

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
MAY 19, 2021**

PRESENT: Commissioners Amy R. Fowler (Chairman), William D. Shorey, and Betty I. Johnson. Human Resources Director KelLee Gray took notes for minutes. County Clerk Barbara Arseneau transcribed from the notes and recorded session. The court session was conducted both in-person and by teleconference due to COVID-19 precautions. Those scheduled on the agenda were permitted to attend in person.

Call to Order: Commissioner Fowler called the court session to order at 9:00 a.m.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Present was Finance Director Karen Trussell reported the following:

The County Checkbook balance is \$49,101.96.

The Jail Checkbook balance is \$31,903.20.

TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE:

\$2,250,000.00 has been borrowed on the T.A.N.; \$1,150,000.00 by the County and \$1,100,000.00 by Corrections. This is less than at this time last year.

County Appropriations:

35% of the County 2021 budget has been expended and it could be 38% at this time.

County Revenue:

50.49% of the County revenue has been received at this time.

Corrections Appropriations:

32% of 2021 budget has been expended and could be 38% expended.

Corrections Revenue:

2.50% of the Corrections revenue has been received at this time.

American Rescue Plan Update:

K. Trussell reported that everything is set up to receive the ARPA funds. She was told it could take up to 4 days and this is day 5. She figures if something was wrong, she would have been notified by now. K. Trussell came back in several minutes later and reported that the County has received the first installment of funds from the Federal Government for the American Rescue Plan Act.

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded to file the Financial Report. Unanimous.**

WARRANTS

**** B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded to authorize payment of the May 13, 2021 General Fund Accounts Payable warrant and May 13, 2021 payroll in the amount of \$218,560.70. Unanimous.**

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded to authorize payment of the May 13, 2021 Capital, Active & Restricted Reserve warrant in the amount of \$42,244.99. Unanimous.**

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to authorize payment of the May 13, 2021 MCRRC (Corrections) Accounts Payable warrant and May 13, 2021 payroll in the amount of \$142,257.13. Unanimous.**

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to authorize payment of the May 13, 2021 MCRRC (Corrections) Restricted Reserve in the amount of \$90,148.73. Unanimous.**

RESIGNATION OF TREASURER:

Present via Zoom teleconference was Treasurer Peter Sheff, who had submitted his resignation effective May 28, 2021. He said that it had been a joy serving with the Commissioners, thanked them for that opportunity and wished them the best. The Commissioners wished P. Sheff the best, said it had been a privilege working with him, and that they hoped he enjoyed retirement.

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to accept the resignation of Peter M. Sheff as Waldo County Treasurer. Unanimous.**

A. Fowler said she notified Katrina Smith, the head of the Waldo County Republican Party so that there could be a caucus and names put forward for appointment by the Governor from the same party.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Present was Human Resources Director KelLee Gray who reported the following:

1. The part-time Deeds Clerk announcement has gone out, and there have been a few applications.
2. They are at the interview process for the Sheriff's Administrative Assistant. The first interviews have been completed.
3. Kelly Lewicki has reached the two-year level of \$21.50, with vacation increase up to 96 hours.
4. Retirees in MainePERS system wishing to be rehired: An employee is looking to retire in the month of July, and then returning back in the same position they are currently in August. This person is in MainePERS system, MainePERS has a rule that if that occurs, there is a 5% gross wage fee. She asked the Commissioners to consider making a policy as to who will pay this. It does not matter to Maine PERS if the employee pays it or the employer. After brief discussion, the Commissioners believed it made sense for the employee to pay that fee and that this would be written in the agreement when hiring that employee back.

If any employee retires on Maine PERS and has been re-hired, the 5% gross wages fee charged by MEPERS each pay period will be responsibility of the employee.

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded that for any MainePERS eligible retiree who is hired by the County will pay the required 5% of their gross wages. Unanimous.**

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Present was Information Technology Manager J-sun Bailey, who reported the following:

1. He upgraded Quick Books to 2021 for the Probate Court last week because the version they were using won't be supported anymore.
2. Last week there was a Spillman outage to work on an issue with the training database. He is still working on that.
3. He is looking at a quote for an upgrade to the camera system for the Sheriff's Office because the hardware won't be supported past the end of the year. Seacoast Security came in he met with them. He spoke with the Sheriff and if there, if they don't have it and there is an issue, this would have been good to have. He is waiting for Seacoast to get back to him with a quote.
4. He is finishing the remote laptops for Registries of Probate and Deeds. The State hasn't finished its work on the laptops for the District Attorney's office. He asked the Commissioners regarding the remote laptops, should each person be given a hot spot automatically with those, or wait to activate them as they need them. This would keep costs down.
4. Ray Monreil of Quality Communications and also someone from Central Main Communications have been asked for quotes to upgrade the phone system up at the law enforcement complex because it's older and no additional extensions can be added to the system. He has requested RFP's and RFQ's for that.
5. He had sent the Commissioners an email about the email server but since that would be a lengthy discussion, they can schedule time to talk about that another day.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

B. Arseneau had submitted both the April requested that the Commissioners approve the minutes from the May 5, 2021 and May 12, 2021 Waldo County Commissioners Court Sessions, but B. Johnson was not prepared to vote and A. Fowler had not read them so they were tabled until the next session.

NEW HIRE – CORRECTIONS:

Present was Sheriff Jeffrey Trafton who presented the following for new hires:

1. There has been some recent turnover in the Reentry Center but have had some experienced applicants submit applications. Stephen Dearborn has been recommended to be hired as Corrections Officer at the 16-year level for experience at \$22.87 per hour effective June 6, 2021.
****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to hire Stephen Dearborn as Corrections Officer at the 16-year level of \$22.87 per hour for experience, effective June 6, 2021. Unanimous.**
2. Jesse Damron has been recommended to be hired as Corrections Officer who is already certified at the 6-month level of \$19.38 per hour effective May 19, 2021.
****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to hire Jesse Damron as Corrections Officer at the 6-month level of \$19.38 per hour effective May 19, 2021. Unanimous.**
3. They are currently working on filling the vacant Sheriff's Administrative Assistant position.

When asked if the Academy is open, Sheriff Trafton replied that they are open and are about to start

classes. K. Gray said she had called the Academy to ask a few other questions and it won't be open until June for active classes.

DISCUSSION OF BOILERS

Present was Facilities Manager Keith Nealley, who presented a breakdown of costs given. He commented that it was timely because there is approximately a 5% price increase that will occur in June on that equipment. (He will emailed a copy to B. Johnson.) It came in better than thought, and was less than the last time he requested this information. K. Nealley was pleased that his estimate was high and the quotes came in lower.

W. Shorey recommended to move forward with all of the proposed plans now, and save the money because this needs to be done. It is close to \$200,000.00. He felt it needed to be done. If it meets the criteria for the ARPA funds, that would be good but it needs to be done anyway. K. Nealley recommended the County consider purchasing its own propane tanks to ship for better propane refills. There was brief discussion on which accounts these projects would be paid for. A. Fowler recommended for the time being to use the reserve Account "Facilities, All Other" and then move the ARPA funds into that account as needed. The Commissioners agreed that K. Nealley should move forward with these projects.

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to move the funds represented here on the list of Capital Improvements for the boilers from the ARPA funds to the reserve "Facilities, All Other" and to start the projects. Unanimous.**

K. Nealley was asked to give the project list to Finance Director Karen Trussell. He presented the paper to sign to secure that price for the Reentry boiler.

W. Shorey and K. Nealley expressed their pleasure at being able to finally get these things done. The Reentry boiler had been repaired a few times in recent years and they were glad it held this long.

K. Nealley said he may have other contracts coming along for the roofing in the near future. He asked that Keith also put these on a sheet.

K. Nealley asked that be included on discussions of building projects in the future. W. Shorey listed the basic three projects as the boilers, the Communications Center, and then the initial work for EMA out at the Garden site. This is what they would start with and then see financially where they are a year or so down the road. It was noted that construction costs and lack of supply could slow things down considerably.

B. Johnson noted that the Wellness Committee Gift Cards were greatly appreciated and thanked K. Nealley for all the work he put into this. K. Nealley thanked the Commissioners for the gift card and said all the employees have expressed appreciation for these.

MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT

Present was EMA Director Dale Rowley, who presented a Mutual Aid Agreement between the County and the City of Belfast regarding where to park large trucks in a state of emergency. The County has had an agreement with the City to use the old runway. The City has since torn up that runway and so the renewal agreement has changed to allow parking trucks in an emergency at another specific area at

the airport. The place has changed to another area within the Belfast Airport property. The Commissioners approved the agreement and it was signed by Chairman Commissioner Fowler.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to go into executive session at 9:37 a.m. for discussion of non-public information as permitted by MRSA Title 1§405(6)(f). Unanimous.**

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded to come out of executive session. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to ask EMA Director Dale Rowley to contact Lewis & Malm to advise them know the Commissioners accepted their proposal/offer to do the Federal work for the County. Unanimous.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Karl Beiser, resident of Northport, mentioned that he has become aware of some of the broadband issues around Waldo County. He noted that he works part-time and uses broadband. 90% of residents in Northport do not have access. Many other rural towns have even less access – a few have more access. He strongly encouraged the Commissioners to seriously consider the broadband infrastructure category of need that could be met in a significant degree with assistance from the County level. He said it sounded that the County already has a water or sewer project in mind, but asked that the Commissioners, in whatever method they feel appropriate, consider using some of the \$7.7 million dollars of federal funds to work on the broadband issue. He felt that if this was done right, it could help people with the broadband issue possibly for many years.

A. Fowler stated that some other people have spoken to the Commissioners about this and many small towns are working together to utilize the funds they are allocated, as well as funding available at the State. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Beiser for speaking with them today and appreciated his comments.

DISPATCH SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Present was Dispatch Supervisor Michael Larrivee and Communications Director Owen Smith. O. Smith said he nominated Mike and explained that the Maine National Emergency Number Association awarded M. Larrivee the award as Supervisor of the Year for 2020 for exceptional professionalism as Communications Supervisor at Waldo County Regional Communications Center. The Commissioners expressed their pleasure and congratulated M. Larrivee for his hard work and for receiving this award. O. Smith said that Waldo County Regional Communications has the only working ENPs in the State. A. Fowler noted that M. Larrivee is skilled on the towers, technology, Spillman and the center itself and is a hardworking and gifted employee. Michael has been working for the County for 22 years. The Commissioners noted that he started before the Communications Center was built, and he briefly described working in the old Sheriff's Office where Dispatch was located at that time.

Resignation on Communications Center Board of Directors:

Penny Sampson of Unity has resigned as a board member. The 14-person committee has not been completely full in a long time. It is comprised of all police chiefs in the County, the Sheriff, two firefighter representatives, two paramedic representatives, County EMA Director, a local EMA representative, a Belfast City Council representative and Commissioner's Representatives. Penny

Sampson represented Amy Fowler. Bill was represented by a gentleman in Frankfort. There was further discussion on who was currently on the committee.

PRESENTATION ON COUNTY-WIDE TOWER REFRESH

Present was Communications Director Owen Smith, Dispatch Supervisor Mike Larrivee, and Norman Boucher. N. Boucher gave a presentation on the proposed countywide tower refresh. He submitted documentation for the Commissioners to look at, and also presented a “screenshare” on Zoom that showed a map of the towers the County uses, including Windy Hill, Aborn Hill, Fletcher, Crocker Road, Liberty, and Point Lookout. He reviewed the heights and levels of the existing system.

He showed a second another map that showed the town borders, red lines were major highways, and gray lines were streets.

Next, he put up maps that showed signal coverage for each tower. Gray areas had no coverage. White areas had coverage inside residential buildings. Yellow represented coverage on the street. Public Safety selects 95% availability as acceptable.

1. Aborn Hill tower in Knox. This is a prime site. Aborn Hill is affected by ridges in the county terrain.
2. Crocker Road tower in Belfast. This gives good coverage in that area. O. Smith noted that this was not a primary site anymore, as it had been when the Communications Center first opened in 2001. Currently they have Fire South that came out of Point Lookout in Northport.
3. Fletcher tower in Stockton Springs.
4. Liberty tower. This is a 275’ tower, but it sits behind a ridge so there is some area not covered.
5. Point Lookout tower in Northport. It does well on the coast, and covers Islesboro well.
6. Windy Hill tower in Frankfort.

N. Boucher explained that they have two sub-systems that are not countywide, but have transmitter simulcast so there can be transmission from more than one site. Special synchronization equipment will be needed to do that countywide. For the user, instead of selecting different sites on their mobile or portable, it will be just one button and they will be able to talk anywhere they go in the County.

N. Boucher noted that there is quite a bit of area that has good signal coverage, quite a bit with street coverage, but there is lot with no coverage. He recommended an additional site be put up to cover some of that terrain. They have looked at four different sites in the northwest area

1. Bagley Hill in Troy.
2. A cell site in Burnham.
3. Unitel tower on Quaker Hill in Unity. This site provides the best coverage. O. Smith said he is talking to the owners of that tower site to see if that would be a possibility.

N. Boucher explained that all the sites need to be linked together with a microwave radio sub-system which would carry all the radio traffic to the Dispatch consoles via dishes on the towers. The goal is to build a connected ring of all the sites, which will provide redundancy so that if one of the hubs goes down, all the other radio sites will continue to work. An alarm will notify someone if one of the hubs fails. A structural analysis is required to make sure each tower can hold these microwave dishes. It was noted that the new dishes now run smaller in size than before.

Power will be upgraded. Most places now use 48-volt battery power to keep equipment running if the power goes out. Most sites have generators, so he recommended a minimum of four-hour batteries.

Some of the sites may need shelter upgrades, or electrical grounding for the new equipment. M. Larrivee explained that most of the structures are fairly new. The structure dimensions, heaters/air conditioners, wiring, etc. were briefly discussed. The owner of the Point Lookout site prefers to take care of the structure needs himself.

O. Smith noted that each site needs its own model, which could be done piecemeal but the cost would likely be more efficient pricing to do them all at the same time. N. Boucher agreed that it can be done in phases, but the microwave radio needs to be done first. Repeaters are needed at all of the sites. Some will have more than others. He listed other equipment that would be needed so that connectivity will work well.

The goal is a 7-site simulcast system, which adds one site (Quaker Hill) to the existing 6 sites. Quaker Hill is the most ideal, if that works out.

It was noted that it is hard to find a vendor in Maine that is large enough to handle this project. He listed a few that may be available in Maine. Having a vendor closer for outage support is an important part of the equation. Some can't build but can maintain. Some maintenance can be done remotely. This all needs to be looked at. Specifications will be put together so that all interested vendors can submit a bid without preferential treatment. COVID has impacted both materials and staff in these companies.

Project and Cost Summary:

1. New microwave system is needed
2. New repeaters are needed.
3. One additional tower site is needed.
4. It will be about \$1.2 million to replace equipment and put new equipment up. The scope of work will include this and other structural costs, enhanced grounding, etc. Once this is submitted to the vendors the projected cost will be about \$1.2 million.
5. The County does not need to go out to bond because the funding is available.

Estimated Timeline:

1. Conduct a study to identify what equipment is there, what needs to be replaced, etc.
2. N. Boucher will write specs in the next 2 to 3 weeks. (Roughly \$6,000.00 to do.)
3. Issue the specs to vendors. Then the County will have its proposed cost.
4. Give the vendors two weeks to respond.
6. Have site visits for interested vendors.

7. In 30 days, receive proposals from vendors.
8. Roughly another 30 days to evaluate the proposals, and sign a contract.
9. Meet with vendor before ordering to make sure the equipment order is correct.
10. Order equipment, which will take roughly 14 to 16 weeks to arrive
11. It is roughly 90 days to six months before the buildout actually starts.
12. Test tower and structural work to see if they pass.

The Commissioners discussed directing O. Smith and M. Larrivee to work with Norman Boucher to come up with the specs, and determine what is needed.

M. Larrivee explained that N. Boucher has already been contracted for consulting, and EMA Director Dale Rowley has already started working on the tower in Northport, with no equipment on it. He asked if the Commissioners wanted them to continue with getting the Northport tower up, and if they wanted to keep that separate. The Commissioners stated that they want to continue to get the Northport tower up and want this as part of the whole tower project. O. Smith said that once they start Point Lookout, this will require work to be done on Fletcher, as well, because one tower has to “talk” with the other. O. Smith and M. Larrivee explained that some equipment will need to be moved around between Crocker and Northport to get things working, so one tower will be down temporarily.

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded that Owen Smith and Michael Larrivee work with Consultant Norman Boucher to craft a Request for Proposal that will specify the new radio system, for material, labor, and statement of work for each site, including two-way radios, microwave radios, and site facilities enhancement. Passed by two, as Commissioner Johnson was not available to vote at that time.**

A. Fowler stated that she knew Commissioner Johnson would be in favor of this motion if she had been available.

There was brief discussion about uses for funds from American Rescue Plan Act, which includes water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. A. Fowler noted that Waldo tries to look ahead and do long-term projects that benefit the citizens, and that Waldo is the only county in the State of Maine that is debt-free. The Commissioners thanked N. Boucher for meeting with them.

COMMISSIONERS MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

1. The Commissioners noted that they will need to keep track of this project and keep in mind that this project could likely cost about \$1.5 million.
2. A. Fowler and W. Shorey discussed an invitation to a meeting being held today that was sent to them from the Waldo County Selectmen’s Association. This is in regards to the Admiral’s Inn, which is used for emergency homeless sheltering. It is out of code and there are several violations. Waldo County Homeless Coalition is looking to gather money to purchase this building to keep a place for homeless people. Currently, various other organizations are paying about \$950.00 and \$1200.00 per month per room, which is just a room with no other services. The owner of the Inn now wants to sell, but won’t take less than \$750,000.00. Some people have been in there long-term – many months. There is no program to give them incentive and help to move to other permanent living arrangements. Another organization is looking at creating transitional housing that would be for people who will also earn their keep while they stay there. The County has been asked to come up with \$100,000.00 to do

this. A. Fowler stated that she was not in favor of this. W. Shorey said he was in favor. A. Fowler noted that there are a number of worthy organizations out there. She noted that Waldo County Homeless Coalition is not a 501-C3, which raises questions about how the funding will be handled. She will attend the upcoming meeting, listen, get information, but not commit to anything at this point. There was brief discussion about the ARPA funds designated for counties, and requests being made to Waldo County by organizations and towns for funding town projects. The Commissioners said they want to benefit the whole county and want to make sure of how they go about it.

Commissioner Johnson was now present again via Zoom. Commissioners Fowler and Shorey reviewed with her tower presentation and their discussion on homelessness funding. Commissioner Johnson mentioned that she believed there was funding at the state level for housing like this. Coastal County Workforce is currently discussing “affordable housing”, or “workable” housing for people who are not in the really low income but can’t afford a house in the town they work, to subsidize them. There are all kinds of grant out there.

The Commissioners also noted that some town citizens have been contacting the County to use the ARPA funds to assist towns with enhancing broadband.

****W. Shorey moved, B. Johnson seconded to adjourn the court session at 11:43 a.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by *Barbara L. Arseneau* Waldo County Clerk
Barbara L. Arseneau