

April 11, 2019

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
held April 11, 2019
in the Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner John Crowley, Sr.
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administration
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, Jail Administrator
Susan Hatton, SCEC
Lynn Dwelley, WNEMA
Judy East, WCCOG
Sharon D. Strout, Deeds
Linda Belfiore, APEX Clean Energy
Paul Williamson, APEX Clean Energy
Karl Pingree, Buildings and Grounds**

The meeting for Unorganized Territories business was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Prior to the regular meeting, the tax abatement hearing was held for Hill vs. Town of Alexander.

**Approval of the U.T. meeting minutes of March 14, 2019.
(Crowley/Cassidy, 2-0-1)**

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston was not in attendance. No written report was submitted. County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald stated Dean will give a full report at the May meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update

A monthly report was submitted and is attached.

TIF Administrator, Susan Hatton had one action item and provided updates on two grants.

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Susan presented a request for an Economic Development Planning grant from Washington County Council of Governments for \$10,000.00. The project's objective is to conduct research and analysis on the status and impact of the dams throughout the St. Croix watershed. Susan explained the application for TIF funds from WCCOG is to cover the costs of this research in the areas in the Unorganized Territories. Other funds will cover other portions of Washington County. The Grant Committee's recommendation to the Commissioners' is to approve the application with a vote of 2-0-1. The one abstention was County Manager Betsy Fitzgerald. Betsy sits on both the Grant Committee and the WCCOG board.

Washington County Council of Governments Executive Director Judy East was present to give details of the project and to answer any questions. Commissioner Gardner asked what was hoped to be understood from the research. Judy stated there are 40 small and large dams in the St. Croix watershed retaining water levels in multiple rivers, streams and impoundments. The overall goal is to address the many shorefront and habitat concerns significant to these impoundments as well as the commercial and recreational value of the fisheries within them. The research should give a clear understanding for landowners, municipalities and guides on the water quality and fish passages. Commissioner Gardner noted the St. Croix has a history "built around what it is because of what it was"; regional economies need those dams in place. Commissioner Crowley stated it is critical to keep water levels the same. Judy stated this is the beginning of a long-term project. Commissioner Gardner stated his concerns that the best of intentions researching the impact of impoundment dams throughout the St. Croix watershed has the potential of a negative impact. Commissioner Gardner is leery that answers would lead to the removal of dams which would be detrimental to those that make their livelihood on the St. Croix. Judy responded that the removal of dams is not the intention of the research at all. The Regional plan includes 1) the preparation of analysis of the status of the impoundment dams affecting the water bodies in Washington County U.T.'s; 2) engaging

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Woodland Pulp in discussions and collaborations that may be possible to ensure lake levels are maintained and stay abreast of FERC license negotiations and; 3) cost sharing contributions from TIF Nature-Based Tourism Fund and Capital Funds to maintain dams and fish passage. Commissioner Gardner inquired who is driving this project. Judy

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stated the Passamaquoddy and Riverkeepers are involved and the possibility of alewife restoration is a part of the purpose for the analysis. The WCCOG will be working with SCEC and the Downeast Salmon Federation. The data collected could be a significant contribution to economic impact on tourism such as guided fishing.

Commissioner Gardner asked about the status of Woodland Pulp Mill's involvement. Judy stated the Mill is involved. Commissioner Gardner asked if Woodland Pulp Mill dam ownership is any part of the discussions. Judy replied SCEC is working with the Mill and keeping an open communication.

Commissioner Crowley asked if there will be any recommendation at the end of the study. Judy stated there will not be a full and definitive recommendation. There will be recommendations revolving around the entities to be involved and what further studies should be done. Commissioner Gardner stated this study is not to be taken lightly as it is so impactful. Commissioner Crowley agreed stating the study will impact many entities including the County, Canada and the Tribes. Commissioner Gardner stated the Board of Commissioners represent the U.T. Commissioner Gardner noted that, as good stewards, the Board of Commissioners need to take the opportunity to do the right thing. Commissioner Gardner stated contact with the Mill and other organizations should be made. Commissioner Gardner pointed out there is a hierarchy of what is most important; the Mill's presence in the county is a big economical drive, therefore, the impact on the Mill should be definitely considered. Judy reiterated there is no intention, not even unintentional consequence, for the study to be detrimental to the Mill. Judy noted additional funding for mitigation surrounding impacts of dams is coming from the Mill.

Commissioner Cassidy inquired about the position of the Tribes. Judy stated the Schoodic Riverkeepers held a meeting last week. The Tribe has hired consultants.

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By consensus, the Commissioners look favorably upon this project and anticipate granting approval at next month's meeting after some research has been done. Commissioner Gardner stated he will contact the Woodland Mill; Commissioner Cassidy will contact Wheaton Land Trust; and Dean Preston will be included in the details of the project.

Susan Hatton presented grant updates on Brown's Tractor Service and Maine 4-H Foundation. (See updates on attached report)

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AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment

None

ADJOURNMENT

4:25 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.