

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioner's Meeting Room with the following present: Commissioners Sather, Walls and Thomas; Solicitor, Larry Newton; Chief Clerk, Heather Fellman; Sid McConahy from Mission Critical Partners; Susan Harry, Treasurer; Fred Gutshall, Public Defender; Laurie Nearhood, Planning Director; Celina Seftas, Director of the Conservation District; Kelsey Dunn, Register and Recorder; Sarah Snare, Prothonotary; Guest, Travis Sather and Daily News Reporter, Joe Thompson.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Sather. Prayer was led by Commissioner Sather and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was led by Commissioner Walls.

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes) to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes) to approve payment of bills.

There was one addition to the agenda: consideration of approval to open TAN bids. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Under announcements, Commissioner Thomas commented that it has been a pleasure to work with Commissioner Sather over the past 8 years. He offered his best wishes for Commissioner Sather's retirement. Commissioner Walls commented that this has been a cohesive group and it has been a pleasure to work with Commissioner Sather. Commissioner Sather commented that although the Commissioners do not always agree, it has been wonderful to work with a group that is willing to come together for the benefit of the community at large. Commissioner Walls presented a plaque to Commissioner Sather from the Commissioners' Office in honor of Mark's service.

Under public comments Sarah Snare congratulated Commissioner Sather on his retirement. She commented that it has been wonderful to work with this board of Commissioners and that she wishes Commissioner Sather well.

Under matters to be addressed by the Solicitor, there were 4 bids received for the TAN. Kish Bank submitted an interest rate of 4.51% and a \$2,500 paying agent fee. FNB submitted an interest rate of 4.68% and a \$3,000 paying agent fee. Juniata Valley Bank submitted an interest rate of 5.53% with no bank fee. Community State Bank of Orbisonia submitted an interest rate of 7.055% and no bank fee. The low bid was provided by Kish Bank. After consultation with the Treasurer, it was recommended to accept Kish Bank's bid. Consideration of approval was given for Resolution 8-2023 to accept Kish Bank's TAN bid. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Under new business, Fred Gutshall, Public Defender, requested consideration of approval for 2024 Conflict Counsel Contracts. Tim Burns will contract for up to 100 cases per year at \$40,000. Lance Marshall will contract for up to 100 cases per year at \$40,000. BMZ Law will contract for up to 50 cases per year at \$20,000. These are the same fees as last year. Doing conflict counsel this way saves the county a great deal of money and it has been working effectively for several years. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Celine Seftas, Conservation District Manager, presented that Conservation District's Annual Report. The highlight of this year was to focus on rotational grazing in Huntingdon County. This has many benefits for

farmers and for the land. An incentive program was initiated for cover crops. Over 6,000 acres signed up. A stream bank fencing project that included cattle crossings was completed. Staff reviewed 8 nutrient management plans covering 10,000 acres. Several roadway improvement and construction projects were completed. Almost 200 technical assistance responses were provided by staff this year. A stream crossing for Anderson Hollow Road is planned for next year. An \$880,000 grant has been awarded for work on county farms for next year. The county has preserved their 12<sup>th</sup> farm through the Farmland Preservation Program. Farmers that are interested in the program can contact the Conservation District. Commissioner Thomas wished Ms. Seftas the best of luck in her new position at Juniata College. He has worked with her for 12 years with the Conservation District. She does a wonderful job and will be missed.

Consideration of approval was given for Ag Land Preservation Program Director Appointments. Stewart Neff and Tony Ricci are requesting consideration of approval to be appointed for a second 3-year term. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to appoint the following individuals to serve as Conservation District Directors: Lisa Blazure, Associate Director; Dennis Johnson, Public Director; Michael Mowrer, Farmer Director; Ross Seilhammer, Farmer Director. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Sather and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes) to appoint Commissioner Thomas to serve on the Conservation Board as Commissioner Director.

Sid McConahy from Mission Critical Partners requested consideration of approval for the PA Emergency Management Agency 911 Grant. This grant provides additional funds in the amount of \$242,222.82 to support the ongoing regional activity that the county participates in every year. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Sid McConahy requested consideration of approval for the Mission Critical Partners contract to support regional activity. Part of that proposal is the active monitoring of the fiber network connecting the 7 counties together. This is fully paid for by the grant. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Sid McConahy requested consideration of approval for Mission Critical Partners Professional Services contract direct for Huntingdon County in support of anything beyond the regional activity. The contract is for a 4 year term at \$80,000 for the full contract. This is the same rate as the last contract. This is also grant funded. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).

Laurie Nearhood, Planning Director, requested consideration of approval for 2 staff and 2 Planning Commission members to attend PMPEI training. This is a course is subdivision land development. The total cost is \$100 per person. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Sather, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Laurie Nearhood requested consideration of approval for EBT Foundation RACP Grant consolidation combining a \$1.4 million and a \$1.1 million grant. Combining it will make it easier to administer the grant. It was moved by Commissioner Walls, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Sather, yes).

Consideration of approval was given to accept the 2024 budget. The budget is balanced and there will be no tax increase for 2024. We were also able to give some salary adjustments to our staff. Commissioner Thomas reminded the public that this is a living document and nothing is set in stone. Sarah Snare asked about some mistakes in the budget that she had brought to the attention of the Commissioners' Office. Heather Fellman

explained that there are errors in the budget that make it look like several department heads are receiving a pay decrease for 2024. The error is in the numbers entered for the previous year. Those numbers are incorrect. The 2024 numbers have been double-checked and are correct. Ms. Fellman will be running a couple more checks to ensure that the problem is definitely with the 2023 numbers. If it turns out that the error is in the 2024 numbers, there is money in the contingency fund that can be used to cover the difference. No one will have a pay cut next year. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Walls and carried (Thomas, yes; Sather, yes; Walls, yes).


There were no Matters for Action.

There were 6 Veteran's Burial Allowances.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Walls to adjourn the meeting at 10:44 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Heather Fellman, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary

