

STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

District

- 1 Vacant
2 Kevin J. Kelley (207) 306-9225
3 Timothy A. Parker (207) 306-9232

Barbara L. Arseneau
County Clerk



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Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION

JANUARY 8, 2026

10:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Kevin Kelley, and Timothy Parker. Staff present were Treasurer Owen Smith, EMA Director Dale Rowley, Finance Director Kari Hunt, IT Director County Clerk Barbara Arseneau took minutes. Also present was Morrill Selectman Randy Place.

1. Welcome / Call to Order: Commissioner called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Review / Revise Agenda

K. Kelley stated that the agenda would be changed to include a moment of silence for the passing of Commissioner Betty Johnson, who served for over 15 years. She will surely be missed, along with her dedication, commitment and extensive historical knowledge of the County. He quoted Hemingway, "People die twice; once when they take their last breath, and again when people stop saying their name." He asked people to use her name often.

3. Consent Agenda

- a) Finance Report
- b) Minutes: March 27, 2025, December 16, 2025, December 18, 2025
- c) VOTE: Consideration of action to approve the consent agenda

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to remove the following from the consent agenda: Finance Report, Minutes from December 16, 18, and March 27, 2025, minutes from the Consent Agenda for edits. Unanimous.**

4. Nominations for 2026 Chair:

Nomination: **K. Kelley nominated himself as Commissioner Chair. Nominations ceased.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to serve as 2026 Commissioner Chair. Unanimous.**

5. Assignment of duties:

Commissioner Liaison Departmental changes:

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to transfer from Commissioner Johnson's Departmental Liaison group to Commissioner Parker's Liaison group the District Attorney's Office, Registry of Deeds, and Emergency Management Agency. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to move any discussion of the 2026 budget until after the Hearing on Appeal of Property Taxes Abatement scheduled at 11:00 a.m. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the minutes from March 27, December 16, and December 18, 2025 with edits. Unanimous.**

4. Public Comment

None

5. Department Reports/Requests - Presented by Finance Director Kari Hunt

5.1 Finance

Finance Director Kari Hunt requested that the Treasurer position resume the responsibility of auditing the warrants bi-monthly, which B. Johnson was doing. T. Parker said he would make the motion, but would like to have someone outside the office review and audit the warrants. K. Hunt explained that this was not an actual audit but a checking of the warrants. T. Parker understood and would still like someone from outside to do it.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve for the Treasurer to resume reviewing all the warrants. Unanimous.**

K. Hunt asked for a motion to pay the first quarter of Jail Inmate Housing for 2026 to Somerset County in the amount of \$375,000.00 from Budget Year 2025.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay the first quarter of Inmate Housing for 2026 to Somerset County in the amount of \$375,000 from Budget year 2025.** Discussion: K. Kelley asked if this included medical expense, and K. Hunt said she didn't know what detail is included in the breakdown. **Unanimous.**

K. Hunt asked for a motion to pay \$51,811.00 to CivicPlus (website software) and \$29,000.00 to Edmonds (accounting software) from the 2025 budget.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay CivicPlus \$51,811.00, and Edmonds \$29,000 from 2025 for a total of \$80,811.00.** Discussion: K. Kelley said CivicPlus is new website software for the public and also facilitate minutes getting out sooner. When asked when CivicPlus could go live, K. Hunt said she would defer to the IT Director. K. Kelley asked when Edmonds could go live, K. Hunt said it would be 2/1/2027 and she would ask if there was any way to move that up. K. Kelley asked to be involved on the call with Edmonds so he would know the timeline and data being transferred. For clarity, K. Hunt said the accounting software is to replace the current inadequate accounting software that doesn't allow much data retrieval. **Unanimous.**

EMA Director Dale Rowley was present. K. Hunt said she received a call that the D4H tracking software used by EMA has been purchased by another company. This contract price is grandfathered and is due for payment before the next commissioners court, so it was requested to be paid by ACH in a timely fashion to avoid losing the grandfathered status. D. Rowley explained usage by towns and Central Maine Power as a collective collaborative tool to record emergency incidents and costs, etc. Payment is \$4,410.00 and would be from the 2026 budget while staying within 2025 budget parameters.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay the invoice for D4H software in the amount of \$4,410.00. Unanimous.**

K. Hunt noted that the federal mileage rate has gone up from .70 cents to 72.5 cents. There are contractual obligations that require paying the federal rate of \$72.5 cents.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to pay the federal mileage reimbursement rate of 72.5 cents.** Discussion: T. Parker said that because of the budget, he believed mileage reimbursements should be done away with for everybody – or at least the elected positions. Employees must receive mileage reimbursements for traveling. K. Hunt asked if this was all elected positions, and if this could be done statutorily, B. Arseneau said that she didn't know, but counties were advised years ago that if there aren't records of mileage reimbursements, it's hard to prove to insurance when an employee had an accident while driving on county business. T. Parker said the employees should receive a mileage reimbursement but he didn't feel the Commissioners needed it. He said he would approve it but he would not be submitting anymore for mileage because of the budget cuts. K. Kelley said he was not clear on the statute. B. Arseneau recommended researching because she wasn't sure employees could be asked to drive for county business without being reimbursed. T. Parker said he had moved away from employees, he said elected officials, and elected officials are not employees. Employees have the right for mileage. He felt that because of budget cuts they had an obligation to reduce the budget and the Commissioners should not receive mileage reimbursement. K. Kelley asked if T. Parker would be willing to table this until receiving a legal review and T. Parker agreed. T. Parker said that the mileage rate they were giving employees was different than the Commissioners anyway and that the Commissioners had been receiving higher mileage reimbursement than the employees. K. Hunt stated that the mileage reimbursement has been the same for all at

.70 cents per mileage. T. Parker said he was pretty sure that they were getting a higher rate than the employees because he recalled talking about it during a workshop. K. Kelley asked if he could restate the motion to approve the new rate for employees and T. Parker said that his motion was to approve the 72.5 cents, and then got into a discussion and he said that he felt that the Commissioners should not be taking mileage. The motion was already to approve it, that they were in discussion now and they were two totally different things. **Unanimous.**

2026 Tax Anticipation Note:

Present was Attorney Timothy Pease from Rudman Winchell to sign the documents needed for the Tax Anticipation Note. He read into the record a Resolution of the Waldo County Commissioners, a copy of which is attached at the end of the minutes.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the resolution:** Discussion: K. Kelley asked if this could be done even though there is no 2026 budget. T. Pease said yes. The budget the County is working under now is based on the 2025 numbers. **Unanimous.** The documents were signed and notarized.

a) MCRCC (Jail) Warrant 01/08/2026 – The 01/08/2026 Accounts payable warrant was \$480,902.98 and the 12/31/2025 payroll was \$52,678.36 for a total of \$533,581.34.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the MCRCC (Jail) 01/08/2026 accounts payable in the amount of \$480,902.98 and the 12/31/2025 payroll of \$52,678.36 for a total of \$533,581.34. Unanimous.**

b) County Warrant 01/08/2026 – The 01/08/2026 Accounts Payable warrant was \$215,590.45 and the 12/31/2025 payroll was \$202,299.97 for a total of \$417,890.42.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the County Accounts Payable warrant of \$215,590.45 and the 12/31/2025 payroll of \$202,299.97 for a total of \$417,890.42. Unanimous.**

c) OPIOID Warrant 01/08/2026 – Zero. \$0.00. Balance as of 12/31/2025 is \$500,666.02, interest to date is \$27,320.14.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the OPIOID Warrant at Zero. Unanimous.**

d) 2026 Tax Anticipation Note Paperwork

5.2 Waldo County Emergency Management Agency

a) Emergency Management Agency Shelter Agreement – EMA Director Dale Rowley presented this contract which will permit the County to use the Waldo Town Community Center as an overnight shelter.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to accept the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency Shelter Agreement with the Town of Waldo. Unanimous.**

5.3 Communications Tower Contract Discussion

Mike Larrivee was present and mentioned that this had already been discussed at the previous court session. He is still working to resolve the matter.

5.4 County Clerk Report – Presented by County Clerk Barbara Arseneau

a) Correspondence

Notice of Layout and Taking of certain parcel(s) of land in the Town of Brooks owned by Raymond Shute, et al.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to accept notice of layout and taking for town Brooks. Unanimous.**

b) Miscellaneous

5.4 Human Resources Report – presented by Human Resources Director Tracy Benton

a) Pay step increases to be noted

- Patrol Deputy Elijah Stone is due the 6-month pay step to the fully burdened pay rate of \$31.84 per hour effective December 23, 2025. Noted by the Commissioners.

- Patrol Deputy Anthony Holzhauser has successfully completed Maine Criminal Justice Academy training and will move from non-certified to certified status effective December 19, 2025 at the fully burdened pay rate of \$33.67 per hour. Noted by Commissioners.

b) Miscellaneous - None

5.5 Human Resources Request: Executive Session for discussion of the National Correctional Employees Union potential collective bargaining agreement change. MRS Title 1§405(6)(D).

****Motion: T. Parker /K. Kelley to go into executive session at 10:36 a.m. for discussion of a potential change in the National Correctional Employees collective bargaining agreement according to MRS Title 1§405(6)(D). Unanimous.**

The Commissioners resumed public session at 10:39 a.m.

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the MOU amending the NCEU National Correctional Employees Union contract to state that holiday accruals earned in the last full pay period of a calendar year shall be accounted for and accrued in that calendar year. Unanimous.**

The Commissioners recessed at 10:40 a.m.

6. The Commissioners resumed public session at 10:57 a.m. and recessed the court session to hold the Appeal for Abatement of Property Taxes – Pet. #387 Claire Hamilton vs. Town of Brooks. (Separate minutes for this hearing.)

The Commissioners returned to public session at 11:41 a.m.

T. Parker commented that January 9, 2026 is annually established in 2015 for law enforcement officers and asked for a moment of silence.

Budget Discussion: K. Kelley requested time the Finance Director read the changes to the 2026 Budget. K. Hunt read the following from the 2026 Budget Reductions and Adjustments Summary:

All department budgets with personnel were reduced by one pay period since 27th pay period was paid from 2025 budget.

1010: Emergency Management Agency: Reduced by \$14,467.45

Also reviewed grants amount over the years that the EMA Director has brought in – roughly \$10 million. Three vehicles: 2018 Jeep (paid by grant) Questions: Are there any grants outstanding that are due? Unknown.

1015 – District Attorney

Positions are statutory requirements.

1020 – P/T position overtime removed, liability insurance reduced to firm number, dues reduced for same, Capital Outlay.

1021 – Human Resources – 27th pay period

1025 – note for minutes – Office Associate position was moved from Commissioners to Finance Director. Will be shared as work level permits with H.R. and County Clerk. Accountant also highly recommended by auditor. If those two positions hadn't been added, it would have been below the COLA increase.

1030 – Personnel savings 27th pay period, and 15 lines were added to this budget. The Jail 72-hour flat, asbestos tarred roof has issues and could develop issues. K. Kelley stated for the record that he's concerned about that

roof. The SMRT study estimated \$220,000.00 to address that roof. T. Parker suggested adding a reserve called "Major Renovations" It was noted that the State Auditor must be notified about reserve changes.

1035 – Reduced by 27th pay period. Also paid CivicPlus and Edmonds in the amount of \$89,000.00 from 2025 budget. J. Bailey said Seacoast Security was purchased by another company and \$7,000.00 was paid from 2025 for that. Also adding a new position because this is a one person department. Named Finance, H.R., IT, and County Clerk as one-person departments.

1065 – Reduced by 27th pay period. Freezing a vacant union position and not funding for 2026.

1070 – Reduced by 27th pay period.

1075 – Reduced by 27th pay period. Capital Outlay was reduced by \$21,500.00, and the Sheriff delayed his salary request and is taking only the 2.7% COLA.

Belfast Resident Eric Buch was present and asked if the error in the Sheriff's Department was fixed. It's the list of positions that are worth about \$290,000.00 in the original. Those increases were ignored. K. Hunt said she and the H. R. Director had gone through all the numbers. The budget had been presented correctly to the budget committee. It was possible that the work sheet listing all the employees might have been incorrect, but the main budget sheet was correct.

1076 – Dispatch - \$56,660.00 – reducing the 27th pay period and freezing vacant union position and not for 2026. This budget has been paying for a program for \$17,000.00 for communications.

1080 Special Appropriations was reduced from \$12,500.00 to \$0.00 because they were not part of the departmental operating budget and not required by statute. The Communications Center has been paying for some software for the fire department for about \$17,000.00. T. Parker said he would not go along with that.

1090 Audit – reduced to the original Commissioners' request of \$25,000.00. The Budget Committee had increased it to \$30,000.00 but she brought it back down.

1095 Debt Services

2000 interest reduced by \$10,000.000 based on the goal and the historical data.

2005 U. of M. Cooperative Extension – this is required by statute, so she did not reduce it.

2025 Employee Benefits: In the past, what was seen in the budget was only the premiums part of the cost. Now they are looking at all the costs for claims, etc. Also some of the costs were in the Jail budget, and that has been moved such as dental insurance, stop Loss, weekly claims actual, weekly claims overage (amount the County has to pay, which is more than what is being taken in from the premiums paid.) There are, she believes, 122 covered lives, every single thing they go to the doctor for, the County has to pay. Money comes in through premiums and the overage is more than what is being taken in. This has never been explained before and now the budget truly reflect all the costs. The employee contributions are listed as an offset. The Commissioners had requested \$4.9 million was and committee reduced it. The original request \$6,361,350.56. \$1,323,241.01 has been reduced out of it. Actual information isn't usually available until later in the year. The risk will be the weekly claims actual. Stop loss premiums have increased substantially. Have had to increase the risk from \$120,000.00 to \$130,000.00 per covered life. The County now has to take on an additional \$10,000.00 the County before the stop loss kicks in. The premium cost is lower but there is more liability on the County.

K. Kelley said there are three open positions, and they are being estimating single vs family. It is a \$13,000.00 difference per person between single coverage and family coverage. The Office Assistant and she calculated to the penny for every single benefit line item. MainePERS is driven by salaries. The also factored O/T, stipends, etc. and all contractual items to get a real number. Three (3) different MainePERS programs – AC, 2C, and 3C. Group life has been calculated to the penny. FICA (Federal Income Tax) has been calculated to the penny with increases, overtime, stipends, and contractual obligations. MPFML is not being paid until May of 2026 and has resulted in some savings \$7,950.00 for County; \$2,477.94 for Jail. Regarding the estimate for worker's comp estimate, they were only off by \$300.00.

2035 Waldo County Soil & Water Conservation District requested \$25,000, so she removed it.

2040 Records Preservation – no change at Zero.

2045 Reserves – no change.

K. Hunt said she provided the Commissioners with two options, one without Special Appropriations and one with Special Appropriations included in the budget total.

****T. Parker/K. Kelley said he was refused and would like to have the number that is contractual through unions so it would be known which part of the total cannot be touched by the Commissioners. Discussion:** T. Parker wanted to know exactly how much “untouchable” for the Commissioners would be so it would be clear for the Budget Committee. K. Hunt that “contractual” includes many different types of buyouts and stipends. K. Kelley said pull the salary numbers, rather than guessing at the variables. K. Kelley agreed this would be very helpful for the Budget Committee to understand. **Friendly edit by K. Kelley and T. Parker to choose Option #2 at \$14,996,654.99 and to add the salary number of the unions in the percentage. Unanimous.**

Comment from the Public. Treasurer O. Smith said that the departments have been asked to trim and cut the budgets. This is the most transparent budget he's seen in 25 years of county work. There have been questions in the past about why there were such low increases, and “now it's come to roost.” K. Kelley said that the former Commissioners did not leave the County with any long-term debt, and that is something to note.

The Commissioners received the 2022 draft audit and it has been sent to the Budget Chair. 11 items have to do with fixed assets, long-term debt questions, paying out unused leave time, etc. There are no Material Issues.

O. Smith said that there are outside agencies that are included in the budget. For years as Communications Director, he was asked to cut his budget. Meanwhile, these outside agencies continue to be funded. He felt that if this is going to continue with such cuts, the outside agencies should be cut from the budget.

Morrill Selectman Randy Place commented about the amount of grants over a number of years. He heard position was paid by grant. K. Hunt said yes, but that grant ended and the position has been let go. The other position is partly paid by grant. The one whose position was partly funded has kindly continued to work regardless. In the future, keep in mind those reoccurring costs that never go away if the grant goes away.

T. Parker said that it's imperative that the public knows that both commissioners will put the county and the public first. He thanked Betty and Kevin for all the work they've done as he hasn't been able to be there. K. Kelley thanked and noted that not always agreeing is a healthy way to be and brings a different perspective.

7. The Commissioners adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

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