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COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

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Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
DECEMBER 18, 2025
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Betty Johnson (Chair), Kevin Kelley, and Timothy Parker. Staff present were Treasurer Owen Smith, Finance Director Kari Hunt, Human Resources Director Tracy Benton, Correctional Administrator Matthew Magnusson, IT Director J-sun Bailey by Zoom, and County Clerk Barbara Arseneau took minutes.

1. **Welcome / Call to Order:** Commissioner Johnson called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. **Review / Revise Agenda**

****MOTION: K. Kelley T. Parker to add OPIOID committee-related updates to the agenda after Public Comment. Unanimous.**

3. **Consent Agenda**

a) Finance Report
b) Minutes: November 6, 2025, December 8, 2025, December 15, 2025
c) VOTE: Consideration of action to approve the consent agenda

****MOTION K. Kelley/T. Parker to remove the December 15, 2025 minutes from the Consent Agenda for edits. Unanimous.**

4. **Public Comment**

Eric Buch from Belfast said he wished to speak specifically about OPIOID funds. Six sets of minutes were approved on November 2, 2025 and were posted later, and after reading them, he had several items to discuss. He asked if the Commissioners had ever determined what the $138,000.00 was used for at the Jail and the funding that went to Two Bridges, MAP Team, etc. K. Kelley said that the funds were used for inmate board, which includes addiction treatment, but the Commissioners do not have the exact details.

E. Buch asked what the $199,000.00 was used for, the balance of the OPIOID funds, and what the transfer of $100.00 was. K. Kelley replied that when OPIOIDS are generated for the OPIOID fund, now automatically goes into a separate account. The General fund was reimbursed for the wire transfer for the OPIOID funds, in the amount of $100.00. The Commissioners will ask the Finance Director to provide the balance of the OPIOID funds.

E. Buch said there was a transfer of OPIOID funds for Belfast Creative Coalition in the amount of $2,000.00, that B. Johnson made a motion, didn't declare a conflict of interest or recuse herself, and this was improper. There was discussion of what had actually been paid in 2024, what had not been paid, it was ridiculous to go back and fix something from three years ago, and now the motion is to transfer from 2024. K. Kelley said that the Commissioners thought they had corrected that. E. Buch asked what has been received in interest for OPIOID funds received so far and what has been done with it.

Bethany from Morrill also asked to speak and asked if some of this money could be used to pay for medication administered to inmates who are OPIOID addicts. K. Kelley said likely it would meet the criteria and introduced Corrections Administrator Matthew Magnusson of the OPIOID Standing Committee. Bethany asked if the Commissioners would recommend that it be used for that in the next budget. K. Kelley said that the Commissioners need to determine where the funds should be spent effectively and appropriately. T. Parker suggested that OPIOID funds might possibly be used for people in the community dealing with addiction before they are placed in jail. Bethany stated the assumption that none of it was originally used for the Jail and inquired about the budget line for a lobbyist. K. Kelley explained that the Maine County Commissioners Association employees a lobbyist. When asked what the goal was for a budget reduction number to go back to the Budget Committee, K. Kelley responded that there is no definitive number as yet.

E. Buch said he liked to make a follow-up comment. A number of people have spent time working toward setting up a process to identify the needs so community groups can have a process to request funds. It will be close to $1.6 million by 2037. The County has had funds for up to three (3) years and this group is pushing for a process to recruit a diverse group from the community from different walks of life with the purpose of scanning Waldo County, figuring out the collective needs, and proposals to be made for those funds. There is a range of other potential programs and/or interventions and that group will work on determining that priority. It is challenging to spend a lot of money on a small number of people. K. Kelley said he believed E. Buch spoke about this and he ran a MAP a program of case managers, etc. and agreed with Mr. Buch that the dollars would not go too far.

B. Johnson closed Public Comment and thanked those who chose to speak.

5. OPIOID UPDATE (added to agenda):
Correctional Administrator Matthew Magnusson was asked to provide a report on the meetings related to OPIOID funds thus far, and read the following from the OPIOID Ad-hoc Committee meeting minutes as follows:

9/29/25 Meeting:

1. Initial meeting and introductions.
2. Jeanna Godo and Mackenize David from MOSS (Maine Opioid Settlement Fund Support) provided training on opioid funds that included the rules and regulations of how funds should be distributed.
3. Discussed process for selecting standing committee members.
4. Agreed Ad-hoc members would work on standing committee applications and communicate ideas with the group before the next scheduled meeting on 10/20.

10/20/25 Meeting:

1. Reviewed standing committee application and made suggested changes.
2. Discussed reading materials created by the MOSS group that were sent out after our last meeting.
3. Reviewed names of people who have submitted interest in being on the Standing Committee.
4. Formalized application process determined deadline to apply and discussed how selections will be made.
5. Set time for next meeting.

11/3/25 Meeting

1. Created rough draft of the Waldo County Opioid Settlement Fund Committee roles, expectations and application.
2. Defined the following items:

Role/Purpose

Expectations
Terms of Service
Time Commitment

Active Participation
Professional Conduct
Transparency and Accountability
Conflict of Interest
Selection Process for Standing Committee
Applications for Standing Committee

11/17/25 Meeting:

1. Finalized Waldo County Opioid Settlement Fund Committee roles, expectations and application for Standing Committee (see attached copy of the work product created).
2. Completed scoring rubric for applications.
3. Applications will go live on the Waldo County Website on 11/19 and stay active until 12/8.

12/15/25 Meeting:

1. Final meeting of Ad-Hoc Committee (Standing Committee will be formed once Commissioners approve new members).
2. Reviewed applications received and scored each application based upon scoring rubric.
3. Recommendations to County Commissioners for Standing Committee:

Matt Magnusson - Correctional Administrator
Tia Poulin - Director of Community Justice & Recovery Services for VOA
Norman Hightower - Restorative Justice Project Maine and lived experience
Ruth Fethke - Probation and Parole Officer for Maine Department of Corrections
John Fitzgerald - Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor
Mara Gallagher - Community member, worked six years for an organization providing MAT
Elise Brown - Emergency Management Director, Liberty Rescue
Lori Knight - Lived experience/person affected by opioid crisis
** Jenna Good - MOSS
** Mackenize David - MOSS

4. First standing committee meeting date will be set for first two weeks in January.

M. Magnusson commented that it is a well-rounded group of people who live and work in Waldo County. When the standing committee meets, they will be tasked with designing the grant application process, creating a scoring rubric, and formalizing the selection and recommendation process. These are the 8 full-time members and 3 from MOSS. Those from MOSS attend the meetings, conduct the audit at the end of the year, and are not voting members but provide suggestions and guidance. This addresses what was mentioned about a diverse group of people. Every six 6 months a packet must be created for use of the funds and what they were used for. It is not required, but the plan is to track individually what the success rate is. The first Standing Committee Meeting will be set in the first two weeks of January 2026. They will look at rules, etc. There is no standard template, but MOSS will help with processes that have worked well. There will be a process for grants requested. The committee will take advise through MOSS, Best practice is to open up, take applications, award, close, then start another 6 month window. The first report is due January 14th. Funds were frozen when the ad hoc committee was formed. Once applications are granted and funds disbursed, reporting will become more important. They have tried to recruit people with different capabilities (licenses). K. Kelley asked that this not be put in the paper but suggested reaching out to a doctor from Somerset County who might be able to attend by Zoom, and asked that future minutes include attendees, who is present, who is absent, etc.

T. Parker asked if while the ad hoc committee was doing their search, if they considered asking youth from schools to be involved as they frequently see and deal with this issue. Perhaps educators might be interested in

participating. M. Magnusson stated that Laurie Knight has many years of experience working with youth.
****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve all OPIOID Ad-hoc Committee minutes that had been presented for 9/29/25, 10/20/25, 11/3/25, 11/17/25, and 12/15/25. Unanimous.**

The Commissioners wished to approve the two other people added to the Standing Committee:
****K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve adding Elise Brown and Laurie Knight to the OPIOID Standing Committee. Passed with two (2) in favor; T. Parker against.**

6. <u>Department Reports/Requests</u>

6.1 Finance – Finance Director Kari Hunt

K. Hunt said she had learned that an additional $10,675.00 is needed for the audits.
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to add $10,675.00 for the audits with the designation of $1,500.00 for the 2024 audit and the remaining going to the check reconciliation work for 2023. Unanimous.**

a) MCRCC (Jail) Warrant 12/18/2025
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the December 18, 2025 MCRRC Accounts Payable and Reserve warrant of $273,993.59 and the December 18, 2025 payroll of $50,861.03 for a grand total of $324,854.62. Unanimous.**

b) County Warrant 12/18/2025
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the December 18, 2025 County Accounts Payable and Reserve Warrant of $285,278.83 and the December 18, 2025 payroll of $189,038.60 for a grand total of $474,317.08. Unanimous.**

c) OPIOID Warrant 12/18/2025
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve $0.00 (zero) expenditures from the OPIOID Fund. Unanimous.**

d) Closing 2025 Books for Registry of Deeds and Registry of Probate. Present were Register of Probate Sharon Peavey and Register of Deeds Stacy Grant.

Registry of Probate:
Fees: $158,872.03
Restitution: $2,488.00
Surcharge: $2,950.00
Grand Total: $164,310.03
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to accept the total 2025 report for the Registry of Probate at $164,310.03. Unanimous.**

Registry of Deeds:
Fees: $286,179.64
Surcharge: $20,829

Interest: $160.43
Transfer tax: $146,641.25
Grand Total: $453,810.32
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to accept the 2025 report for Registry of Deeds at $453,180.32. Unanimous.**
e) Engagement Letter for official contract for Tax Anticipation Note Bond Counsel: K. Hunt requested approval and signatures on an engagement letter for a contract with Rudman Winchell for Bond Counsel for the 2026 Tax Anticipation Note in the amount of $5,500.00.
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve and sign the engagement letter for 2026 TAN Bond Counsel with**

Rudman Winchell in the amount of $5,500.00. Unanimous.

K. Hunt will prepare a final 2025 warrant to present at the January 8, 2026 commissioners court session. Deadline for 2025 invoices will be January 5, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.

T. Parker asked what else is owed for the audit. K. Hunt said that what she had requested earlier in the meeting is all that is owed for 2024 and there will be no more balance.

T.P. asked for a spreadsheet of payments to RHR Smith Auditing to be prepared and sent to the auditor for signature so that this matter would be very clear.

6.2 EMA Report – EMA Director Dale Rowley

a) Shelter Agreement with Town of Waldo for Commissioners' signatures: D. Rowley had emailed to the Commissioners a shelter agreement with the Town of Waldo for their review. Agreements already are in place with Troy Howard Middle School, the Town of Searsmont, Mount View Middle School, and also the YMCA in Belfast once they have a backup generator. An agreement is also in place with Belfast Soup Kitchen for meals. The rate for the Town of Waldo is $200.00 per day for use of their recreational facility. The Shelters are primarily for power outages for overnight stay and are not a homeless shelter. There are two groups of people, one to manage the human shelter and one to manage the animal shelter, which is strictly for the people staying at these centers and is likely only for dogs and cats. All the necessary equipment needed is set for both types of shelters. When asked, D. Rowley said there is nothing suitable in Winterport area. Most of the provisions at the shelters have been obtained by grant funds but at times, some payment has been needed for food and for transportation by WCAP to bring people two and from home and shelters. Notification that the shelters are open has been challenging, especially during power outages. There is a wireless emergency alert that can ping cellphones, notification is also done by TV and radio stations, Ham radio, 211 when notified by EMA, and the towns are notified to post the information. The County does not operate warming centers but does give help where possible. It is difficult to find Red Cross volunteers and last time he asked, he was told there was one in Bangor. K. Kelley requested that a signed copy of the agreement with Town of Waldo be sent to the County Clerk and recommended a few edits.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to recess at 11:03 a.m.**

****The Commissioners reconvened at 11:10 a.m.**

6.3 Commissioners Miscellaneous Reports – County Commissioners

a) 2026 Budget (updates): K. Kelley met with the Sheriff, Jail Administrator and Finance Director to work on possible budget reductions, appreciates everyone's patience and knows it's a difficult topic. B. Johnson asked if T. Parker had met with his liaison departments and had not yet. B. Johnson reported meeting with the department heads yesterday at a department head meeting. She listened to their concerns, and they want to assist. The next tentative Budget Meeting is January 9, 2025. She felt it would be helpful for the Budget Committee to let the County know what they are looking for in reductions. It is the Commissioners' budget, but it is in the Budget Committee's hands, so the Commissioners are waiting on that. She knew everyone is concerned, and the Commissioners are thinking and working on it every day.

b) The MCCA President wants to hold an annual meeting in Waldo Count. B. Johnson has been researching places and she is not aware of any that can host 100 – plus people. She recommended that this be held in the summer when the ocean and other sights can be enjoyed, particularly since this is an overnight meeting. The message going back will be not to hold it in Waldo at this time.

c) K. Kelley reported that auditor RHR Smith submitted to the County a 2-page December 2024 Independent Audit on compliance for CORONA Virus CSLFRF. The County of Waldo was listed as compliant for 2024.

****MOTION: K. Kelley/B. Johnson to approve the 2024 CORONA Virus CSLFRF Report. Unanimous.**

d) Audits: Fiscal Year – Spoke to Ron Smith of RHR Smith. 2021 is on County Website; management concerns. 2022 is in financial review; may be management concerns. 2023, Finance Director is pulling together additional information that should be returned very quickly.

e) Inmate Boarding Contract Preparation: The Somerset County Commissioners have approved the boarding contract for Waldo County's inmates starting 1/1/2026 at $95.00 per day for males and $135.00 for females. It is a 5-year contract for 34 male beds, 6 female beds. The Sublocade injection rate is $1,552.72 plus 5%. Currently 18 Waldo County inmates are still at Two Bridges Jail. The last 3 will be transferred by the end of the month before December 31, 2025.

f) Conflict of Interest Mentioned in Public Comment: Regarding what was mentioned earlier about a conflict of interest regarding the vote to award some OPIOID funds to Belfast Creative Coalition, K. Kelley referenced his decision to recuse himself four (4) times during the RFPs for accounting companies, and actually left room for vote. He recommended that in the future, for ethics, optics, and integrity, that starting in 2026, the Commissioners should take a stand as leaders and elected officials and it was necessary to do some housekeeping, and intends to make the following two-part motion:

****MOTION: K. Kelley that due to inflation, fiscal constraints and responsibilities as elected officials this motion suspends any increases in the treasurer & commissioner's stipends effective December 18, 2025. Cost of living increases will be suspended indefinitely. Pay scales for the treasurer & commissioners will be suspended and discontinued effective this date. We took an oath to faithfully discharge, to the best of our abilities, the duties incumbent upon us as a County Commissioners for the County of Waldo. It is imperative that our focus remains steadfast in the governance of our County and not on remuneration, and:**
Due to responsibilities endowed by the voters of Waldo County, the County Commissioners herby suspend benefits for the treasurer & commissioners that are subsidized by the county. The benefits under this motion include employee benefits that are subsidized with matching contributions such as medical and dental. Employee benefits which are voluntary and paid in full by the treasurer or commissioners will remain in effect. It is imperative that the focus remains steadfast in the governance of our County and not on incentives.

B. Johnson seconded for discussion. Discussion: T. Parker stated that he thought these motions are irresponsible to those serving and to the families that are affected, and he will strongly oppose something so unilateral. K. Kelley said he knew when he was sworn in that costs on benefits were tight, that the County was on soft footing, and it is untenable. These positions are part-time jobs expecting full-time benefits when people in the County can barely put food on tables, fuel in cars, and heat in homes. He thinks the salary scale and benefits are too fat for the commissioners and that the commissioners should not set their own salary scale; that should go before the budget committee. He didn't think they should be paid more money for being in the position longer or absorb benefits at more cost. T. Parker said he did not disagree but these collective amounts of money paid should represent transparency, and meeting with department heads without notice is a lack of transparency even with meetings that are not being held with notice. If the Commissioners were doing away with their own benefits, the other employees should be told that they will have to do without benefits, too. K. Kelley said that he took this job to give back to the community, and it is unethical to set their own salaries. B. Johnson said that she didn't take benefits her first term but when her husband retired, she looked into them. She pays in, and the company sends in, too. Her husband's health insurance did not cover her anymore, so she signed up for health benefits with the County. She hears what both commissioners are saying. It is a job, and she hears it every year, that someone is going to run for county commissioner for the healthcare and right now the cost of health care is terrible. She hoped that if the vote passes, that there is time to be able to obtain coverage elsewhere. She asked if that was possible and was told it is likely thirty (30) days. T. Parker said he was forced by this county to enter Maine State Retirement by the
Human Resources Director. When he left previous full-time employment with the County, he was told he didn't

have a choice to opt out of Maine State Retirement. K. Kelley said this choice did not include any benefits that incur a subsidy by the County. B. Johnson said this decision would affect her and appears that it would also affect T. Parker. The Commissioners meet two days a month. She felt it was important to allow time to obtain health insurance. She said she had heard that the County's health insurance works with social security and Medicare but she was told it doesn't, so she is torn. It is understood that the Commissioners' wages are considered a stipend and an income that is not feasible to live on. T. Parker said that for the record, he was told by the County that even though he was elected, he was being treated as an employee and could not opt out of MainePERS. **Motion Passed by two; T. Parker opposed.**

6.4 County Clerk Report – County Clerk Barbara Arseneau

a) Miscellaneous Correspondence – None.

b) B. Arseneau reminded the Commissioners of upcoming holiday dates and the change in court sessions for the month of January 2026 to be the 2nd and 4th Thursdays because of the New Year's Day holiday being on the first Thursday, and that during the January 8, 2026 court session there is a tax abatement appeal scheduled,

6.5 Human Resources Report – Human Resources Director Tracy Benton

a) Pay Step Increases: T. Benton reported that she has changed the process for pay step increases and that there will now be a form to sign and vote on for appropriate recordkeeping.

1. Effective 12/8/2025 Dispatcher Paige Morgridge completed 5 years of employment with a pay step increase to $31.49

****MOTION: K. Kelley/B. Johnson to approve effective 12/8/2025 the 5-year pay step for Dispatcher Paige Morgridge to $31.49 per hour. Unanimous.**

2. Effective 01/1/2026 Deputy Register of Deeds Amy Keller will complete 12 years of employment with pay increase to $27.63 per hour.

****Motion: K. Kelley/B. Johnson to approve effective 01/1/2026 the 12-year pay step for Deputy Register of Deeds Amy Keller to $27.63 per hour. Unanimous.**

b) New Hires

1. Elijah Law has been selected to fill the vacant position of full-time Patrol Deputy effective 12/18/2025 at the rate of $28.24 per hour and a base vacation of 80 hours.

****MOTION: B. Johnson/K. Kelley to approve hiring Elijah Law to fill the vacant position of full-time Patrol Deputy effective 12/18/2025 at the rate of $28.24 per hour and a base vacation of 80 hours. Unanimous.**

2. Tyler C. Baker has been selected to fill the vacant position of full-time Patrol Deputy effective 1/15/2026 at the rate of $37.00 per hour with three (3) years of experience and is eligible for the military stipend.

3. ****B. Johnson/T. Parker to approve hiring Tyler C. Baker to fill the vacant position of full-time Patrol Deputy effective 1/15/2026 at the rate of $37.00 per hour with three (3) years of experience and the military stipend. Unanimous.**

4. Discussion of Potential Pay Period Change: 2026 was set up to have 27 pay periods because the first pay date in 2026 would be 1/2/2026. If the 27th pay period was pushed back to 2025, it would save about $200,000.00 off the impact for 2026. The pay per period will increase insurance premiums a small amount since it would only be paid over 26 pay periods, but there is not change to the aggregate. For Employee Only, it would be $3.08 per pay check, for Employee/Children $5.22 per pay check, for Employee/Spouse $6.04 per pay check, and for Family $8.66 per paycheck. Four (4) employees could be affected by this because of minimum threshold in union contracts. It has been discussed and explained and all four (4) employees agreed to allow this for one year only. Two motions would be needed; one to change the 27 pay periods and one for an MOU for unions to sign.

K. Hunt was brought in and asked her opinion. K. Hunt stated that she was in favor of this, and according to

calculations, savings would be roughly $239,000.00. The H.R. Director has spoken with the union employees and the union reps. The 2025 budget will be very tight. K. Hunt said the 2025 budget was approved and finished, and the former H.R. Director said she realized that she had not known there would be 27 pay periods during 2025. Because the budget had already been passed, it was decided to move the 27 pay periods to 2026. The 2025 Benefits budget, fortunately, had been calculated at 27 pay periods. K. Kelley asked if the non-union employees would be affected. The Registry of Deeds has savings because a part-time employee wasn't hired in 2025, the Sheriff's Office has a few savings in 2025 because they hadn't hired people to fill a few vacant positions yet, as well. The Commissioners asked to speak with Register of Deeds S. Grant and Register of Probate S. Peavey, and they also asked IT Director J. Bailey to come in. T. Benton explained the situation and the proposed idea of paying a 27th pay period in 2025. Total deductions over the year would be the same but just spread closer together.
The Commissioners recessed at 12:15 p.m. while staff contacted the department heads for input on this.

The Commissioners resumed the court session at 12:33 p.m.
The following results were reported back to the Commissioners: all Department Heads are in favor of moving the 27 pay periods to 2025. The Sheriff mentioned that a well-crafted letter be written by an attorney explaining it to all employees, and the Commissioners should expect some potential grievances.
****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker for the Human Resources Director to draft a letter changing the 27th payroll period from 2026 to 2025, send a draft to an attorney for legal review, and bring back that review on December 23, 2025. Unanimous.**
T. Benton said that an attorney review would take time and recommended sending out notice that this is on the table and being considered.

c) Conference Information: T. Benton reported that there is free training from the Department of Labor through Safety Works in Brewer, Maine on January 21, 2025, requested permission to attend, and the Commissioners granted it.

6.6 H.R. Request for an executive session for discussion of a personnel inquiry at 12:34 p.m.
****MOTION: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go into executive session at 12:34 p.m. for discussion of a personnel inquiry as allowed by MRS Title 1§405(6)(A). Unanimous.**

The Commissioners resumed public session at 12:53 p.m.
****MOTION: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Exit Interview Policy effective and dated today, December 18, 2025.**

7. Other Business: T. Parker wished to go into executive session to review and discuss contracts with other towns related to patrol services.
****T. Parker/B. Johnson to go into executive session for non-public information regarding at 12:54 p.m. Unanimous.**
The Commissioners resumed public session at 1:04 p.m.

8. Adjourn: T. Parker/K. Kelley to adjourn at 1:04 p.m.

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