

STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS



District

- 1 Breanna Pinkham Bebb (207) 323-1226
- 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
MARCH 18, 2026
9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioner's Kevin Kelley (Chair), Breanna Pinkham Bebb, and Timothy Parker (arrived 9:05 a.m.) Staff present were Office Associate Danielle Murray to take minutes, County Clerk Barbara Arseneau, Finance Director Kari Hunt, Human Resources Director Tracey Benton. Staff present via Zoom were Deputy Register Amy Keller.

1. **Welcome / Call to Order:** Commissioner K. Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. **Review / Revise Agenda**

Commissioner K. Kelley modified agenda under Commissioners' New Business discussion of a Congressionally Directed Spending grant application with Communications Director Michael Larrivee and Annual report for Congress Street LLC.

****Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve adding Discussion of Congressionally Directed Spending grant application with Communications Director Michael Larrivee to the agenda.**

3. **Consent Agenda**

- a) Finance Report
- b) Minutes: 3/5/2026
- c) VOTE: Consideration of action to approve the consent agenda

****Motion: Commissioners K. Kelley/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve consent agenda and remove minutes from March 5, 2026. Unanimous.**

4. **Public Comment (3 minutes per person)**

Eric Buch, Belfast resident, reflected on the budget process. Approximately \$4 million was cut from the proposed budget. He stressed transparency and improved processes. His concerns included the lack of meaningful audit review, believes the County should consider hiring a professional administrator as a top priority for 2027, and called for significant structural reforms to county operations.

5. **Department Reports/Requests**

5.1 **Finance**

- a) Ending balance of the 2/28/2026 Opioid Funds is \$503,982.23; interest earned was \$1,100.54. Year-to-date interest earned is \$29,636.00.
- b) Bank reconciliations – 35 checking accounts were reconciled to 12/31/25. 9 checking accounts are more involved and will take additional time. When the staff member returns, they will continue with project.
- c) Audits – There is currently no update on where the 2023 audit stands. K. Hunt has emailed the auditor because they were supposed to submit it to the County by the 18th of this month. K. Kelley said that a recent update from the audit stated that they now believe it will be by the end of March. K. Hunt said she has asked them for a written update.

**** Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 3/18/26 MCRRC (Jail) Warrant in the amount of \$341,468.28 and the 3/12/26 payroll in the amount of \$42,022.05 for a total of \$383,490.33. Unanimous.**

**** Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 3/18/26 County Warrant in the amount of \$341,736.15 and the 3/12/26 payroll in the amount of \$175,733.99 for a total of \$517,470.14. Unanimous.**

****Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the 3/18/26 OPIOID Warrant at \$0.00. Unanimous.**

5.2 Emergency Management Agency Report

a) Commissioner K. Kelley there is a timeline for renewal of agreements with Maritime Energy. Commissioner K. Kelley mentioned that Commissioners T. Parker and B. Pinkham Bebb had not had a chance to review. Chair K. Kelley tabled renewal agreements with Maritime Energy until 4/2/26.

5.3 County Clerk Report

Correspondence – County Clerk Barbara Arseneau

1.) The Sheriff submitted documentation regarding an asset forfeiture for the State v. Luis Fernando Polanco-Peña \$3,021.50, with 50% of the total amount referenced for distribution. It was confirmed that the funds qualify as a direct cash forfeiture and will be placed into the County's drug forfeiture account. Use of these funds is legally restricted and requires judicial approval before any expenditure. The Commissioners clarified that a formal motion is required to proceed with acceptance and handling of the forfeited assets.

****Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to accept drug forfeiture funds in the amount of \$3,021.50 in the State vs Luis Fernando Polanco-Pena. Unanimous.**

Finance Director K. Hunt stated that funds from asset forfeiture must be placed directly into the drug forfeiture account and cannot be used without court approval. A judge must issue an order to release the funds before they can be spent, and they cannot be used to offset other budget items. Finance Director K. Hunt has not used any funds from this account to date and was unsure of the current balance. Funds remain in the account until officially authorized for use by the court.

2.) B. Arseneau County Clerk was previously asked to hold off on an invoice she had received from Belfast Police Department for police details during our Commissioners court sessions and Budget Committee meetings. The amount due is \$1,434.60.

****Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve paying \$1,434.60 from the Commissioners' Budget Professional Services line. Unanimous.**

5.2 Commissioners Old Business

a) 2026 Budget Discussion

Commissioner K. Kelley noted that as of the last budget meeting on 3/6/26 the final budget was \$14,819,166.64. A 15.97% increase when reduced, based on the assessments from municipalities, is down \$1,429,700.64 as noted on the bottom of the summary page. Department 1035 has consolidated Information Technology into one expense. The I.T. budget is now \$736,138.95 and includes software costs, internet, telephones, salary, and contractor fees, which explains a 220.69% increase.

Increased utilization of the 2025 Department of Health Benefits self-insurance program was noted. It was stated that the County is reevaluating future options and cannot continue with self-insurance moving forward. It was stated that the county must exit the self-insurance program as it is not financially sustainable. This will require changes to contract language to reflect a transition to a different health benefits model. The 1025 Finance line item reflects a 62.22% increase, due to the reassignment of a position previously categorized as administrative support under the commissioners. The position was moved under Finance and is split between Finance, Human Resources, and County Clerk, providing support to those departments with one staff member each. As a result,

there are no full-time hourly employees remaining under the County Commissioners' budget. Discussion. It was noted that the Budget Committee's Public Hearing is scheduled for March 27, 2026. A vote will occur at the end of the Public Hearing, although the Budget Committee has already approved the budget. It was noted that few, if any, additional changes are expected, and the budget is nearing finalization. A total of \$408,000.00 in position-related reductions have been made. This included a part-time union position in Deeds and a Full-Time union position in Communications, both of which remain but are not funded. A full-time Facilities position was reduced to a 20-hour position. There were reductions in the Commissioners' budget, and an EMA position was reduced from 27 hours to 24 hours, with 9 hours funded by a grant. Another fully grant-funded position ended as of December 31, 2025. Commissioner B. Pinkham Bebb said that the 2025 stated budget for employee benefits is about 8% higher than actual spending last year, primarily due to healthcare costs. Compared to the total County and Jail budgets, this represents over a 15% increase from the prior year's budgeted amount. While spending \$900,000.00 more than last year is concerning, the current budget better reflects the real cost of employee benefits.

Commissioner K. Kelley stated that actual cost is a key point. Commissioner T. Parker stated employee insurance reflected true, uncontrollable costs. Commissioner K. Kelley stated the County eliminated one broker and switched to a new agency, resulting in \$100,250.00 in annual savings effective October 1, 2025. A bid was sent to seven commercial carriers and was declined due to the County's 24-month claims history, which is being addressed. Alternatives and cost-saving measures are being explored to manage health benefits going forward.

b) Spirit of America Ceremony Planning – Barbara Arseneau County Clerk

Counties participate in the volunteer recognition program founded by Bruce Flaherty through the Spirit of America Foundation, a 501(c)(3) established in 1991 in Augusta, Maine. Commissioner K. Kelley questioned the foundation's finances, noting approximately \$1.3–\$1.4 million in assets and an executive director salary of \$372,000 for one of two employees. The program primarily provides local recognition, with no formal multi-level national award structure currently in place. Towns and municipal-based organizations nominate individuals for recognition, which has resulted in 14 individuals selected this year. These individuals are recognized at the County level during a local ceremony. Commissioners may also nominate additional individuals at their discretion. B. Arseneau asked for any chosen by the Commissioners to be submitted promptly to allow invitations to be sent by the end of the week. Commissioner B. Pinkham Bebb request the list of selected candidates for Waldo County be emailed. County Clerk B. Arseneau will send it to the Commissioners.

c) Miscellaneous - B. Arseneau noted that attorney Shayna Sacks of Napoli Law, who has been assisting the county with opioid-related pharmaceutical lawsuit settlements, has sent notification of a new round of additional settlement funds that are becoming available. In order to participate, the Commissioners must sign an electronic (DocuSign) document. Prior communications and authorization requests had been sent to Commissioner Betty Johnson as the designated signer, and now a new authorized signer must be selected to proceed with accessing these funds. After discussion, Commissioner B. Pinkham Bebb volunteered.

Motion: Commissioners K. Kelley/T. Parker for Commissioner Pinkham Bebb to serve as the single authorized signer for electronic documents related to OPIOID funds. Unanimous.

d) **Austin Winder 5 and Dime Studios.** A proposal was received from Austin Winder, representative of Five and Dime Studios, to create a documentary film highlighting Waldo County's 200th anniversary in 2027. Commissioner B. Pinkham Bebb noted the project would not be free and referenced the studio's recent work in the Town of Van Buren, Maine. She has reached out to Van Buren to determine project cost and funding methods, though details are still pending. Commissioner K. Kelley suggested tabling the discussion due to budget considerations, while Commissioner T. Parker expressed support for the concept. The matter was tabled until April 2, 2026 for further information and consideration.

e) County Clerk B. Arseneau participated in the EOC tabletop exercise on March 11, 2025 at the Waldo County

EMA and reported that it was well attended by the other counties who were invited. There is another exercise scheduled next week, but she regretted that she would be out of the office and unable to attend.

5.3 Commissioners New Business

1. K. Kelley stated that the Congress Street Hill Property, LLC Annual Report is due and is required to be submitted to the state of Maine. Former Commissioner Bill Shorey was the point of contact for this and that needs to be changed.

****Motion Commissioners T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to put Commissioner Kevin Kelley on Congress Street Hill Property, LLC, and authorize the annual report to be submitted and paid. Unanimous.**

2. Congressionally Directed Spending Grant Application – Communications Director Michael Larrivee

M. Larrivee reported that this is the same grant that I.T. Director J. Bailey received computers through in the past. The grant is estimated at \$1.3–\$1.4 million and would fund the following:

- Upgrading cruiser radios from analog to digital, adding UHF and VHF channels.
- AI transcription for dispatcher screens to display live radio communication as text.
- Smart portable radios with cell phone-style screens.
- Integration of cell technology for backup communication if radios fail.

M. Larrivee has requested quotes by the end of business today as the grant application is due on Friday. He is unsure if there are additional costs or maintenance costs. The first year is free, and then they County would negotiate for 2028. The radios are already set for digital, and there are no maintenance costs as far as he can tell. He requested letters of support from the Commissioners.

****Motion: Commissioners K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve sending letters of support from Commissioners K. Kelley, B. Pinkham Bebb and T. Parker.** Discussion: The Commissioners wondered if there were requirements for additional training. M. Larrivee assumed there would be some training. This also has cell technology so if the radio doesn't work, they can use their cell phones. T. Parker inquired about record preservation. M. Larrivee explained that the information is already being saved into CAD (Computer Assisted Dispatching). K. Kelley asked that if this appears that it will be awarded, the Commissioners need to know if there are any additional cost before the grant is accepted. **Unanimous.**

Human Resources Report – Human Resources Director Tracy Benton

a) Pay step Increases:

1. Deputy Lucas Potts was selected to fill the Patrol Sergeant position effective March 22, 2026. The Fully Burdened rate of pay will be \$41.63 per hour, and this was already budgeted for in 2025 and 2026.

****Motion: Commissioners T. Parker/K. Kelley to approve the promotion of Lucas Potts to Sergeant. Unanimous.** T. Parker commented that this is a great mark for Waldo County in a positive way.

2. Deputy Trevor McCray is due a specialty stipend increase for becoming certified as Intoxilyzer Site Coordinator, effective March 9, 2026. The Fully Burdened rate of pay will be \$33.61 per hour. This is on pause until the 2026 budget is passed. **So noted by the Commissioners.**

b) Miscellaneous

T. Benton said she was asked to do a review of all Job Descriptions and performance reviews. She has gone through the files and is presenting a list of employees to the Commissioners. Commissioner B. Pinkham Bebb stated that she is pleased that this work is being done. Commissioner K. Kelley inquired if elected positions required a job description. T. Benton stated that with elected positions it's always good to have the details in writing, noting that two of the elected positions have written job descriptions. Commissioner K. Kelley asked if there are job descriptions for the commissioners and was told not at this time. It was agreed that this should be worked on.

Performance Reviews: Human Resources Director T. Benton went through person by person and determined

that 13 employees have current reviews, 20 employees have no review on file, and 11 employees were not applicable. Commissioner K. Kelley inquired what about deputies and was told that these are required annually. It was noted that the County needs to catch up with these evaluations. Commissioner K. Kelley asked that an email be sent to department heads to let them know evaluations need to be caught up and should be performed based on the anniversary of hire date for the employees. H.R. Director T. Benton should sign off on some of the reviews.

Commissioner T. Parker wondered if there should be an executive session during the April 2, 2026 Commissioners' session to sign reviews.

c) Civic plus has the option to do job applications online. Commissioner T. Parker wondered if this could be done in executive session at another time.

d) Executive Session was requested to discuss a personnel matter

****Motion: Commissioners K. Kelley/T. Parker to go into executive session for discussion of a personnel matter according to MRS Title 1§405(6)(A at 9:51 a.m. Unanimous.**

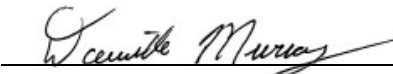
Public session was resumed at 10:05 a.m.

****Motion: Commissioner K. Kelley/T. Parker to go into executive session for discussion of Labor Negotiations at 10:05 a.m. according to MRS Title 1§405(6)(D). Unanimous.**

Commissioners resumed public session at 10:33 a.m.

6. Adjourn

****Motion: Commissioners K. Kelley/T. Parker to adjourn at 10:33 a.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by  Danielle Murray, Waldo County Office Associate