

June 11, 2020

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting
Held June 11, 2020
in the Washington County Probate Courtroom
Machias, Maine**

**Attending the meeting were:
Commissioner Christopher Gardner
Commissioner Vinton Cassidy
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Carla Manchester, Administrative Assistant
Susan Hatton, SCEC
Susan Goodrich, Dennysville
Sarah Strickland, Greater East Grand Region
Kyle Burdick, Baskaheagan Company
Dean Preston, Unorganized Territories
Michael Crabtree, Chief Deputy
Barry Curtis, Sheriff
Joshua Rolfe, WCSO / RCC
Paula Johnson-Rolfe, WCSO
Rich Rolfe, WCSO / Jail
Benjamin Robinson, Edmunds Twp.**

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 May 14, 2020.
(Cassidy / Gardner, 2-1-0)**

AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report

Unorganized Territories Supervisor Dean Preston's monthly report was submitted. (See attached)

Dean reported that he is preparing the year-end closing of books effective June 30, 2020.

Dean reviewed animal control activities.

38

Dean stated the sale of shellfish licenses started on May 28, 2020. Dean noted the requirement of conservation credits has been suspended until the July timeframe. Dean is in the process of re-writing the

June 11, 2020

Shellfish ordinance for the Commissioners' review at the July meeting. Dean stated there will be significant adjustments to the conservation credit program.

Dean reported he has negotiated and formalized a land use agreement with Clayton Lakes Woodlands Holdings, LLC for a pit area in Twp. 19ED for the purpose of using the site to dump stumps, place rocks and extract gravel for the 19 Road project.

Dean held a pre-construction meeting for the Middle Branch Bridge over Calor Brook in Centerville Twp. Both the contractor Hanscom Construction and Engineer Calderwood Engineering were present. All required permits have been obtained and construction will begin approximately July 15, 2020.

Dean stated there are 7 snow removal contracts that expired this spring. Dean is developing bid packets and expects to start the bid process as early as July 2020.

Dean reported the U.T. now has 10 cemeteries that are being maintained throughout the Unorganized Territories.

Dean stated he continues to work on the public access to lakes in the Forest City area. Dean has been in contact with Colin Brown, the Executive Director of the Woodie Wheaton Land Trust in Forest City. Dean is developing a letter to present to land-owners of identified public access sites.

Commissioner Gardner asked about the current status of a right-of-way on U.S. Route 1. Dean identified the land as the "old rest area". Dean stated the current land-owner had bought the property from the State of Maine. There is a 6 to 8-foot piece of land that is not accounted for; Dean stated he has been working on this but the State is not helping. Dean has been told by the State that it is a county issue.

Commissioner Gardner stated he has had a land-use complaint. Dean replied that there is no real answer for accountability for property

39

owners that have trash and junk accumulating on their property. Commissioner Gardner inquired about a land-use ordinance or if LUPC could get involved. Dean stated there should be an ordinance but there is not. There is a complaint process but "no teeth" to enforce it.

June 11, 2020

AGENDA ITEM: TIF Committee Update

A report was submitted and is attached.

Program Administrator Susan Hatton presented a proposal to establish a protocol for home-based businesses and proof of residency. Ms. Hatton stated the proposal pertains to TIF requests for those applicants like an over-the-road trucking business and fishermen. The Grant Committee discussed proof of residency and proposed the following qualifications:

1. Applicant must either own property as a residence or for a business in the unorganized territories; or must lease a property for their residence or business for the length of the loan in the unorganized territory; and
2. The applicant must provide an affidavit of residency.

Commissioner Gardner stated qualifying applicants for TIF funds should only be available for U.T. residents. Commissioner Gardner stated an applicant that lives in one of the municipalities of Washington County but owns a business in the U.T. should not qualify for funds. Dean Preston stated the terms qualify those with a garage or base of business in Unorganized Territories. Commissioner Gardner added the purpose of the proof of residency is to prevent people from finding a loop-hole in qualifying for TIF funds. The purpose of TIF funds are specifically designated for the economic development in the Unorganized Territories of Washington County. Dean Preston agreed residence is the key qualification. Ms. Hatton asked how should residency be proved. Josh Rolfe stated he understood the business had to be located in the U.T. Commissioner Gardner responded that loop-holes are a concern with those with moving or portable businesses. Commissioner Gardner stated applicants should have an established full-time residency or business in their residency in the U.T. in order to qualify. Paula Johnson-Rolfe stated the program qualifications are flawed for those who have two residences, spending half the year at one place and half the year at the other, and pay

40

taxes in the U.T. Again, Ms. Hatton asked for guidance as to what should be asked for to document the proof of residency. Several ideas were discussed but Dean Preston noted more work is needed. Commissioner Gardner concluded more thought and input was needed before the Board of Commissioners would be prepared to vote on a protocol for proof of residency for home-based businesses in the U.T. Commissioner Cassidy agreed. Commissioner Gardner directed Ms. Hatton to work with the TIF Grant Committee and provide a suggested policy. Commissioner Gardner stated all questionable requests for TIF funds

June 11, 2020

based on proof of residency should be put on hold until a protocol can be put in place.

Ms. Hatton presented a request for a TIF Loan in the amount of \$40,000.00 and a TIF Forgivable Loan for \$10,000.00 for Ben Robinson. The purpose of the request is to purchase a fishing vessel. Commissioner Gardner stated he knows Mr. Robinson. Commissioner Gardner also stated Ben's father lives in Edmunds Twp. but Ben does not. For that reason, the Commissioners would not consider the request. Ben Robinson asked to speak directly to the Commissioners in regards to the question of his residency. Ben stated he lives with his father in Edmunds Twp., and his understanding is that he qualifies as a resident of the Unorganized Territories. Commissioner Gardner stated there were reasons to believe that Ben may not be a full-time resident of the U.T. Commissioner Cassidy stated that prior to Ben's request, the Commissioners were discussing the establishment of protocol for proof of residency. Commissioner Cassidy pointed out the Commissioners' objective is to help and not hinder citizens of Washington County. Commissioner Gardner stated, although the Board would like Ben to qualify for the TIF funds, they must also focus on the whole picture. Ben contended his residency is in the U.T. Commissioner Gardner stated there must be an established policy before his request can be approved. Ben expressed his concern on the timeframe for the approval of the funds and the purchase of a fishing vessel. Ben stated the best part of the fishing season is now. Commissioner Gardner concluded the Board would not make a decision without an established protocol. By consensus, the Commissioners agreed to table the decision. It was also agreed that if some agreement can be made before the next meeting, the process to request the funds can move forward.

41

Ms. Hatton presented a request for a TIF Loan in the amount of \$80,000.00 and an EDI Grant for \$10,000.00 for Susan Goodrich, DBA Sue's Cobscook Bay Café. Ms. Goodrich is in the process of purchasing a property on Route 1 in Edmunds. She plans to renovate the building and open a restaurant/café. The Loan Committee recommended approval of this loan request by a 3-1-0 vote. Commissioner Gardner asked the reason for the one vote against the approval. Ms. Hatton explained the one vote against was due to the concerns involving COVID-19 and the effect it is having on restaurant businesses. Ms. Hatton explained that Ms. Goodrich has planned for the business to offer take-out as well as spaced seating for inside and outside dining. With the recommendation of the majority of the Loan Committee,

June 11, 2020

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the TIF loan in the amount of \$80,000, loan # SG-TIF-05-27-20, for Susan Goodrich, DBA Sue's Cobscook Bay Café for the purchase of real estate and renovation of a restaurant/café as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-1-0.)

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the TIF Forgivable Loan in the amount of \$10,000, Grant # 2006-03-CP, for Susan Goodrich, DBA Sue's Cobscook Bay Café for the purchase of restaurant equipment and supplies as presented. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-1-0.)

Ms. Hatton presented a request for Citizens Organization for Rural Education (CORE) for a \$5,000.00 Economic Development Planning grant for Phase 1 of a Broadband Planning Grant with ConnectMaine. Ms. Hatton stated CORE was a recipient of a TIF planning grant in 2019. The purpose of the grant was to publish an economic roadmap to address rural decline in the U.T. areas of Forest Twp., Forest City Twp., and Brookton Twp. Phase 1 planning is a pre-requisite to ensure continued progress towards high speed broadband infrastructure. Five thousand dollars is 25% of the cost of the project. Thirty percent of U.T. areas will benefit from this project. High Speed broadband is imperative for the businesses. The Grant Committee recommended approval by a vote of 2-0-1. The one abstention was Charles Rudelitch. Mr. Rudelitch abstained due to a conflict of interest.

42

MOTION Commissioner Cassidy moved to approve the TIF Grant Request of \$5,000.00, Grant # 2005-01-EDP, for Phase 1 of the Economic Development Planning of the Broadband Grant with ConnectMaine, in conjunction with the Greater East Grand Regional Economic Planning Initiative. (Cassidy / Gardner, 2-1-0.)

Ms. Hatton introduced Kyle Burdick of Baskaheagan Company. Mr. Burdick is also a member of the Greater East Grand Region. A Greater East Grand Region Economic Development Plan: 2020-2030 Interim Report for Washington County UT was presented. (See attached). Mr. Burdick stated the initiative by Greater East Grand Region "A Heritage Reclaimed" is moving forward. Mr. Burdick noted COVID-19 issues caused delays. Mr. Burdick stated he believes the initiative has a realistic plan with goals based on economic vitality. The initiative

June 11, 2020

focuses on three connected goals. Those goals are to support existing businesses and emerging entrepreneurs; investing in youth and young adults; and creating a regional landscape fortified with the necessary infrastructure for connectivity. The pending proposal to submit a Phase 1 Planning Grant to ConnectMaine is an integral part of assuring the future expansion of broadband internet access in the Region. Commissioner Gardner agreed that broadband is absolutely key to successfully bringing people to this area.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment

None.

ADJOURNMENT

4:56 p.m.

ATTEST:

**_____
Carla J.R. Manchester, Admin. Asst.**