

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
(SPECIAL SESSION)
APRIL 11, 2011**

PRESENT: Commissioners William D. Shorey – Chairman, Amy R. Fowler and Betty I. Johnson. Present to take minutes was County Clerk Barbara L. Arseneau.

Call to Order: Commissioner Shorey called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

SHERIFF'S REPORT:

Present for the Sheriff's Report was Sheriff Scott Story, who informed the Commissioners of the following:

1. The vacancy created by the resignation of Corporal Christopher Louriero needs to be filled. The position was posted and Corrections Officer Michael Hopkins is the only person who applied. After interviewing him, Sheriff Story recommended to promote him to this position effective April 12, 2011 at the rate of \$18.25 per hour.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to promote Corrections Officer Michael Hopkins to Corporal at \$18.25 per hour effective April 12, 2011. Unanimous.**

2. Seth Curra used to work as a Corrections Officer for the County, but went to work for another County and most recently Volunteers of America. Mr. Curra wishes to return to being a Corrections Officer. He applied and interviews were conducted with him and other applicants. The consensus was that S. Curra was the most qualified. The Sheriff felt that a minimum of three weeks notice should be given VOA and requested that S. Curra be hired at a date to be determined at the two-year step of \$15.74, which is where he was when he left.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve the hire of Seth Curra as Corrections Officer at \$15.74 per hour with a date to be determined after he gives his notice to VOA. Unanimous.**

3. **RESOURCE OFFICER:** S. Story reported to the Commissioners that the Mt. View School Budget Committee has approved the budget to hire a Resource Officer. He explained that the proposal was to be as part of a cost-sharing with the Waldo County Sheriff's Office, with the school paying the "lion's share." S. Story said he wanted the Commissioners to have a head's up that he will need to do some preparation on this and will be bringing it to the Commissioners in the near future. He knew it was in the newspaper and he did not want the Commissioners to be caught off guard. He explained that he had not thought it would move forward, so he had not notified the Commissioners up to this point. There was brief discussion about the difference in fiscal years between the school and the County. The Sheriff will need to figure out who will be the right person for this job, as well. It would also need to be determined how it would work with nine months of the school year and the summer months when the school is not open. It was noted that the Resource Officer program at Belfast Area High School has been "a huge success." It was explained that the officer spends a lot of time meeting with the kids and also with parents. The security component is smaller by comparison.

HIRE/REHIRE DISCUSSION:

Present were Sheriff Story, Communications Director Owen Smith, Register of Deeds Deloris Page, Register of Probate Sharon Peavey and Human Resources/Payroll Director Michelle Wadsworth. O. Smith said the majority of the Department Heads believed that when a person is hired at higher than the starting rate, they will move ahead to the next pay step. While O. Smith said that he believed that

the person should have worked the total number of years before actually moving to that next step, he acknowledged that the rest of the Department Heads were in agreement that regardless of which pay step a person would be hired at, the employee would move to the next pay step as if they had started from the starting pay.

The Commissioners briefly discussed when this policy clarification would take effect. The Commissioners recommended that the wording be as follows:

“Any employee being hired and placed on the pay scale, other than starting wage, will move forward on the scale as though they were already that tenure and will advance to the next step. For example, a person hired at the five-year step would need to work three years to advance to the eight-year step. Notwithstanding any previous procedures, this clarification will take effect April 11, 2011.”

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to accept this hire/rehire clarification as stated above. Unanimous.**

PAYSCALE PROPOSALS:

Present were Sheriff Scott Story, Register of Deeds Deloris Page and Register of Probate Sharon Peavey. Sheriff Story told the Commissioners that this group would like to offer three pay scale proposals. The view was not to “fatten anyone’s pockets,” but to build something that is sustainable, and predictable.

The first was for the three full-time elected officials: The Sheriff, Register of Deeds and Register of Probate.

S. Story discussed how these were calculated. With the existing pay scales, subordinates can make more money, with a little bit of overtime, than the elected officials. If you apply 10% raise to a higher figure and a smaller figure, it is a greater raise for the higher figure. The scale is in two parts; Start to 8 years, and over 8 years. These were created with the salaries that are moved according to the people who are working for them. For example, the Register of Deeds’ present salary was backed-in (rounded up just a little), with \$500.00 added, which is \$10,568.00 more than Class 7 20-year step. For the Sheriff’s salary, the current salary was backed-in to be calculated at more than \$6,000.00 above the Chief Deputy.

The Register of Probate has more than eight years of service, although not in the Register position, which may need to be a discussion. It was noted that the salaries for Deeds and Probate Registers have historically been the same. This position would increase \$3,000.00. When the union’s pay scale gets settled, the wages will be based on that.

S. Story used O. Smith as an example. When he came to the County, his time and tenure were allowed as a credit to be brought here. He acknowledged that this was a special situation with the dispatch. He mentioned that perhaps there should be consideration for the County would permitting the years of service in a department to be carried forward, since it is already allowed in hourly positions. There was brief discussion of the current Register of Probate having had to start at the starting wage when she took office. S. Story said he was making the pitch to put her in over the 8-year level.

He did want to make the Commissioners aware that these elected salaries would move and would stay a certain amount of money above their subordinates. When the unions’ salaries are increased, the elected officials would move up in order to keep the gap between those wages the same. The one problem is that since the elected officials always serve on union negotiating teams, someone could argue that they were

setting salaries for the unions knowing that they would get the same. There was discussion that perhaps they might have to abstain from the salary part of negotiating.

S. Story requested that this scale for these three positions be funded this year, effective July 1st. A. Fowler asked where the money would come from. There was brief discussion that money was a problem this year.

A. Fowler asked when new legislation is signed by the Governor, when does it take effect? It was noted that it can be 90 days.

W. Shorey said that the Commissioners were going to need to listen to a number of other pay scale proposals from other departments. He explained that the Pay Scale Committee had held a couple of meetings and now they would all get to come and present their scales. The Commissioners would need to see how this would fit in the budgets being presented for 2012. He said he had done some calculating and figured it would likely take about \$50,000.00 to fix the pay scales. He also believed that the wages were about 1.4% of the budget. He felt that when the department heads put their budgets together, they should put in what they believed they should be paid and then the Commissioners could review it at that time. He did not believe the scale for these three positions could be done in the middle of this year. The current budget already has several individual lines overdrawn, and more to follow. He noted that he has had several conversations with the Budget Committee that the 2012 budget this.

S. Story said that the three people before the Commissioners right now have not had a new pay scale in years while other departments and positions have received new pay scales, etc. He stated that these three have sat quietly while unions received increases and everyone around them got new pay scales and did not make a big pitch. He explained that this group wants sustainable pay scales so that they will know where they are going, and that it will be parallel with the people working for them. When asked what happens after the 8 year level, S. Story explained that the scale moved up \$500.00 one time.

S. Story added that if times are tough and the unions don't get a raise, these department heads would be O.K. if they don't receive a raise themselves. "We'll benefit when times are good, like everyone else, and we'll roll up our sleeves like everyone else during the tough times."

B. Johnson expressed that even if the Commissioners liked this arrangement, it might not mean it could be done for the current year; it would be for the upcoming budget year. That is how she saw it. She believed that it was to improve it and make it fair, but not necessarily this year.

W. Shorey said that this looked like a plan that could likely be workable. He asked them to understand that everyone needs to be made "somewhat whole," and he restated his belief that it would be close to \$50,000.00 to accomplish that. "Percentages need to be looked at, and what is fair is fair," he said. "What is done for one, it needs to fit a package." He restated that this is why they needed to listen to all proposals first.

S. Story said that none of the group came into the meeting expecting it would be awarded today. A year or so earlier, they had been told they could come up with their own pay scales and they opted not to because they felt it would be self-serving. After seeing what was done in some of the budgets and the increases some positions received, they felt that they needed to make an effort on their wages this year.

W. Shorey said he hoped that the message the Commissioners had recently sent out indicating that the budget for 2012 will need to be at least 4 to 5% would be listened to, in view of some of the pay scales that needed to be adjusted.

A. Fowler said that, particularly for these three positions, she would be willing to step up to the plate and if there was money available, she would not have minded starting this in 2011. She recalled the discussion with the Register of Probate during a previous budget cycle in which the Commissioners had not increased her pay the same way they did with the Register of Deeds because the Deeds Register had been in that position longer. She stated that no disrespect had been intended and S. Peavey said that none had been taken.

SECOND PROPOSAL:

The scale works the same way as the first scale shown. This scale included the Lieutenant, Sergeants, Jail Administrator and Chief Deputy. S. Story pointed out that the Jail Administrator salary would need to be addressed for July 1, 2011 because of the Corrections fiscal year.

The Chief Deputy's salary would increase in order to work backwards into the scale. This scale would need to be addressed now, however, because this is too low now. The current Chief Deputy will be retiring this year and this will need to be addressed prior to that, if possible. The next Chief Deputy will have to be solicited based on the pay scale in place at that time. S. Story asked that the Commissioners take a vote on that soon so that he could be sure he will have the right wage scale for the next Chief Deputy.

The Lieutenant's position will require a raise because that position has fallen behind the subordinates.

CORRECTIONS PAY SCALE:

At first, S. Story wasn't going to try to address it because he had heard that the corrections officers may be unionized, which did not appear to be the case, so he felt it was best to try and address it now. He stated that the current scales are "very much a mess," explaining that the pay steps are such that if he hired someone December 31, 2010, they would get a new step in January and then another in June. He said it "wasn't broken in the first place" and he would like to try to get the old one back. If the County stays with the current 15-year scale, it is less money in some positions, but there is a percentage above the current. This would have the officers on July 1st with pay increases from 1.8% to 4.02%. He explained that he had to back the people into the scale and this would increase 2.75% in the full-time salary lines. He felt that this was doable, since Patrol just got 3% increase. This scale would continue to work as it was in the past – if there is a COLA, it would be applied to it. He said he had spoken with all the Reentry staff about this and stated that they were very disappointed that it went backwards. They were also disappointed that after topping out, the Communications Director's scale allowed a \$1,664.00 bonus annually while their scale allowed a \$300.00 bonus. S. Story shared that the one employee who would get hit the hardest said he would rather go back to the scale they had before, even though he would take the hardest hit.

W. Shorey assured S. Story that the Commissioners have a keen interest in all the pay scales.

S. Story said that he met with the employees and told them what he would try to do. They told the Sheriff that they were not looking for big raises. They couldn't understand what happened in their paychecks. S. Story said it was so complicated neither he nor the Human Resources/Payroll Director could understand what had been decided by the Commissioners and had to telephone the existing chairman to try and understand it.

W. Shorey said that the Commissioners are doing their best to make it understood that the budget for 2012 cannot be held as low as the previous years budgets.

S. Story said that if the Commissioners were to fix 19 positions in the County that he had presented them with, it would be about \$1,009.00 per person. The majority was \$13,000.00 for the next fiscal year for the Jail. It would fix it and would sustain it. The Commissioners would no longer have to look at what would

happen to the Elected Officials. For the Registers of Deeds and Probate, they would need to wait until the Support Staff contract is settled.

W. Shorey said he believed that the group had made good proposals. The Commissioners wanted everyone to have time to address pay separate from the rest of the budget. They appreciated all the work that had been done on these scales.

B. Johnson said it was very helpful to her to hear how this all went and to hear the history.

S. Story said he believed that by attaching it to the subordinates, it resolved many of the issues. He explained that with the ratio, whatever the union employees received, the percentage of increase would actually be less for the elected officials.

S. Story asked that the Commissioners please act soon in their meetings for both the Jail budget and the Chief Deputy.

DISCUSSION OF STANDARDS OF PAY SCALES:

W. Shorey said that he would prefer to see what the rest of the departments presented before arriving at any decisions about pay scale standard. The other Commissioners agreed.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMISSIONERS BUSINESS:

1. A. Fowler said she has to be at another meeting tomorrow and cannot attend the first part of the Commissioners' morning, and may not be able to attend at all.

2. There was discussion of using a new mileage sheet that would consist of a sheet turned in to the Deputy County Clerk each month. The Commissioners discussed this at length and each shared how they logged and processed this information and how they did it based on their calendars. B. Johnson explained that she thought it would make sense for all three Commissioners to submit this monthly since Commissioner Fowler has requested that she be able to submit monthly sheets for the Corrections side.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to try the new mileage log for a month, starting with the month of April. Unanimous.**

3. National Association of County Courthouses Awards Nomination. W. Shorey stated that he had given thought to nominating the Sheriff for putting the Reentry Center into place. All the Commissioners were in agreement with this nomination. He has spoken with the Sheriff and asked for some information to be put together. People from Restorative Justice and Volunteers of America will be contacted to submit narratives. A. Fowler stated that she will also get two others to write something as part of the submission as required. B. Johnson wondered if someone who had benefited from the program should also submit something.

4. B. Johnson said she has signed up for a couple of webinars, one of which is on Coastal Counties. The other one is about how counties can reach out more to veterans.

5. National County Government Month: B. Johnson discussed the work being done in preparing presentations for schools, rotary clubs, etc. and noted that this would not be ready for April but could be done during the course of the year. She thought buttons could also be made promoting the Waldo County Garden, etc. W. Shorey said he felt that B. Johnson could be the "face" of the Commissioners in the community and that the Commissioners could try to get the press involved when the Waldo County Garden gets going this year, but he explained that he would not be able to write reports.

6. W. Shorey suggested that after the bids have been opened, there will be a ground-breaking photo session with the Commissioners, the Sheriff and EMA Director on a date to be determined.

7. B. Johnson said she had also gotten some rules regarding web cams and the like for public meetings. It was briefly discussed that the Technology Policy is separate because it changes so much.

COUNTY BOARD OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW DISCUSSION:

B. Johnson felt that Knox County does a great job following the statutes and establishing a County Board of Assessment Review. As requested by Commissioner Johnson, B. Arseneau had contacted the Knox County Administrator and was told that he had no objection to Waldo County using Knox as a template or model. B. Johnson asked B. Arseneau if she was able to find a list of licensed real estate appraisers. B. Arseneau responded that she had made contact with the secretary of one of the local real estate agencies, had learned of two web sites, had gone on the web sites, but had not found it particularly easy to locate a list that isolated appraisers with businesses in Waldo County. She had also been given a telephone number at the State level and had left a message for assistance. B. Johnson agreed that it had not been easy to find lists of licensed real estate appraisers, as she had tried herself.

W. Shorey said he was not in favor of creating a board of assessment review at this time. He had reviewed many of Waldo County's tax abatement cases and stated that most of them have come out quite well. To his knowledge, there haven't been any Superior Court cases that resulted.

A. Fowler believed that the Commissioners had created bridgework between the citizens and the selectmen/assessors and helped get communication going. She also felt that it would be hard to get people to volunteer to serve on this board.

W. Shorey said he noticed in the statute that the attorney and real estate appraiser were not required to be present at each hearing, and he could see problems resulting from that.

B. Johnson said she would like to do more research to find out which Maine Counties had a County Board of Assessment Review, etc. She agreed that the Commissioners had enough on their plates right now and was not intending that this be created at this time. She had thought it was worth researching and looking into for the future. She had not wanted it to be dismissed without at least looking into it. She appreciated that she had been able to research it and bring it forward to the Commissioners.

W. Shorey suggested that this be tabled at this point and the other Commissioners agreed. B. Johnson said she would continue to do a little more research.

NEXT COURT SESSION:

The next regular Commissioners Court Session is on April 12, 2011.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to adjourn the Court Session at 3:15 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Barbara L. Arseneau
Waldo County Clerk