STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

District
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Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
FEBRUARY 5, 2026
9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Kevin Kelley and Timothy Parker. Staff present were Human Resource Director Tracy Benton, Finance Director Kari Hunt, Communications Director Mike Larrivee, Facilities Director Chris Bryant, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau and Danielle Murray to take minutes. Staff present via Zoom were Register of Probate Sharon Peavey, Register of Deeds Stacy Grant, and Treasurer Own Smith. Eric Buch and Breanna Pinkham Bebb from the public were also present.

1. Welcome / Call to Order: Commissioner K. Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and noted that the Commissioners have revised the start time of their to 9:00 a.m. and said notified of the revised start time to 9:00 a.m.

2. Review / Revise Agenda

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to revise the agenda after going into executive session in 5.4, they were adding section D. another executive session for discussion of a labor contract regarding the Communications M.A.P. Association under MRS title 1§4&5D. Unanimous.**

3. Consent Agenda

a) Finance Report
b) Minutes: January 8, 2026, January 22, 2026
c) VOTE: Consideration of action to approve the consent agenda

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Consent agenda. Unanimous.**

4. Public Comment

E. Buch said that the revised budget is not on agenda and was curious as to why. E. Buch understands that the commission has committed to provide the budget committee a budget by tomorrow. K. Kelley advised that timeline has slipped as they are waiting on numbers from a few more departments. K. Kelly spoke with chair Bob Kurek yesterday and the meeting is being postponed to a later unknown date.

E. Buch stated that during the last Commissioners Court Session on January 22, 2026 he identified 4 items that he wanted made public prior to budget committee meeting, and received indication from K. Kelley that those seemed to be reasonable requests:

1. Draft of the 12/12/25 public hearing minutes made public in advance of last week's budget committee meeting. K. Kelley asked if those minutes had been approved and B. Arseneau said they were not because the budget committee had skipped that, so they are done but still a draft. B. Arseneau had understood that E. Buch was requesting them for himself, so she sent them to him. He said he was requesting them to be made public on the County's website.
2. Narrative explaining budget reductions for upcoming budget meeting. The County is still working those.
3. Any communication between the budget committee and commissioners for the 22 questions from the budget committee. E. Buch has the information, but wants it made public.
4. Asked why the 2022 audit wasn't on the website. (There was a brief pause in recording due to technical

difficulties.) K. Kelley advised that the County's completed audits, including 2022, are available on the State Auditors website, and the County's website should direct people there.

E. Buch stated that the County had 6 weeks and there was still vital information not given to the Committee until they met again. K. Kelley noted that at times information requests are received from the Budget Committee 1-2 hours before a meeting and we're hustling to get that information to them. E. Buch said those questions were received in plenty of time. He quoted a French saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same," and stated that the "Sins of the past" the Commissioners referenced on a couple of occasions in public meetings are very much the sins of the present - lack of transparency in this county government and organization. He felt communication should be not just to the Budget Committee but with the public at large.

Breanna Pinkham Bebb spoke and introduced herself as currently a member of the Budget Committee and the Northport Select Board but as of Monday night 2/9/2026 she will be finished with the Select Board Stated and would be sworn in as interim Commissioner on Tuesday 2/10/26. She wants to get started sooner rather than later which is why she was in attendance today and to observe and listen to the exchange and learn more about the work. She hopes to bring that to the commission and is excited to work with the commissioners.

5. Department Reports/Requests

5.1 Finance - Finance Director Kari Hunt.

a) **** Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the 2/5/26 MCRRC (Jail) Warrant in the amount of $97,458.83 and the 1/28/26 payroll in the amount of $45,156.22 for a total of $142,615.05. Unanimous.**

b) **** Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the 2/5/26 County Warrant in the amount of $217,873.40 and the 1/28/26 payroll in the amount of 191,271.73 for a total of $409,145.13. Unanimous.**

c) ****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the 2/5/26 OPIOID Warrant at $0.00. Unanimous.**

d) Requesting a County Credit Card for Human Resource Director Tracy Benton. The past the Human Resource Director had card and when she got done it was canceled. Requesting we give one with a $2000.00 limit.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to give Human Resource Director Tracy Benton a updated Credit Card with $2000.00 hard limit.**

e) IT Expenditures – IT still does not have a budget, there are still expenses (Microsoft Office, Zoho, and credit card) totaling $7942.00. T. Parker asked if funds would need to be pulled out of reserves and K. Hunt said the reserve she would recommend using is currently in the negative $114,000.00. There are some funds in Future Technology Reserve, and it would be a placeholder. T. Parker asked if all the bills due today are past a 30-day grace period or already on their 30-day grace period and was told there is one more warrant this month, and it would go on that warrant 2/19/26 and it's due the 25th. T. Parker if it was possible to schedule the budget before the 19th and K. Hunt had no idea. When asked whether interest would be charged if it was pushed to the 19th owed, K. Hunt said 1.5% interest rate would start accumulating if not paid by 2/22/26. Total bill amount is $4,260.45 at 1.5% interest. Currently have one invoice. E. Buch said he didn't think the budget would be changing any time soon. T. Parker said the little things were adding up and this is why the department was pushed to have a budget. He recommended paying it because to avoid interest.

****MOTION: T. Parker to pay this bill out of the recommended reserve with the stipulation that this be used as the example for our next budget meeting of the reason why an IT department budget has been proposed.**

K. Kelly asked if the IT reserve is in the negative and was told yes.

Motion died on the table.

f) Miscellaneous- Mileage reimbursement was tabled from the last meeting. The Commissioners tabled again to February 19, 2026 when the new commissioner is there.

6. Facilities Report

a) Sign Johnson Contract: Facilities Director Chris Bryant presented a service agreement for fire alarm panels to be in code. They originally said it would be a 9% increase. The contract had expired in November, it fell through the cracks, and Johnson didn't notify C. Bryant until after. Johnson reached out in early January and said that the County had a certain number of days to renew, C. Bryant told them he hadn't known it was expiring and was able to talk them down to a 5% increase. T. Parker noted that for the 2nd time in the last year C. Bryant saved the county money.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the CPQ-1164750 plant service agreement with patrols. Unanimous.**

7. <u>IT Report</u>

a) J-Sun Bailey Director of Information Technology presented. Battery backups need replacement. Funding needed is $877.80 (219.45 each) for a total of four (4). He requesting it come out of Communication Center Reserve account.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the battery backup replacement for the servers at the Comm. Center. K. Kelley made the friendly edit to take it out of the Communications Center Equipment Reserve. Unanimous.**

b) Communications Director M. Larrivee asked to speak. He had a board meeting yesterday, 2/4/26. This board consists of 12 people from the community. The Advisory Board for the community is made up of Firefighters, Police Chiefs, EMS Personnel, 2 are appointed; 1 from the City of Belfast (Pat Richards) and one is appointed by the Commissioners. This board does keep minutes, and they meet quarterly. He requested that the Commissioners appoint someone to the board. T. Parker and K. Kelley will ask for a couple of recommendations. This will be tabled until 2/19/26.

8. County Clerk Report

a) Correspondence – County Clerk Barbara Arseneau

B. Arseneau asked that the Commissioners please finalize who would serve as proxy on both the Maine County Commissioners Association Board of directors and the Risk Pool. K. Kelley tabled to 2/19/26 when the new Commissioner is present. K. Kelley has an idea that he wants to present about an ad hoc committee that's standing up by the County Commissioners Association.

b) Miscellaneous – Vote on the new Commissioners Court Sessions starting time.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to change the time and start the regular County Commissioners meetings at 9:00 a.m. Unanimous.** B. Pinkham Bebb thanked them for starting earlier.

c) Planning needs to start for the annual Spirit of America of America ceremony.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to conduct the Spirit of America Ceremony on April 16, 2026, during the court session. Unanimous.**

9. Commissioners Old Business

a) K. Kelley mentioned LD 2124 Emergency Shelters which potentially could take 1% from Deeds transfer tax to fund emergency shelters. K. Kelley would like to know what the 90% is being used for. Due to budget constraints, K. Kelly is against this.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to oppose this transfer and for the Commissioner Chair to co-sign with the Sheriff a letter in opposition to LD 2124.** Discussion: T. Parker said the State doesn't uphold what they are supposed to do in statute and mandating money for the counties. K. Kelley stated the soft number is about 14.7%. The State is not upholding their portion to the county. They should be subsidizing 20%. T. Parker said Waldo County has always been a fantastic partner, including with the Jail consolidation , and District 6 Collaboration. **Unanimous**

c) The Jail is one of the unseen drivers of rising property taxes. The Maine County Commissioners Association drafted a letter that they would like counties to publish that talks about jails and the funding gap across the state. The State is supposed to fund 90%. K. Kelley is leaving a copy for the County Clerk

10. Commissioners New Business

a) Miscellaneous – T. Parker set before the Commissioners in January and felt that it is very important to support local business exchange, support local business, and can be verbal support. B. Johnson felt it was more important to support the COGS and WCAP. Businesses are the County's friend.

E. Buch stated that he knew he was out of order but wanted to ask a question and was given permission by Chair Kelley. E. Buch stated that Senator Collins has earmarks of $250 million for recipients and noticed that the Sheriff's Office was listed. Was the County aware of this, did they sanction this proposal, and is this is the greatest need for an earmark from the State Senator? K. Kelley explained that it was for $688K of equipment, and it's not duplicate equipment. This was brought up in a public Budget Committee meeting. It's not listed in the budget.

K. Kelley noted that since 2006 EMA has raised over $10 million for Waldo County very successfully in the past but with all the turmoil in D.C. right now, holding grant funds and not appropriating, the process is really up in the air.

E. Buch asked since now the commitment has been made, if funds can be used or not. K. Kelley said that until the $688,000.00 cash is in hand, not a penny can be spent because it's not in the budget.

11. Human Resources Report T. Benton

a) Pay step Increases to be noted

- New Hire at Communications Center: They have selected a candidate, Chase Thayer, with a conditional offer at $24.44 per hour based on a successful background check. No start date as this is a conditional offer.

T. Parker asked for clarification whether this was this already in budget as there is an addition position that was frozen. There was brief discussion about this not being a new position but a back-fill and already built into the 2026 budget. Until the background check is passed, when asked, M. Larrivee stated that the position is currently being filled with all overtime.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley motion to approve the conditional hire offer to Chase Thayer as Dispatcher Trainee. Unanimous.**

- Promotion: Patrol Officer Aaron Santana to open detective position in the Sheriff's Office at the fully burdened rate of $35.28, which does not take effect till budget is passed.

****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the promotion of Aaron Santana to detective. Unanimous.**

b) T. Benton stated that previously the Commissioners discussed canceling MainePERS for the County Commissioners only. To withdraw, it would cost $2000.00. K. Kelley said he would leave it on the table, and it dies on the table. T. Parker said he wanted back-contributions for those months. T. Benton advised it had never stopped.

c) Executive Session for discussion of employment and compensation -MRS Title 1§405(A)(1)

****MOTION: K. Kelly/T. Parker to go into Executive Session at 9:54 a.m. for discussion employment and compensation as allowed by MRS Title 1§405(A)(1). Unanimous.**

Commissioners resumed public session at 10:08a.m.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve side bar agreement with MAP Comm. CTR. O/T and compensatory language. Unanimous.**

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker correction to salary scale in CBA. Unanimous. To approve union $1.00 wage increase for 2026 correction for CBA. Unanimous.**

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to adjourn at 10:09 a.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Danielle Murry Danielle Murry, Waldo County Office Associate