

October 10, 2013

**Minutes of the Washington County Commissioners'  
Unorganized Territories Regular Meeting  
held October 10, 2013  
in the Commissioners' Conference Room  
Machias, Maine**

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**Attending the meeting were:  
Commissioner Christopher M. Gardner  
Commissioner John B. Crowley, Sr.  
Commissioner Vinton E. Cassidy  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Carla Manchester, Administration  
Ken Carter, Charlotte Selectman  
James T. Davies, Princeton Selectman  
Joshua Rolfe, RCC  
Hillary Savage, MVNO  
Larry Finnegan, Jonesport  
Steven A. Welsh, Lubec  
Ken Daye, SCEC  
Wayne Peters, Roque Bluffs  
Jill Holmes, Treasurer  
Tim Cox, BDN  
Dawn Young, DEMS  
Darlene Wallace, Deeds  
Sharon Strout, Deeds  
Judith Alexander, Treasurer's Office  
J. Scott Moody, Maine Heritage Policy Center  
Jonathan Haines, Maine Heritage Policy Center  
Steve Robinson, Maine Heritage Policy Center  
Sheriff Smith, WCSO  
Carlene Holmes, Probate  
William Tuell, Downeast Coastal Press**

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The 3:00 Tax Abatement hearing was rescheduled to November 14, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Chablis, the taxpayer, was unable to attend.

The 4:00 p.m. presentation from J. Scott Moody of the Maine Heritage Policy Center was postponed until after the Unorganized Territories business.

**Approval of the September U.T. meeting minutes  
(September 5, 2013) (Crowley / Cassidy, 3-0)**

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**AGENDA ITEM: Monthly Report**

A monthly report was submitted and is attached.

Three snow contract extensions were presented for approval. The first two snow contracts were negotiated for a three year term.

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the extended snow contract for Edmunds Twp for \$129,000 for 2013-2016. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the extended snow contract for Township #27 for \$33,000 for 2013-2016. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The third contract will be for one year due to negotiation issues.

**\*MOTION\*** Commissioner Crowley moved to approve the extended snow contract for Township #8R3 & 8R4 for \$23,760 for the 2013-2014 season. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**AGENDA ITEM: TIF Grant Committee Update**

A report was submitted and is attached.

TIF Administrator Ken Daye reported that the TIF Grant Committee is continuing to work on the grant and loan program guidelines and should have a working draft available for the Commissioners to review next month.

**AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment**

Commissioner Gardner stated that the Downeast EMS discussion should be addressed during the Unorganized Territories business but will be pushed back on the agenda.

Commissioner Gardner reported that a potential crisis was averted when the Edmunds public boat ramp was in jeopardy of being closed due to the current federal government shutdown. Commissioner Gardner was contacted by local fisherman who prompted him to take action. He

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asked UT Supervisor Heron Weston what his interpretation of the contract was with the Edmunds boat ramp and Washington County in regards to jurisdiction. Supervisor Heron Weston said that it is his understanding that the County is responsible and has jurisdiction over the boat ramp, the parking lot, and the road that goes there; the State has jurisdiction from the high water mark down.

**AGENDA ITEM: J. Scott Moody, Maine Heritage Policy Center, Free ME Initiative**

Commissioner Gardner introduced CEO and Chief Economist J. Scott Moody of the Maine Heritage Policy Center. The MHPC's mission and goal is to promote policies to benefit the people of Maine. Mr. Moody, seeking Washington County Commissioner's support for the Free ME initiative, stated that this plan to eliminate sales and income taxes in Maine's poorest county to promote economic growth is in the preliminary stages. Pointing out the challenges that Maine faces, Mr. Moody reported that there has been growth in government dependency; Maine being the third largest Medicaid budget in the United States. He also stated that there are vastly different levels of growth throughout Maine. The Free Me program is based on the Pine Tree Development Zone program concept, but the continued deterioration of Maine's economy is evidence that the PTDZ is not expansive enough to make a difference. The index used to determine what county to select to implement this plan is based on four components: poverty level, unemployment rate, the percentage of personal income of Maine's private sector, and population growth. The Free ME program would be implemented throughout Maine geographically, county by county, with Washington County being first. Once Washington County saw recovery in these four components for three consecutive years, the plan would be implemented in the next county that qualified. Potentially, at least half the State of Maine could be affected. Governor LePage is supportive of the Free ME initiative and MHPC is in hopes to have a bill introduced in the Legislature next session. In response to Selectman of Princeton Jim Davies' question as to whether taxes would come back all at once or be phased in, Mr. Moody stated that he hoped for tax reform that would result in lower taxes throughout Maine. Commissioner Cassidy stated it was a good idea, great discussion, but not sure we are ready. He, as well as others attending the meeting, had questions about migration to the area for the tax relief; how would residency be proved and whether the plan would be detrimental

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rather than helpful. Commissioner Cassidy was supportive of the idea but not in favor of endorsing it. Commissioner Gardner was in favor of endorsing the plan stating that Washington County has fought outward migration for years. Commissioner Crowley stated that he was not completely familiar with Free ME initiative, but knows that Washington County needs to create an environment that will create business. Commissioner Gardner proposed that the concept of Free ME be endorsed so that further discussion can be had.

**\*MOTION\***                    **Commissioner Crowley made a motion to offer support for the Free ME concept with the full understanding that further discussion is needed for a complete endorsement to be offered. Commissioner Cassidy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**4:50 p.m.**

**ATTEST:**

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