# COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

Wednesday, September 4, 2024

MEETING STARTS AT 3:00 PM

**SOMERSET COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS**

**Present: Commissioners:** Robert Sezak, John Alsop, Cyp Johnson and Scott Seekins were present. Commissioner Joel Stetkis joined the meeting via Zoom.
**Staff**: Tim Curtis, Leanne Dickey, David Spencer, Sheriff Dale Lancaster, Patrick Dolan, Mike Smith, and Tammy Barker.
**Public**: Jake Freudberg with the Morning Sentinel

**A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Pledge was observed.

**B. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 3pm.

**C. MINUTES:**

**Resolution 24 - 175: To Accept the Minutes of August 21, 2024.**

Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to Accept the Minutes of August 21, 2024.
Second: Commissioner Johnson
Vote: Motion Carries 5-0

**D. WORKSHOP:**

**1. Discuss funding for AXON Body Cameras:** Finance Director Patrick Dolan and Sheriff Lancaster met with County Administrator Curtis to review available funds to enter into a service contract with AXON beginning in the current fiscal year. Working on the assumption of a price of $100,000 per year, Patrick identified sufficient savings in the Sheriff's budget and the Jail budget. Currently $56,000 is budgeted for Watchguard cameras and software, which would be replaced by AXON products so the net increase to the County would be approximately $44,000 annually. Commissioner Stetkis noted that this technology should result in savings in overtime and overall stress on the deputies.

Sheriff Lancaster is also pursuing grant funding that will offset the cost of the AXON contract. Commissioner Sezak confirmed that this agreement will provide for new vehicle cameras as well as body cameras. Commissioner Alsop asked if there had been discussion with the District Attorney's office regarding the artificial intelligence drafting the initial reports. Sheriff Lancaster confirmed that they had been in conversation with the DA's office.

**2. Employee Handbook Review (Vacation Time/Health Insurance Buyout):** Administrator Curtis reviewed a brief history of vacation time offered to non-union employees over the past 10 years. The benefit has varied greatly and currently no vacation is offered at employment for six months, and up to seven weeks of vacation is offered after 20 years of service. The Administrator is recommending that a week of vacation be offered after 90 days of employment and to grandfather the seven weeks with the seven current non-union staff members and cap the number of weeks at six (240 hours). The consensus was to make note of this to be reviewed in the final review of the handbook.

At the August 7th meeting, Commissioner Sezak recommended that the Board consider amending the Health Insurance buyout to make it consistent with some of the recently negotiated union contracts. The handbook states that an employee can receive a buyout equivalent to four months of the benchmark premium for individual coverage as long as they can provide proof of insurance elsewhere. Current contracts with FOP and Teamsters provide a buyout value of six months. The consensus of the Commissioners was to make note of this to be reviewed in the final review of the handbook.

**3. Discuss Agenda Format (Department Head Reports):** Commissioner Johnson had asked that the format for meeting agendas be discussed in a workshop. He asked if Department Head Reports needed to be on every agenda. The consensus of the board was to have Department Heads submit reports to the County Administrator to be included in Commissioner Packets prior to the meeting. Department Heads would not be expected to attend every meeting unless there was a workshop or action item that involved their department.

**E. PUBLIC HEARING:** None

**F. PUBLIC COMMENT:** (To allow members of the public to comment or reserve time to speak on an upcoming agenda item.)

**G. NEW AGENDA ITEMS:** (Commissioners Only): None

**H. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:** In addition to his written report, County Administrator Curtis shared with the Commissioners the results of reviewing the four bids for the LED lighting replacement project at the Courthouse. The highest and lowest bids were not considered due to incomplete bid documents, leaving the low bid from IKIO in Indianapolis and Quality Electric from Skowhegan. The local bid (Quality) was $14,000 higher than IKIO who installs light fixtures that they manufacture. IKIO is doing a LED replacement project at the City Hall in Waterville this fall.

The County Administrator also shared what he had found out regarding spending Community Benefit funds on private roads. David Spencer had provided some documentation showing that three non-profits negotiated $10,000 a year-payments from the Bingham Wind Project for

20 years or the life of the project whichever is shorter. This would explain where the former Commissioners came up with the idea of reimbursing road maintenance costs to the Camp Owners Association(s) impacted by the wind towers near Mayfield and Kingsbury Ponds.

In speaking with TIF attorney Jonathan Pottle with Eaton Peabody last week, Administrator Curtis said that it is still unclear as to whether spending Community Benefit funds on private roads is absolutely prohibited, but Pottle recommended staying within the parameters of projects that would benefit the public such as erosion control measures for camp roads as outlined by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Commissioners thanked the Administrator for the follow up and asked that he relay this information to the Camp Owners Association.

**I. FINANCE REPORTING: Finance Director Patrick Dolan** reported that the first few months of the fiscal year are showing favorable balances to the General Fund and the Jail Fund, mainly due to unfilled positions in the Sheriff's Office and Jail. Patrick did mention that in the past few months the average number of inmates being boarded from other counties and federal inmates has been below the budgeted amount. As of today, the numbers have come back closer to budget, but this is a source of revenue that needs to be monitored. Patrick also mentioned that the audit of the FY24 financials has begun and should go smoothly.

**J. DEPARTMENT HEADS: Sheriff Lancaster** introduced Michael Welch as the new SCJ Administrator. Major Welch said he is excited to hit the ground running. The Sheriff noted that several Chevy Tahoe's with Police Packages are still be held for a recall. Three deputies are currently being trained at the Academy, and deputies and detectives were involved in a significant cocaine bust in the past week.

**U/T Coordinator Dave Spencer** has been on the road in the U/T replacing signs and updating addresses. He continues to collect data for FEMA regarding damage from winter storms and he will facilitate a TIF Committee meeting on Monday September 9th to review a request for funding.

**EMA Director Mike Smith** had provided information regarding dam safety and emergency response training in the County. MEMA has approved the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and it has been passed on to FEMA for approval. There are several towns waiting to submit for Hazard Mitigation funds.

**Communications Director Tammy Barker** reported 7,322 calls for service in August (2100 911 calls). The new generator has been placed at the Courthouse and they hope to finish the install this weekend. Talks have begun with the State to co-locate radio towers on Moose Mountain, and the Comm Center will host a luncheon for the Friendly Callers program on September 24 at noon.

Commissioner Johnson asked if Tammy had talked with Madison Fire about concerns over not getting calls. Tammy said some of the concerns were out of the County's control, but that Rusty with Yankee Communications would be coming to the next Fire Chief's meeting.

**K. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**L. NEW BUSINESS:**

**Resolution 24-176: To award the contract for the Somerset Courthouse LED Lighting Replacement Project.**
Motion: Commissioner Johnson motioned to award the contract for the Somerset Courthouse LED Lighting Replacement Project to IKIO of Indianapolis Indiana for a price of $64,221.00.
Second: Commissioner Seekins
Vote: Motion carries 4-1 (Alsop)

**Resolution 24-177: To authorize the Sheriff to move forward with the AXON service contract for body cameras.**
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to authorize the Sheriff to move forward with the AXON service contract for body cameras.
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: Motion carries 5-0

**Resolution 24-178: To pay the following amounts from Community Benefit Funds for completion of Matching Grant Projects.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Mercer Historical Society** | **$4,000 (Heat Pumps)** |
| **Maine Laboratories** | **$5,000 (PFAS Treatment)** |

Motion: Commissioner Johnson motioned to pay the following amounts from Community Benefit Funds for completion of Matching Grant Projects.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mercer Historical Society | $4,000 (Heat Pumps) |
| Maine Laboratories | $5,000 (PFAS Treatment) |

Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: Motion carries 5-0

**Resolution 24-179: To approve the hiring of Shelby Ames as Patrol Deputy for the Somerset County Sheriff's Office.**
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to approve the hiring of Shelby Ames as Patrol Deputy for the Somerset County Sheriff's Office.
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: Motion carries 5-0

**M. CAPITAL RESERVE EXPENDITURES:** None

**N. UNORGANIZED TERRITORY:** None

**O. WARRANTS:**

**Resolution 24-180: To approve the Treasurer's Warrant for General Fund, SCJ, and Unorganized Territories:**

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|---|---|
| **General Fund** | **$ 49,059.38** |
| **SCJ** | **$141,591.20** |
| **Unorganized Terr.** | **$ 20,331.46** |
| **Total** | **$210,982.04** |

Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to approve the Treasurer's Warrant for the General Fund, SCJ, and Unorganized Territories in the amounts shown in the resolution.
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: Motion carried 5-0

**P. MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION ITEMS:** (Commissioners Only): Commissioner Sezak said he would like to make sure that when TIF or Community Benefit Committees review applications for grant funding, that applicants are notified and invited to attend those meetings.

**Q. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Title 1, Section 405 (6) (A) Personnel/SCJ**

Motion: Commissioner Johnson motioned to go into executive session under Title 1, Section 405 (6) (A) Personnel/ SCJ
Second: Commissioner Seekins
Vote: Motion carries 5-0
The Commissioners entered into executive session at 4:00p.m.

The Commissioners came out of executive session at 4:14p.m.
Motion: Commissioner Seekins made the motion to accept the Sheriff's recommendation to terminate the SCJ Deputy Administrator, effective immediately.
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Discussion: The consensus of the Commissioners was that the employee was afforded the opportunity to be present for the executive session, and that the employee's constitutional due process and other legal rights were honored in this process.
Vote: Motion carries 5-0

**R. RECESS TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS:** The warrant and other items were signed.

**S. ADJOURN:** Meeting adjourned at 4:20p.m.