

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
DECEMBER 1, 2022**

PRESENT: Commissioners William D. Shorey (Chairman), Amy R. Fowler, and Betty I. Johnson. Also present was County Clerk Barbara Arseneau to take minutes.

Call to Order: Commissioner Shorey called the court session to order at 9:00 a.m.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Finance Director Patricia Parker reported the following:

The County Checkbook balance is \$3,392,950.01 and the Jail Checkbook balance is \$1,281,439.37.

TAX ANTICIPATION NOTE:

The total Tax Anticipation Note is \$5,500,000.00. \$1,620,000.00 has been borrowed; \$1,275,000.00 by the County and \$345,000.00 by Corrections. \$1,620,000.00 is owed on the TAN, which she expects to pay off this week, along with the interest owed in the amount of \$27,983.

County Appropriations/Revenue:

84% of the County 2022 budget has been expended and it could be 92%. 120.51% of the County revenue has been received.

Corrections Appropriations/Revenue:

73% of the Corrections 2022 budget has been expended and could be 92%. 139.76% of the Corrections revenue has been received.

Swanville and Jackson have not submitted the 2022 taxes yet, so she sent a letter notifying them that interest will be charged if not paid when due.

Requests for bid proposals for the 2023 Tax Anticipation Note have been sent to four local banks, and one proposal has been received so far.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to file the Financial Report. Unanimous.**

WARRANTS

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to authorize payment of the November 30, 2022 General Fund Accounts Payable and Reserve warrant and November 24, 2022 payroll in the amount of \$864,322.28. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to authorize payment of the November 30, 2022 MCRRC (Corrections) Accounts Payable and Reserve warrant and November 24, 2022 payroll in the amount of \$681,407.17. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to go into executive session at 9:07 for discussion of non-public information as permitted by MRSA Title 18405, 6. F. Unanimous.**

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey seconded to come out of executive session at 10:05 a.m. Unanimous. No action was taken.**

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Director Michael Larrivee was present, along with Supervisor Melissa Bisson, and reported the following:

1. The new radio system is “live”, is being tested, and they loose ends are being tied up. The Comm. Center should be on it by the end of the year, and the old one will be decommissioned.
2. M. Larrivee has been speaking with D. Rowley about the new tower for Liberty and the need for a basic gravel road. M. Larrivee will ask the consultant to handle that process.
3. Scheduling Express Program: M. Larrivee said M. Bisson has expressed concern over the iSolved scheduling program, and that the Schedule Express program should be kept beyond the end of this year. They believe the iSolved program will eventually work, but it is taking longer than expected for CGI to design it to do what Dispatch needs. M. Bisson said CGI has only trained her one day to implement the schedule into iSolved, and several months have gone by with CGI still working on making the changes. The schedule has changed several times since, and she hasn't had any time off-desk to contact the trainer because the Comm. Center is so understaffed. It takes a lot of time to input the information, is difficult to teach other dispatchers how to do it, and the time spent on it creates more overtime. M. Larrivee explained that it keeps showing employees on the schedule who have been removed. CGI won't be able to enhance this program until the end of the 1st or 2nd quarter of the coming year. He doesn't want to pay \$5,000.00 for Schedule Express, but felt it is still needed at this point. M. Bisson said all the dispatchers know how to operate Schedule Express. One button sends out a notice to everyone that someone has called in sick and there is an open shift. A. Fowler asked why the other 24/7 departments such as Sheriff's Office and Corrections can use iSolve, and M. Larrivee explained that the Comm. Center has several different shifts, and more staff to deal with. They are operating with two dispatchers for 10-hour shifts and two shift supervisors 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The Sheriff's Patrol and Corrections have some differences with shifts from the Comm Center staff, and they also have the admin staff that can fill in, whereas Dispatch does not. A. Fowler suggested funding Schedule Express from the Radio Repair budget line. M. Larrivee also suggested the Training budget.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to take \$5,000.00 from 4600 Radio Repair to fund Schedule Express. Unanimous.**

4. Two certified dispatchers may be applying at the Communications Center. There was brief discussion of the process to attract candidates to the Communications Center. Some employees have been in favor of it, and others have not.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT:

IT Director J-sun Bailey said he is doing day-to-day work and to save the Commissioners time on the agenda, he didn't have anything major to report.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Present was Human Resources Director KelLee Gray, who reported the following:

1. Pay scales were submitted that were previously approved by the Commissioners and needed their signatures.

2. Dispatcher Elizabeth Kolko has resigned full time effective 12/3/22 and is staying on as Part-time On-call. There was brief discussion of a long-standing policy is that if a P/T employee doesn't pick up a shift in 3 months, their employment is terminated automatically.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded to accept the resignation of Elizabeth Kolko as full-time Dispatcher, and to move to Part-time On-call Dispatcher. Unanimous.**

SWANVILLE SOLAR PROJECT UPDATE

EMA Director Dale Rowley reported the following:

1. He has been researching installing solar panels on the new EMA building. Solar Logics is encouraging the County to install them on the other County buildings, as well. The proposal is \$248,700.00 and is projected to produce about 90,000 kilowatt hours per year. The two options are just do the Swanville buildings, which is budgeted, or consider doing the Public Safety building roof with solar, as well. D. Rowley said putting solar on all the County buildings could eventually pay for itself in saved electricity costs. The budget to do the solar with batteries for EMA would cost \$100,000.00 including batteries. If a larger net metering system was installed in Swanville, the credits will cover electricity costs for the other County buildings. After discussing estimates for upcoming renovations, the Commissioners thought that it might be possible to put solar on the Public Safety Building for about \$175,000.00, the EMA Buildings for about \$250,000.00, Deeds Renovations at \$120,000.00, and District Attorney's renovations at \$250,000.00, which would total \$795,000.00, and they all believed it would likely be less. Another solar company may do the work on some of the other buildings. D. Rowley said he was not advocating either way regarding the solar panels. The Commissioners understood that electricity bills will continue to increase. The County still has a healthy reserve, if needed. D. Rowley said the Swanville project is coming in at less than he feared. B. Johnson felt this should be done right, since the funds are available.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to do all solar on the Swanville project at the estimated \$248,700.00.** There was discussion about possible \$50,000.00 in rebates, according to Revision Energy. W. Shorey said Revision will be coming in to do a presentation on December 15, 2022 and asked that this motion be delayed until the December 15, 2022 court session. D. Rowley suggested spreading the solar project out over time based on what funds were available.

****A. Fowler withdrew her motion and B. Johnson withdrew her second.**

2. D. Rowley reported that there will be permitting required for the Deeds and District Attorney Renovations, including Fire Marshal, ADA and construction permitting. Whenever walls or doors are removed or added, this is necessary. He asked if he could hire Haley Ward Architects by the hour to do the Statement of Work and permits, explaining that the County needs someone from the mechanical side, the electrical side, and architectural side. Once the rental space is vacated, measure it. The Commissioners considered allowing their chambers to be used by Deeds, provided there is soundproofing so that Executive Sessions in the Courtroom cannot be overheard. D. Rowley said that once he knows what's involved, he'll take drawings over to Belfast City Hall to see what is required. The Commissioners asked him to write up the solar project, and to also draft both renovation projects.

****A. Fowler moved, B. Johnson seconded to authorize contacting an architect to assist with planning out the space and permitting. Unanimous.**

3. Drywall is complete in the new EMA mechanical room, and other work should start, including windows. He mentioned some issues resulting from recent rainstorms.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

CORRESPONDENCE

County Clerk Barbara Arseneau reported correspondence as follows:

1. The Maine County Commissioners Association Executive Director and Risk Pool Manager have asked for each County to submit the names of their representatives for the MCCA Board, the Risk Pool Board of Directors, and point of contact. For 2022, Commissioner Johnson was the representative for the MCCA Board, Commissioners Fowler and Shorey are proxies, and Commissioner Fowler is the representative for the MCCA Risk Pool Board of Directors, with Commissioners Johnson and Shorey as proxies. Commissioner Fowler is the day-to-day business point-of-contact.

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to leave all representative appointments as they are. Unanimous.**

2. Printed handouts were given to the Commissioners of solar information that had been sent by Revision Energy and forwarded to the Commissioners by email. K. Nealley is still working out the details for a representative from Revision Energy to make a presentation to the Commissioners.

3. An application for a tax abatement appeal hearing was received on November 18, 2022 from Belmont resident Stacy Leafsong. B. Arseneau noted that there may be some confusion regarding whether this was a tax abatement appeal based on equity or an appeal based on poverty and hardship. The Commissioners reviewed the information submitted. The applicant requested the abatement amount to be “what is fair based on my income.” She submitted her reason for appealing the decision of the Town Assessors as “Hardship and poverty. My taxes have increased over \$4,000.00 this year, due to having a house fire and being forced to rebuild with insurance.” They reviewed the Town’s letter in which the Town stated, “Upon review of your abatement request, your property record card, the completed Property Data Verification Forms, and a visit to your property, we believe your assessment to be fair and in line according to market value. In order to maintain equity with the Town, your abatement request is denied. Please note, the increase in your tax assessment for the April 1, 2022 tax year was due to the addition of your new home and updating our records to reflect your Farm Store, and the Farm Stay (Above the Store and Cabin), which are both rented out.” The Commissioners stated that they did not believe that they could hold a hearing because it was not the correct application for a poverty and hardship abatement, there wasn’t proper information to go with the application, and it appeared that the Town had held an abatement hearing based on fair market value, not based on poverty and hardship, which is what it appears the applicant is asking for from the Commissioners. They believed they must deny a hearing on this basis, that the plaintiff would need to go back to the Town and ask for a poverty abatement application, and that the Town must hear it first based on the request of poverty and hardship before it could be appealed to the County Commissioners.

****B. Johnson moved, A. Fowler seconded that the County Commissioners cannot hold a hearing on this appeal because the reason for the abatement request on the application is written as “hardship and poverty” and the proper information was not submitted to hold an appeal hearing based on this reason. Unanimous.**

3. The Commissioners signed a letter to attach to gift cards for each County employee.
4. H.R. Director K. Gray had given B. Arseneau the MainePERS paperwork the Commissioners regarding what she spoke about with them earlier in the session.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

B. Arseneau presented the October 6, 2022 and November 3, 2022 Court Session minutes for approval.

****B. Johnson moved, W. Shorey to accept the October 6, 2022 and November 3, 2022 Court Session minutes as read. A. Fowler abstained because she had not read them. Passed by two.**

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

1. Tax Anticipation Note: The Commissioners discussed the idea of seeing if there was a way of avoiding taking out a Tax Anticipation Note. They commended trying to think of ways to save money but believed the County should continue with the standard operating procedure.
2. There was brief discussion regarding recent news reports that predict interest rates will be significantly higher than anticipated for 2023.
3. B. Johnson may have a conflict with the special court session scheduled on December 14, 2022 and may not be able to attend.
4. A. Fowler volunteered to review the accounts payable warrants for a few months to catch up on the invoices and give B. Johnson a break. B. Johnson agreed.

****W. Shorey moved, A. Fowler seconded to adjourn the court session at 11:27 a.m. Unanimous.**

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