COMMISSIONER'S MINUTES

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

MEETING STARTED AT 3:00 PM

SOMERSET COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS

Present: Commissioners: John Alsop, Cyp Johnson, Scott Seekins, and Robert Sezak
Commissioner Joel Stetkis was absent
Staff: Tim Curtis, Leanne Dickey, Sheriff Dale Lancaster, Pawel Bialczak, Patrick Dolan, David Spencer and Mike Smith

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

C. MINUTES:

Resolution 23 – 220: To Accept the Minutes of October 18, 2023
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to Accept the Minutes of October 18, 2023
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: 4-0

D. PUBLIC HEARING: None

E. PUBLIC COMMENT: (To allow members of the public to comment or reserve time to speak on an upcoming agenda item): None

F. WORKSHOP:

1. Continue Discussion of Cost Savings Strategy (Jail Solar Array): In response to questions raised at the previous meeting, County Administrator Curtis provided a summary of the impact of the State's Net Energy Billing program. This program requires CMP to pay a tariff rate of $.235 per kWh generated from small-medium scale solar arrays. CMP then passes these stranded costs along to customers at a rate of about $.0125 per kWh. As a result, each CMP customer pays about 4.3% of their bill to help subsidize the cost of solar in Maine.

If the SCJ were to build a solar array to help offset energy costs, it could result in budget savings of about $100,000 per year.

The consensus of the Commissioners was to continue to pursue options to save energy costs for the jail including a purchase power agreement either with an existing solar array or from entering into a partnership with a new solar build.

2. Discuss Personnel Policy Items

a. Section 5.6 Resignation: According to the most recent update to the Personnel Policy approved in December 2022, the Commissioners must approve a request for an employee to leave prior to the end of a ten-day notice. County Administrator Curtis recommends adding the following language in the case of unique circumstances. **"***Should a Department Head seek to provide terms of separation outside those listed in the policy, those terms must be approved by the County Commissioners."*

The consensus was to bring that language change to a future meeting for approval.

b. Section 9.4 Exit Interviews: At the previous meeting there was a question regarding the process of Exit Interviews. The Administrator noted that there was only one small reference in Policy, simply to state that the *County reserves the right to conduct them.* HR Director Leanne Dickey provided the Commissioners with some recent history on exit interviews and the documents used.

The consensus of the Board was to move language on Exit Interviews from Section 9 to Section 5.6 under Resignations, and to mention that the intent of the County is to gain valuable information from employees.

c. Section 9.5 Sick Leave & Vacation Donation: The County Administrator wanted to bring to the Commissioners attention a couple of items related to sick and vacation time. There was a provision that allows for a sick leave bank to be created by keeping hours on the books earned by people no longer employed by the County. This language was approved by the Commissioners in October of 2022, but was never included in the current policy document. There are a number of references polices that allow for active employees to donate sick time. Administrator Curtis said he is in favor of leaving the policy as it is and not incorporating the sick leave bank from former employees. The Commissioners agreed to leaving section 9.5 as is.

d. Section 11.3 Vacation Leave/Earned Pay Leave: Current policy allows for employees to carry over 120 hours of unused vacation time to the next anniversary date. For those employed for over 20 years, the carryover is 160 hours. In some cases, this can leave an employee with eleven weeks of paid vacation (440 hours), and it is proving very difficult for some employees to take

that much time off. There is no provision in the policy that allows for a case-by-case review, only that those additional hours will not be carried forward. The Commissioners and Department heads agreed that this topic needs further discussion.

The new State Budget includes a provision for Paid Family Medical Leave which will go into effect in 2026. This would allow for an employee to be paid 90% of their wages (up to $1,037 per week for up to 12 weeks).

A State law passed in 2021 requires that all employers must provide at least 40 hours of Earned Paid Leave. This would apply to the County's reserve, per diem and some part time employees that don't earn sick time. Administrator Curtis recommends putting some language regarding this policy into the Employee Handbook.

Lastly, the Administrator made reference to Resolution 23 – 223 on the agenda asking for clarification on Christmas and the New Year. Policy says when a holiday falls on a Saturday it is observed on a Friday and Sunday holidays are observed on Monday. This year Christmas Eve is a Sunday and a paid holiday, New Year's Eve is a Sunday and by policy a half day holiday. Since Christmas and New Years Day occupy the Monday, the Administrator is asking for clarification to have Friday December 22th off and Friday December 29th a half day.

G. NEW AGENDA ITEMS: (Commissioners Only) None

H. FINANCE REPORTING: Patrick Dolan reported that the finances from the month of October are not complete, but the County continues to run favorable even though job vacancies are slowly being filled.

I. ADMINISTRATOR REPORT: Tim Curtis submitted his report and wanted to give the Commissioners a more detailed update on the possible CMP Corridor TIF. He and attorney Jon Pottle met with DECD to discuss two options due to the fact that the current valuation of the land in the corridor is valued at more than 10% of the entire U/T valuation. Statute requires that TIF projects only involve 5% or less of the U/T total value. This leaves the County with two options; one is a single payer TIF that would allow for money only to be spent in the 9 townships impacted by the corridor. This would avoid the 5% threshold, but not allow for spending throughout the U/T. The second option would be to capture up to 5% of the project value and have a smaller amount of money that could be spent throughout the U/T.

J. DEPARTMENT HEADS: U/T Director Dave Spencer reported that contracts have been settled for winter maintenance on Lake Moxie Road in the U/T. He had been waiting to make sure the County and the Forks were on the same page since they share the maintenance on that road. He also reported that he provided documents to attorneys pertaining to the arbitration over Kingsbury's refusal to pay for a portion of a salt/sand shed build over a year ago.

I/T Director Pawel Bialczak reported that the website update is approximately 50% complete and that funding has come in from Homeland Security to update cyber security firewalls.

Communications/EMA Director Mike Smith reported 6670 calls in October including 1914 '911' calls. The Homeland Security FY23 grant has been approved, including $89,000 for cyber security updates, $30,000 for Fairfield Fire and $7,500 to upgrade outside lights at the Comm Center. Recently, the Comm Center hosted a luncheon for volunteers with the County's Friendly Caller Program, and Mike continues to convene meetings with Jackman and other EMA officials regarding the traffic anticipated for the solar eclipse in April.

Sheriff Lancaster reported 390 calls for service last week. He noted that long time Franklin County Sheriff Dennis Pike had passed away. (Jail Administrator Major Mike Pike's father). The Sheriff mentioned that there are currently 6 corrections officers in training. With staffing on the increase, the Sheriff mentioned that there will be a conversation forthcoming about opening up B-Pod at the jail.

K. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

L. NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution 23 – 221: To authorize voluntary participation among County employees in a Heart of Maine Workplace Campaign.
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to authorize voluntary participation among County employees in a Heart of Maine Workplace Campaign.
Second: Commissioner Johnson
Vote: 4-0

Resolution 23 – 222: To accept the resignation of Reserve County Deputy James Lyman
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to accept the resignation of Reserve County Deputy James Lyman
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: 4-0

Resolution 23 – 223: To clarify the fall Holiday Schedule
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to clarify the fall Holiday Schedule to observe Christmas Eve on Friday December 22, 2023 and New Years Eve by closing at noon on Friday December 29, 2023.
Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: 4-0

Resolution 23 – 224: To accept the FY23 Homeland Security Grant in the amount of $126,511.04, and the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Grant in the amount of $10,800
Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to accept the FY23 Homeland Security Grant in the amount of $126,511.04, and the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Grant in the amount of $10,800

Second: Commissioner Alsop
Vote: 4-0

M. CAPITAL RESERVE EXPENDITURES: None

N. UNORGANIZED TERRITORY:

Resolution 23 – 225: To authorize the Contract for Snow Plowing for the Township of Moxie Gore.
Motion: Commissioner Johnson motioned to authorize the Contract for Snow Plowing for the Township of Moxie Gore for a total of $210,301.82 over three years.
Second: Commissioner Seekins
Vote: 4-0

O. WARRANTS:

Resolution 23 – 226: To approve the Treasurer's Warrant for General Fund, SCJ, Unorganized Territory and TIF U/T

General Fund:	**$ 59,220.26**
Jail:	**$ 52,280.45**
U/T:	**$160,762.44**
TIF/UT:	**$132,836.15**
Total:	**$405,099.30**

Motion: Commissioner Seekins motioned to approve the Treasurer's Warrants for the General Fund, SCJ, UT and TIF Community Benefit in the amounts shown in the resolution
Second: Commissioner Johnson
Vote: 4-0

P. MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION ITEMS (Commissioners Only): None

Q. EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

R. ADJOURN:

Commissioner Seekins motioned to adjourn at 4:30 PM