

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
SEPTEMBER 7, 2023**

PRESENT: Commissioners William D. Shorey (Chairman), Amy R. Fowler, and Betty I. Johnson. Also present was County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

Call to Order: Commissioner Shorey called the court session to order at 9:58 a.m.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Finance Director Kari Hunt reported the following:

The Towns of Troy, Knox and Unity have paid their County tax bills. The due date for payment is 10/1/23 and the towns have until 11/30/23 to make payment before interest is assessed.

The funding is tight currently. The Commissioners will be signing warrants this date with \$ 320,000.00 paid out in payroll but a good portion of that was retroactive for union going back to 1/1/23.. K. Hunt had to use \$300,000.00 out of the TAN account to cover payroll expenses . The remaining balance left in the TAN account is currently \$691,246.00. The County recently received \$154,000.00 from Knox County, per the agreement, for the 9-1-1- services the County is temporarily providing to Knox. She would like to recommend that the County replace \$142,000.00 of that amount into the Future Technology Reserve 0266 account. It is Kari's understanding the Technology is using some of the funds to update the system at the Communications Center.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded that the Finance Director will allocate \$142,000.00 from Knox County to Future Technology Reserve. Unanimous.**

K. Hunt has been talking with the Department Heads. She will be making a separate correction warrant for changes that have to be made in the NDS system. There will be no checks to be written.

This will be strictly for corrections, and she wants to keep them separate for transparency.

K. Hunt, Susan, and Annette took NDS training last week, and it was very helpful in learning to navigate the system. After today, the department heads will be receiving their year-to-date statement.

K. Hunt will provide a year-to-date statement to the Commissioners after today's meeting.

W. Shorey asked Kari if Community Corrections Act funds had come yet from the State. K. Hunt will research and let them know for sure.

Kari, Annette and Barb had a meeting regarding budget and Kari's role this year. Kari will be working with Barb this year, assisting, and learning with the ultimate goal of taking lead on it next year.

Discussion of Health Insurance: Commissioner Shorey wants to increase budget on the County side \$1.2 million which also includes the Jail. B. Arseneau was asking if some of that should be put in the Jail Medical budget. A. Fowler said the jail can increase their budget around 3% so that needs to be considered. W. Shorey said it has historically been low for years. All agreed that the amount needs to be increased.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to accept and file the Financial Report. Unanimous.**

WARRANTS

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to authorize payment of the September 7, 2023 General Fund Accounts Payable and Reserve warrant with the August 31, 2023 payroll of \$186,211.60 and the accounts payable of \$ 120, 331.71 for a total \$306,543.31. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to authorize payment of the September 7, 2023 MCRRC (Corrections) Accounts Payable and Reserve warrant with the August 31, 2023 payroll of \$156,055.97, and the accounts payable of \$34,895.67 for a total of \$190,951.64. Unanimous.**

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

IT Manager J-sun Bailey reported as follows:

1. J-sun ordered new phone system and recorder for Communications Center. He had the first meeting with the vendor to discuss timeline to move forward. The recorder is another vendor, who will reach out to their supplier today. The phone system was \$73,000.00 and the recorder was about \$60,000.00. W. Shorey asked if the current system is handling the load. He believed so, as he's checked in, but he would defer that question to the Comm. Center Director. So far it's been working smoothly. Knox County has contacted Motorola regarding the two CAD systems. He believes that is Knox's project to head up. He's been trying to keep up with a few news articles regarding this and so far the articles don't seem to be negative. He knows there will be some "growing pains." It's been operating for about 1.5 weeks now.
2. He is finishing setting up phone and computer for a new Sheriff's employee.
3. Reached out to GWI as well as Consolidated Communications for quotes on phone service. He doesn't want to just sign with Consolidated Communications and work with only one quote. He wants to see what else is out there and is waiting for more quotes.
4. He is working on Ray Monreal's 6-month probationary evaluation with Human Resources. It will be done by the next Commissioners meeting. He will review it with Ray Monreal and HR Annette McLaggan.
5. J-sun and Ray have been in touch with Dale Rowley regarding the renovations for the new Deeds offices project. Dale will keep them in the loop so they can get their work done before the walls are put up.
6. Commissioner Shorey inquired regarding upcoming Motorola conventions. State Maine User Group in Belfast is coming up on September 20, 2023 at the Bayview Center. The day after, the State is holding training for a new mental health phone number. The next National Motorola will be in Texas, in May. The Commissioners asked if Ray Monreal would be attending some of these, and budget permitting, he can be included.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT:

Present were Human Resources Director Annette McLaggan, Sheriff Jason Trundy, and Chief Deputy Matt Curtis. HR Director McLaggan reported as follows:

1. Education Reimbursement: Felicia Gray has signed up for a work-related professional ethics course and submitted it through the Alford Grant, which is 50% reimbursement. Brief discussion about potential other employees taking courses in the past. Further research is needed. Alford Grant should be reimbursing F. Gray since she's already paid. Commissioners felt that it was good to do but wondered about funding. Prosecutorial Asst. Eric Harvey has coded it to his training budget. A. McLaggan asked that there be a motion that when she completes the class the Alford Grant will cover what it covers and release those funds to Felicia Gray. Brief discussion that if it was being reimbursed by the Alford, it would be about \$448.00. A. McLaggan said that the Commissioners would set up parameters and a policy for this type of education, including the Alford Grant so it is built into this. Commissioners discussed and expressed concern that this was not a required course and needs to be clarified if employees will be reimbursed. She asked if in the meantime, she could apply for the training reimbursement because it must be done before the class starts. She requested that the employee be reimbursed 50% when the County receives the funds from the Alford Grant.

****B. Johnson, A. Fowler moved to table this matter until further research was done.**

Unanimous.

2. There is a new hire, Jacob Pierce, who is a blue pin and is certified. A. McLaggan is requesting a motion for approval for hiring him, effective August 21, 2023, at \$34.14 per hour. He was hired at a higher annual accrual vacation rate of 160 hours. Jacob Pierce qualifies for the \$10,000.00 sign on bonus.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve the hire of Jacob Pierce. Unanimous.**

3. Bobby O'Leary of Liberty has been offered a conditional offer of hire as a full-time patrol deputy. He has accepted the offer, effective September 11, 2023 @ \$26.45 per hour. He has been hired at the annual vacation accrual of 80 hours per year. B. O'Leary qualifies for the \$10,000.00 sign on bonus. O'Leary is a green pin and has not attended the academy yet.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve the hire of Bobby O'Leary. Unanimous.**

4. A. McLaggan has spoken to Lt. Cody Laite who said there are two other conditional offers out there, pending acceptance, who are not certified. A couple of the detectives have resigned. A few more Detective interviews are being done and no conditional offers have been made. The jobs were posted with no interest to promote internally. The positions are now posted outside the Sheriff's Office.

5. Arryn Gary, a dispatcher has finished training and is now a qualified/ certified dispatcher. She has gone through the academy. Her rate of pay will now go from \$19.08 to \$20.43. She will get the second installment of her sign-on bonus (\$4,000.00), effective 7/31/23. So noted.

6. Deputy Trevor McRay has completed field training and qualifies for the first installment of sign on bonus in the amount of \$3,750.00. So noted.

7. John Shirk was promoted to Corporal position, August 27, 2023, new hourly rate \$32.80.
****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve the new hourly rate of pay for John Shirk. Unanimous.**
8. Deputy Brook Hartshorn, hired approximately one month ago as a blue pinner (certified), now qualifies for the first payment of her sign on bonus in the amount of \$1,000.00 after passing field training. So noted by the Commissioners.
9. Robert Walker is going from Detention Manager and is now assigned as Correctional Officer effective Sept. 27, 2023. His rate of pay will change to \$28.00 per hour.
B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve new job assignment and hourly rate for R. Walker. Unanimous.
10. Ryan Jackson has resigned from Sheriff's Office August 31, 2023 and is due separation pay of sick and vacation time; amount to be determined at next payroll.
****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to accept resignation. Unanimous.**
11. Josh Staples has resigned his position as Detective from the Sheriff's Office, effective September 5, 2023. He is also due vacation/sick payout of roughly \$8,000.00.
****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to accept resignation. Unanimous.**
12. Corrections Officer Mack Page has completed the Basics Corrections Training Program and is now certified. He is due a step increase to \$21.91, retroactive to February 27, 2023.
B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve step increase for Mack Page.
13. B. Johnson and A. McLaggan have been working on job descriptions for the Comm. Center and draft copies will be given to the Commissioners in their mailboxes.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

Present were Sheriff Trundy and Matt Curtis:

Matt Curtis reported regarding the conditional offers mentioned earlier for two patrol officers. They are going through the last phase of pre-employment steps. If all goes well, the conditional offers should be able to be offered by the first of next week for the two patrol vacancies. Interviews were conducted yesterday for the detective positions. Conditional offers and background checks should be occurring next week. Lt. Cody Laite has worked very hard on the recruitment piece and Chief Deputy Curtis wants to recognize this publicly. He also wants to recognize the Commissioners for their willingness to work on the pay adjustments. The Sheriff's Office can now be competitive and hire new people. One deputy is at the academy right now. A. Fowler asked about the cost of the Academy. M. Curtis indicated that it is about \$3,500.00 for tuition and then specific uniforms must be purchased. So, the total is more like \$5,000.00, plus their salary. A. Fowler asked if the Alford grant could apply to the academy training. The Sheriff said he will follow-up on that. M. Curtis has requested reimbursement for training for one employee who left employment and had received the funds. He is preparing another letter requesting reimbursement for an additional employee who resigned. He recognized that the funds received do not go back into the Sheriff's Office budget, so it may not look like they have funds to send others to the Academy but should be all set. Lt. Laite has been working

with HR in this regard. On the fleet side of things, two out of the three final vehicles they have been waiting on have arrived and are in Massachusetts. As soon as the third vehicle has arrived, arrangements will be made to go get those vehicles. The department will then be back to request the funds for the vehicles. Those vehicles will bring the department up to what they need. Lt. Laite has worked with one of the vendors and they will let the Sheriff's Office use their slot for a vehicle auction. Chief Deputy Curtis will let the Commissioners know when this takes place.

Corrections Side:

Sheriff Trundy reports that he has spoken with Major Porter who has been working on an issue they have had regarding an inmate the County has been holding at Two Bridges, resulting in significant medical costs. That person is being transferred today from Two Bridges to Maine State Prison. The Maine State Prison infirmary will hold the inmate to meet his unique medical needs that cannot be met at Two Bridges. They are not seeking reimbursement for the costs so far. Major Porter has spent a tremendous number of hours, a great deal of time and energy working with the parties involved to try to get this worked out for this individual. Sheriff also wanted to thank Ray Porter for the work he did with Finance Director to make sure the numbers are updated in CRAS, and that the County received its allotment from the State. For about the last 5 years, the Commissioners and the Sheriff's Office has utilized about \$10,000.00 of the Community Corrections Fund to match a grant that the County has with Healthy Acadia. This will fund a full-time Recovery Coach to work in the Correctional Facility. That opportunity is presenting itself again to continue with that grant opportunity. The grant obtained by Healthy Acadia allows the County to hire a 40-hour-per-week Recovery Coach. The grant is renewed every year. Waldo uses \$10,000.00 of Community Corrections Funds to match the grant that funds the Recovery Coach, 40 hours per week. The Sheriff requested that the County participate this year in the Healthy Acadia Grant for a Recovery Coach.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to renew with the Healthy Acadia Grant for a Recovery Coach. Unanimous.**

The Correctional Manager position is now open with the vacancy. Sheriff Trundy will be talking about doing away with that position. It defies common sense to have a Major in Corrections and a Captain overseeing the Corporals. He felt that it should be a rank structure that is the same in both Corrections and Sheriff's Patrol. He felt the Captain should be eliminated and should be more like a Sergeant. He will come back with a proposal. There should be no increase in the budget. When asked about the Jail and Sheriff increase for the 2024 budgets, it is roughly 14% each.

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Communications Director Michael Larrivee reported the following by ZOOM:

1. Update on 9-1-1 call service: It's going well, only a few hiccups with locations because the 9-1-1 screen didn't match what was down there in Knox. Dispatchers were anxious at first, but it's not been as bad as anticipated. Knox is dispatching right away and closing it down right away. Waldo can hear that they are paging it out. Waldo doesn't always know the area. One call came from So. Thomaston, and it was actually Rockland. Knox might have known which address it really was. This is just an example. Things are going better at Knox, as well. There haven't been gaps in service, and

he is trying not to force employees to come in if it isn't necessary. When asked, M. Larrivee feels that it will be fine for the next 6 months, plus he will have a few more dispatchers completing training so they will be able to work, too. The pay is being handled through the payroll system. He has also been receiving updates about staffing levels, from Knox, and wondered if the Commissioners wish for those reports to be forwarded to them. The Commissioners agreed they'd like the reports.

2. Liberty Tower project is moving right along. The buildings should be delivered this week.
3. Blueberry Broadcasting had to be out of their ratings and then can start on Aborn.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Present was Elaine Higgins, who provided update on the Waldo Broadband Corporation for the five towns. They have gone from having a broadband utility district which was not financially feasible. It would have taken too long for funding to come through from the State and everywhere else. They could not afford it. The group is partnering with Direct Communications out of Unity. Direct Communications are going to build and own the lines, etc. Elaine has been assured it will still be an open concept so that more than one business can go through those lines once they are run. She submitted one copy of a report from the directors; and one copy of an update on the news. She took this information directly from their website. A. Fowler asked E. Higgins if anyone had told her that they wanted to be on the Budget Committee. There are currently only two selectmen in Freedom. There are two people that are candidates for Freedom. The candidates will have a meet-and-greet tonight.

CORRESPONDENCE AND CLERK'S REPORT

County Clerk Barbara Arseneau reported the following:

During the most recent Department Head/Safety Committee Meeting on August 31, 2023, it was decided that the DHSC meetings will be held the 4th Thursday of each month. There has been confusion for some time about whether it was the 4th Thursday or the last Thursday each month. B. Johnson said she had been unaware of that meeting and asked to be included on the email distribution list.

The Town of Swanville 2023 tax bill has been received for the 685 Swan Lake Avenue, Swanville property. The total value was \$ 513,970.00; \$ 52,800.00 for the land and \$ 461,170.00 for building.

A message was received from Economic Development Director Thomas Kittredge of City of Belfast. He requested permission to conduct a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment of the property the City intends to purchase (Waldo County Superior Court building). Commissioner Shorey requested that Mr. Kittredge be told it was okay to begin the assessment of the property.

The Waldo County Extension Association has invited the Commissioners to their annual meeting on 9/12/23. The Commissioners are unable to attend and thank them for the invitation.

There have been two new requests for funding. One request was from "From Above" for \$15,000.00. This is a group that cleans up rubbish; one of their recent jobs was done in Brooks, ME . The other was Camp Capella for \$9,500.00. All their funds go to tuition. The Commissioners are concerned

about the new budget coming up. The requests from these groups will be put into the budget for review later this month on 9/21/23.

B. Arseneau was asked to cancel course enrollments at Maine Municipal Association for two employees because one had a conflict, and the other was no longer employed.

B. Arseneau submitted sheets showing the budget committee vacancies in the commissioners' districts.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

None.

FACILITIES REPORT

Facilities Manager Christopher Bryant reported the following:

Chris has been speaking with Revision Energy regarding the solar panels and some trees that needed to be cut down. Chief Deputy Matt Curtis has cut the trees down himself. The panels should be installed soon.

The first time with the budget for 2024 went well. The budget increased up 8.7% from 2023, mostly fuel and electricity costs. Chris has been catching up on other things now. He will be on vacation next week. Has a plan in place to give vendor contact information to all the department heads. Chris has spoken with the custodian about making sure he is here that week and will have someone do the mail runs for him.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY REPORT & ARPA UPDATE

EMA Director Dale Rowley reported the following:

1. The new Deeds Office has been demolished and workers are finding water and septic lines. They will be putting a kitchenette in. A stairwell to the upstairs was found in one of the walls, which is now gone. It was apparently used before the addition was put on. He is waiting for the final plans from the architect. He has been pushing the Deeds along a little faster because the contractor, Dennis, will be going on vacation in January. The minute they can start building, they've already saved a week or two. He is working with Registrar of Deeds, Stacy Grant, picking out flooring and cabinets. Dale hopes to hire Parenteau of Searsport because they can grind the concrete floor smoothly, and the flooring will be better. As soon as the plans are available, they will start.

Regarding the District Attorney's Office project, he has had RH Lambeth Company there on the site. They really do not want to start anything including demo work until the final plans show up. As soon as he gets the plans, the company can start the demo work.

On the EMA side, he is trying to finish up site work. The fire/retention ponds are going in. He needs certain types of soil material that must be mixed and tested. Hopefully, paving will be completed by the end of October. A spigot needs to be installed. Heat to the warehouse and the fire suppression system in EMA office needs to be finished.

He has a portable gas tank to keep the Jeep going. He wondered if he could use the ARPA funds to refill that tank. Commissioners said yes.

In the past, Homeland Security Grants purchases, the EMA Reserve account was used until those funds were received and then reimbursed the reserve. The Commissioners said yes, and for D. Rowley to speak with the Finance Director about it.

BUDGET IDEAS

EMA Director Dale Rowley submitted the following suggestions from the Department Heads/Safety Committee regarding the 2024 budget process:

Dale recalled how each department used to pay fuel bills out of their budget. The fuel bills are now in the Facilities budget. The department heads would like to do the same with telephone and internet bills and put all that in the IT Technology Budget. The IT Director agreed with that, and he said it may not be able to break them out anyway if a VOIP system is used. So, starting with the 2024 budget cycle, pull the phone lines out of each budget and put them into the IT budget. He explained how the current phone bills work and noted that the EMA phone will still be broken out, but the rest of the buildings will be together. He also felt it might be easier for the Facilities Director to break out the electrical bills by building, but that would be in the future. But for now, phones and internet can be part of the IT Technology Budget. The Commissioners agreed. They did acknowledge that it was nice when it was broken out by budget as it was easier to see what each department was using but recognize that with changes that happen in modern times, it makes sense to do it this way.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to strike the telephone and internet lines from each departmental budget and move it to Department 1035. Unanimous.**

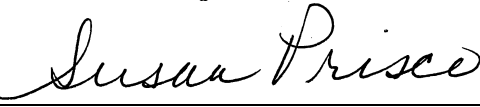
A. Fowler asked if it is possible to get a report on the solar panels at the new EMA building. Director Rowley noted that any unused power and credit left would be as follows: all power generated comes off the EMA building (including warehouse and storage buildings) bill first; if still credit left then it comes off the Windy Hill tower site; any more of a credit left then it comes off the bill as a credit for County Commissioners office building. Rob Hoey has said he would like to do a chart on the solar panels. It is hoped that the power bill will be half what it was, and likely that will happen at the Public Safety Building.

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to go into executive session for non-public information as permitted by MRSA Title 1§405(6)(F) at 10:53. a.m. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to come out of executive session at 11:07 a.m.**

No action was taken.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to adjourn at 11:07 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted by  Office Assistant
Susan Prisco

FOR MORE DETAILS, PLEASE REVIEW THE VIDEO