STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

District
1 Betty I. Johnson (207) 323-3767
2 Kevin J. Kelley (207) 306-9225
3 Timothy A. Parker (207) 306-9232

Barbara L. Arseneau
County Clerk

39-B Spring Street
Belfast, ME 04915

Phone (207) 338-3282
Fax (207) 338-6788
E-mail: countyclerk@waldocountyme.gov

Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL COURT SESSION
DECEMBER 23, 2025
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Betty Johnson (Chair), Kevin Kelley, and Tomothy Parker. Staff present were IT Director J-sun Bailey, Finance Director Kari Hunt, Human Resources Director Tracy Benton, Register of Deeds Stacy Grant, AFSCME Union Representative Probate Assistant Elena Donovan, EMA Director Dale Rowley, Sheriff Jason Trundy, and Treasurer Owen Smith by Zoom. Public Present: Randy Place from the Town of Morrill, and Chris Lewis of Thorndike, and Derek Samoluk of AFSCME Council 93.

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

Review / Revise Agenda
No agenda changes.

2. **Explanation of Proposed Pay Period Change for 2026**

Human Resources Director Tracy Benton presented a proposal related to cost savings for the proposed 2026 budget. Staff reviewed options to reduce expenditures and proposed shifting the January 1, 2026, payroll from the proposed 2026 budget year back into the 2025 budget. This would be accomplished by issuing the payroll with a pay date of December 31, 2025. This change would result in 2025 having an additional (27th) pay period and would reduce the proposed 2026 budget by approximately $235,000.00.

She further explained that insurance premiums are based on the number of pay periods. With 27 pay periods, employee insurance costs would increase by approximately $3.00 to $9.00 per paycheck. However, employees would pay the same total annual insurance amount for 2026, down to the penny. Employees were notified of the proposed change via email, and feedback has generally been favorable. Final approval rests with the Commissioners.

Commissioners Discussion:
K. Kelley asked whether insurance premiums would increase per pay period in 2026 and whether the total annual amount paid by employees would change. T. Benton confirmed that while the per-paycheck amount may vary, the total annual premium paid by employees would remain unchanged. K. Kelley asked whether any unions or non-union employees had raised concerns. T. Benton stated that only one union, AFSCME, was impacted. AFSCME had been contacted and was present to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to permit this one-time change. No other unions have responded. K. Kelley asked whether action was required at this meeting. T. Benton confirmed that a decision was needed due to payroll deadlines because payroll must be submitted on Monday. K. Kelley asked whether health insurance premiums would be deducted from the final pay period. T. Benton stated that no health insurance premiums would be deducted from that final 27th pay period. K. Kelley confirmed that AFSCME was willing to sign the MOU and noted that other unions had not responded. T. Parker asked whether notice of the change had been provided and T. Benton confirmed that notice had been given.

Public Comment
Chris Lewis of Thorndike, Maine asked whether there would be any adverse impact on MainePERS. H.R. Director T. Benton stated there would be no change, as MainePERS contributions are calculated per paycheck and the contribution percentage does not change.

C. Lewis asked whether there would be a tax impact because employees would receive the payroll in calendar year 2025. T. Benton responded that the offset of benefits would help with that. C. Lewis responded that this would be an impact because they would be getting more money in their paycheck. He also asked whether this tax impact was clearly articulated in the memo sent to employees. T. Benton stated that it was not.

****Motion - T. Parker/K. Kelley to change the 1/2/26 payroll to 12/31/25 in an effort to help save on the 2026 Budget. No further discussion. Unanimous.**

3. Review and Sign MOU with AFSCME Council 93 General Government Unit re:2026 Pay Period Change
MOU (Memorandum Of Understanding) – Probate Assistant/Union Steward Elena Donovan and AFSCME Council 93 Representative Derek Samoluk were present to sign the MOU regarding the 27th pay period change from 2026 to 2025.

K. Kelley asked if the Union needed to vote on this. E. Donovan stated that only four (4) people would be affected and permission was obtained from all four (4) of those union members to move forward with the MOU.

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Memorandum of Understanding 12/23/25 Re: Article 19 Health Insurance & Benefits, One-Time Over-ride of 12% Premium Cap for Calendar Year 2026. Unanimous.**

4. Miscellaneous Year End Business
a.) Holiday Inquiries
H. R. Director T. Benton raised questions regarding operations on 12/24/25 & 12/26/25 following recent announcements by President Trump concerning holidays. K. Kelley asked what action the State is taking and T. Benton stated that the State has taken no action. K. Kelley commented that he believed the State is closed.
K. Kelley outlined potential options, including maintaining normal operations, delayed opening, remote work, or early departure. B. Johnson expressed agreement with those options.

Finance Director K. Hunt stated that she had learned that the State of Maine is closed on Thursday and Friday.
T. Parker asked about past practices. B. Johnson stated that in the past the County may have implemented a delayed opening or allowed remote work. He noted that taking the full day off would require addressing compensation considerations.
****Motion: B. Johnson to allow non-essential employees to work remotely on the Friday 12/26/25.**
T. Parker stated that the President had clarified that December 24–26 is being recognized as holidays and suggested a **Friendly Edit** to recognize all three days as holidays. T. Benton asked Finance Director K. Hunt what financial impact declaring additional holidays would have on payroll and the budget. Finance Director K. Hunt responded that if Christmas Day and 12/24/25 & 12/26/25 were declared holidays, employees would be entitled to time-and-a-half pay, noting that some facilities operate 24 hours per day. K. Kelley stated that the Commissioner Board needed to slow the pace of the discussion and would like to see what the financial impact would be before considering additional holidays. He expressed a preference for a delayed opening on December 26. **The proposed friendly amendment was declined.**

T. Benton noted that the County is already absorbing a financial impact in 2025 due to the payroll timing adjustment in the amount of $235,000.00. K. Kelley asked for clarification on the motion currently on the floor.
The motion was confirmed as allowing non-essential employees to work remotely on Friday 12/26/2025.
K. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
K. Kelley commented that the Board has been working to reduce future budget pressures, including costs

related to the jail and employee benefits. He stated that approving a remote workday aligns with those efforts and is a prudent decision. T. Parker stated that while he did not disagree that the decision was reasonable, he expressed concern that the action applies to a limited group, noting that many employees are considered essential and cannot work remotely. B. Johnson stated that the remote work option allows non-essential employees to perform their duties in the same manner as a normal business day.

b.) Opioid Fund

K. Kelley asked Finance Director, K. Hunt, whether there had been any changes to the Opioid Fund. K. Hunt stated that there was no change to the balance of the Opioid Fund.

c.) Future court sessions and meetings:

K. Kelley stated that a budget workshop is needed prior to the next Budget Committee meeting scheduled for January 9, 2026.

B. Johnson noted that the regular commissioner's court session is scheduled for January 8, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., followed by a tax abatement hearing at 11:00 a.m.

The Commissioners scheduled a budget workshop for **Wednesday, December 31, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.**, to further review and revisit the budget.

K. Kelley thanked staff for their hard work and wished everyone happy holidays. B. Johnson echoed those sentiments, stating that everyone deserves a break and that the time off is beneficial.

5.) Motion to Adjourn

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to adjourn at 10:25 a.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by Danielle Murray **Office Associate**

Danielle Murray