

April 8, 2021

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
Held April 8, 2021
in the Washington County Superior Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Jill Holmes, Treasurer
Susan Hatton, SCEC
Lisa M. Hanscom, WNEMA
Christine Day, WNEMA
Josh Rolfe, RCC Director
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Sharon D. Strout, Deeds
Carlene Holmes, Probate
Brian Smith
Robert Simpson**

Commissioner John Crowley, Sr. was not present.

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

**Approval of the U.T. meeting minutes of March 11, 2021.
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston's monthly report was submitted and is attached.

In Dean's absence, County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald presented two contracts.

The Solid Waste Transfer Station Agreement is a solid waste management plan between the Unorganized Territories and the Town of Danforth. The Town of Danforth will provide a place to accept household waste

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from the U.T. areas of Brookton Twp., Forest City Twp., Forest Twp., and Kossuth Twp. The agreement will be a three-year term beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2023 for an annual cost of \$18,282.00 per year.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the Solid Waste Transfer Station Agreement between the U.T. and Town of Danforth as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

The Fire Protection Agreement will provide firefighting services and accident/injury responding forces for the U.T. areas of Brookton Twp., Forest Twp., Forest City Twp., T8 R3, and T8 R4. These services will be provided by the Town of Danforth Fire Department for an annual cost of \$4,500. The term of the agreement is for a five-year period, beginning July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2025.

***MOTION* Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the Fire Protection Agreement between the U.T. and Town of Danforth Fire Department as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-0.)**

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Committee Update

Ms. Hatton's monthly report was submitted and is attached. Ms. Hatton stated there were no action items.

Ms. Hatton gave an update on Jim Robinson of Dennys River tractor Service. Jim has been awarded bids for sections of roads for mowing and has another three-year contract.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment

Commissioner Gardner reported concerns he has regarding the wind power TIF agreements Washington County already has in place. Prompted by an article by Bill Trotter of the Bangor Daily News, Commissioner Gardner noted the agreement with commercial wind farms to generate electricity by hosting turbines in rural areas of Maine for revenue could become problematic as the turbines age. Commissioner Gardner stated Hancock

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County has just faced the effects of depreciating value with the 19 turbines in the Bull Hill Wind project. The turbines at Bull Hill Wind in Hancock are a decade old. The turbines have depreciated in value with age and because of advancements in turbine technology. State officials granted an abatement to TerraForm, owners of Bull Hill Wind. This forced Hancock County to return \$17,342 it had received in

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TIF payments last year. Hancock County Administrator Scott Adkins stated the county did not find out about it until after the State had agreed to reduce its valuation of the turbines. TerraForm also owns and operates wind farms in other areas including Stetson Mountain in Washington County. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald reported Washington County received a letter from the State notifying the County that an abatement of \$223,000.00 was granted to First Wind due to an over-assessment of the wind turbines. The county has been instructed to return the difference of the allocations received for revenue from the TIF First Wind program and the abatement amount. Commissioner Gardner stated he has two major concerns. The first concern is that promises made by the wind power companies cannot be honored due to depreciation of the equipment. The second concern is that the State Revenue Department can make such decisions as the reevaluation of the turbines without working with the local officials. Commissioner Gardner stated the County should pause on all TIF activities. Commissioner Gardner directed the Treasurer's Office to put a hold on sending any money back to the State. Commissioner Gardner also directed County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald to have a discussion with the County Attorney. The Sunrise County Economic Council administrators of the TIF program have also been asked to familiarize themselves with this issue. TIF Administrator Susan Hatton asked the Commissioners if applications for TIF loans should still be accepted. Commissioner Gardner replied that applications should still be accepted, but plan on putting a hold on them until the County has a better handle on this situation. Commissioner Gardner concluded the discussion by stating APEX should be put on firm notice regarding the current pending project and offer they have presented to the County. What will happen in twenty years will need to be considered.

ADJOURNMENT

4:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.

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