivan, D.A.'s Office  
Jessica Crowley, Jonesport/Beals  
Charles Rudelitch, SCEC  
Meredith Mawhar, SCEC  
Megan Huffman, Finance  
Carlen Jay, Jonesport  
Sondra Small, Finance  
Grace Falzarano, Columbia Falls  
Robert Simpson, Whiting**

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Commissioner Burns called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with the purpose to hold a budget workshop and address personnel matters.

**AGENDA ITEM: Personnel Matters**

Commissioner Burns stated a Separation Agreement has been drawn up by County Attorney and National Corrections Employees Union Representative Bill Doyle. The agreement is between the Washington County Sheriff's Department, the NCEU and a formerly terminated county employee. The agreement includes a one-time payment to the employee of \$20,000.00 with no further action expected.

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**\*MOTION\* Commissioner Howard moved to accept the Separation Agreement and Release as presented. (Howard / Hammond, 3-0)**

Commissioner Burns stated Treasurer Jill Holmes will be resigning from her position. He stated there are steps that will need to be taken following the acceptance of the resignation. Commissioner Burns explained a provisional Treasurer will need to be appointed. He also noted, by statute, Sondra Small will need to resign as Deputy Treasurer during the transition. Commissioner Burns proposed that the Board of Commissioners appoint Grace Falzarano as provisional Treasurer. The anticipation is that the appointment will be done during the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Washington County Commissioners.

**AGENDA ITEM: Finalize the Proposed Budget for FY 2026**

Commissioner Burns stated this special meeting will give the Board of Commissioners an opportunity to review, make any changes and finalize the proposed budget that will be presented to the Budget Advisory Committee at the Public Hearing on September 11, 2025. Commissioner Burns stated each of the Commissioners have had an opportunity to go through the budget. He asked if the proposed budget includes the bond annual payment with the anticipation that it passes the vote. County Manager Renée Gray responded the bond annual amount and interest is included in the budget under debt service. Commissioner Burns stated the proposed budget reflects an increase of 39.87%. Commissioner Howard reiterated that he is not happy with the increase. He also voiced his concern regarding the possibility of the bond not passing. A lengthy discussion included many concerns, questions, and comments. Most wanted to know what will happen if the bond does not pass. There were no answers or solutions to offer. Dissemination regarding information about the bond was discussed. Commissioner Burns stated the Board of Commissioners are required by law to hold meetings in each of their own districts to give information regarding the referendum. County Manager Renée Gray noted the statute requires the BAC hear the referendum before the Commissioners can have the informational meetings within their districts. She also noted she plans to have weekly information sessions. A member of the public asked how confident the County is in the deficit amount, and how likely is it that more of a deficit will be found as audits are completed. Commissioner Burns acknowledged figures may change as audits continue to be completed. He did state he does not anticipate

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needing to go for another bond. Commissioner Hammond stated this bond

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will help as the County plans ahead for years to come. Commissioner Burns stated there are three options for the proposed budget. He asked the Board which one should be presented to the BAC. Commissioner Burns noted the Board will work with the BAC as much as possible, and stated this is the first time the Commissioners have taken the responsibility to go through the entire budget line by line. There was a discussion lead by one of the new members of the BAC about the process that takes place after the budget is presented to the BAC. Questions about the options for how information will be presented to the BAC was fielded by Finance Manager Sondra Small. She noted she will offer the information needed as best she can with the direction of the BAC. One of the versions of the budget had included funding a vehicle fleet lease option for the Sheriff's Office. This version was not the Commissioners first option choice. Chief Deputy Crabtree asked why the lease option is being dismissed so quickly. Commissioner Howard stated his concern was getting stuck in a lease. Chief Deputy Crabtree pointed out this type of lease does not lock you in and stated he felt the lease was a viable option to get all six cruisers that is needed. Chief Deputy Crabtree stated the lease option was vetted as much as possible but we don't know until we try it. Commissioner Hammond stated that is the problem. Commissioner Burns noted he just does not want to complicate the budget issue at this time and felt this option should be put on hold. RCC Deputy Director asked why shouldn't the version with more actual county expenses be proposed. Commissioner Burns stated the Board is trying to think leaner. The fact that the BAC may go through the budget and cut more was discussed. U.T. Supervisor Heron Weston asked how much of the budget is for the bond payment. The portion of the budget that is for the bond is \$1.4 million for FY 2026. A member of the public asked if the only solution was to pass the bond referendum. Commissioner Burns explained the Bond Council has offered three other options. (See attached) Commissioner Hammond commented that the County must move towards a more educated and informed direction; a more common-sense attitude with new leadership from the BAC. A member of the public asked how volunteers that get involved in their community get guidance or education needed. Commissioner Burns pointed out MMA gives training to municipal officers. In review of the three possible proposed budgets, Sondra Small listed the options:

- Draft One-The initial one after the Commissioners met with all the departments;

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- Draft two-a budget that reflects the more accurate need;
- Draft three-a budget that includes details not originally thought of such as contract night-time differential rates with the bond debt service included.

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BAC member Ben Edwards asked if all three options could be presented to the BAC for their consideration. He noted the perspective is important. Commissioner Howard felt it would lead to confusion. Ben insisted it would give the BAC perspective. Commissioner Hammond stated the statute reads "the Washington County Commissioners shall submit **a budget estimate** to the Budget Advisory Committee". Commissioner Hammond noted there is no problem sharing any information the BAC requests. Ben noted he will want more years of budgets as a comparison and will want them digitally. Commissioner Burns asked if all that information was available on-line. County Manager Renée Gray stated all previous years' budgets are on-line. Ben noted the previous years' budgets are on-line but he is not able to manipulate the documents. Commissioner Burns questioned why the Commissioners went through the exercise of meeting with each department and going through the budget line by line then not present the proposed budget they compiled. Commissioner Howard stated he favors presenting option one which is the leanest budget. Commissioner Burns noted the Sheriff's Department can still prepare an explanation of the lease option to present to the BAC to consider. In conclusion and with much consideration

**\*MOTION\***                    **Commissioner Hammond moved to present the Proposed FY 2026 Budget dated 08/21/25 with an increase of 39.87% including the bond debt service and not including the vehicle lease option. (Hammond / Howard, 3-0)**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**2:39 p.m.**

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**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.