STATE OF MAINE
COUNTY OF WALDO
COURT OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

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Treasurer
Owen R. Smith

WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
MAY 21, 2026
9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Commissioners Kevin Kelley (Chair), Timothy Parker and Breanna Pinkham Bebb. Staff present were Treasurer Owen Smith, Human Resource Director Tracy Benton, Finance Director Kari Hunt, EMA Director Dale Rowley and Office Associate Danielle Murray. Others present: Eric Buch of Belfast.

1. <u>Welcome / Call to Order:</u> Commissioner Kelley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. <u>Rollcall / Attendance</u>
Commissioners Parker, Pinkham Bebb, and Kelley were all present.

3. <u>Review / Revise Agenda :</u>
Add two moments of silence for the recent tragedy and for Memorial Day.
****Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb approve the revisions to the agenda. Passed unanimously.**

Moments of Silence
Commissioner T. Parker stated that last Friday in Searsmont there was a tremendous loss experienced, and that there would be a moment of silence for the loss, for the Robbins family, for all of the firefighters who were affected, and for all of the residual damage this huge tragedy will bring to the community.

Commissioner T. Parker stated that a second moment of silence would be observed for Memorial Day, which is coming up on Monday, and is a time for remembering the people who have served this country and helped make it what it is today.

4. <u>Review / Revise / Approval of Consent Agenda</u>
4.1.1 Approval of Minutes: May 7, 2026 and May 13, 2026 court sessions minutes. B. Pinkham Bebb had edits for May 7, 2026 minutes, so the Commissioners pulled those from the Consent Agenda.
4.1.2. Finance Report
****Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve the Consent Agenda as revised. Unanimous.**

5. <u>Public Comment</u> – (3 Minutes Per Participant) No one asked to speak.

6. <u>Department Reports/Requests</u>
6.1 **Finance – reported by Finance Director Kari Hunt**
6.1.1 Miscellaneous: There are no changes to the OPIOID Settlement Fund at this time. Audit update: K. Hunt received an email on Monday from auditing firm RHR Smith stating that the draft should be submitted to the County next week. RHR Smith is currently working on the 2024 reconciliation, but K. Hunt said she has heard nothing yet regarding the audit. Tax Anticipation Note: $1,586,259.93 has been borrowed, which represents 28.84% of the TAN. 2027 Budget Process Timeline: K. Hunt said to stay on target with the budget timeline, it is requested that the Commissioners discuss and vote on the non-union employees' COLA, to discuss any underpaid positions and the elected officials' pay scale, regarding whether any changes should

be made. Originally a 2.8% COLA had been considered, however K. Hunt and the H.R. Director did some research and current projections indicate the COLA may increase to around 3.9%, based on Social Security standards and CPI estimates. Both the Senior Citizens League and Kiplinger are predicting 3.9%, while another source estimated 3.3%, so projections currently range between 3.3% and 3.9%. Last year, the COLA was based on the Social Security COLA, which was 2.7%. In prior years, the increases were approximately 3% in 2023, 2.5% in 2024, and around 2.7% to 3% in 2025. A vote will be needed so that non-union department budgets can be prepared. B. Pinkham Bebb believed that if the County's standard has been to use the Social Security COLA, to continue with that, with the caveat of if, in October, the Social Security COLA is lower, the County would adjust the budget accordingly. T. Parker stated that there have been times that the County did not give a COLA. There was brief discussion of what the City of Belfast might be using for a CPI. K. Kelley asked whether they wanted to put a tentative motion on the table to either not exceed or mirror the COLA amount. He then asked if they wanted to proceed with that motion. ****Motion: B Pinkham Bebb/T. Parker to set a tentative COLA of 3.9%, which is believed will match the Social Security amount, with the addendum that if that turns out to be lower when they release it, the County will adjust the budget accordingly. Passed by two; T. Parker opposed.**

K. Hunt requested that the Budget Caucus be set for Thursday, July 2, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. and the Commissioners agreed.

6.1.5 Tabled Finance Director job description: B. Pinkham Bebb stated that she had questions and edits. The Commissioners added the following edits to the Finance Director job description: in the second sentence the word "insures" should be "ensures." When asked what "GASB" stands for, K. Hunt advised that it stands for Governmental Accounting Standards Board. The Commissioners requested that it be written out. In Item 5, change first word to "provides" and information does not need an "s" at the end, and add "as needed" at the end. On Item 20, change to "Maintains the cash" and add the word "accounts" after it. On Item 23, add an "l" to change "handing" to "handling."

****Motion K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Finance Director job description with the caveat that any spelling or grammatical corrections may be made based on the job description and any corrections the Finance Director may identify. Passed unanimously.**

6.1.2. MCRCC (Jail) Warrant 05/21/2026

****Motion: B. Pinkham Bebb/T. Parker to approve the 5/21/26 MCRRC (Jail) Warrant in the amount of $227,448.75 and the 5/21/26 Payroll of $54,759.32 for a total of $282,208.07. Passed unanimously.**

6.1.3. County Warrant 05/21/2026

**** Motion: B. Pinkham Bebb/T. Parker to approve the 5/21/26 County Warrant in the amount of $584,722.50 and the 5/21/26 Payroll of $192,596.27 for a total of $777,318.77. Passed unanimously.**

6.1.4. OPIOID Warrant 05/21/2026

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the 5/21/26 OPIOID Warrant at $0.00. Passed unanimously.**

K. Hunt reminded the Commissioners that if the Commissioners have made any financial decisions regarding the crisis that occurred on Friday, May 15th, a motion should be made. K. Kelley advised that, as a formality, when there is a crisis, part of the procedure is for the County Commissioners to vote to release funds from an EMA emergency fund. He noted that this was done verbally at the time due to the timeline of the emergency.

****Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to release funds for the May 15, 2026 Emergency Crisis at Robbins Lumber. Passed unanimously.**

K. Hunt reported one expense included overtime in the EMA Office, which will be paid from County Disaster Relief Reserve funds. T. Parker requested that the funds expended from this reserve be tracked and an exact number be provided to the Budget Committee so that the account can be properly replenished. K. Hunt advised that there was some overtime from EMA paid out of the County Reserve Disaster Fund in the approximate amount of $758.00.

6.2 **Emergency Management Agency Report – EMA Director Dale Rowley**

a) Robbins Lumber Crisis Report: Emergency Management Agency Director Dale Rowley reported that expenses during the Robbins Lumber crises were $656.29 and listed some of the expenditures. Total estimated expenses are approximately $1,400, with final figures to be confirmed before the next Commissioners' meeting.
T. Parker asked which towns lost assets and suggested sending a letter to them expressing condolences and appreciation for their losses and response efforts. D. Rowley reported that a number of nearby towns, agencies, counties, and businesses have offered emergency equipment, vehicles, and supplies. He reported that approximately 25 fire departments responded on day one and about 15 more on day two, allowing local departments to attend processions. Mutual aid also came from multiple counties and the U.S. Forest Service, which assisted with incident management and records. An after-action report is not required but will be prepared and completed within approximately one month and will be divided into Fire, EMS, and Incident Management sections due to the scale of the event. D. Rowley noted the complexity of the incident, with victims spread across multiple locations rather than concentrated on one site. He also emphasized the emotional impact on responders and the importance of mental health, peer support services, etc. at town offices, hospitals, and EMS services. He has gathered records of the event and will eventually piece all the actions and activities together because it is important to know if the response plans worked. Some victims were moved from the site by car and met on the way by ambulances. The Commissioners expressed great appreciation for the work that D. Rowley does as EMA Director.

b) EMA Job Descriptions –
1. EMA Director job description: Since D. Rowley is also a professional engineer, he included that in the description because he has done work for the County and it should be included in the description to be covered by the County insurance. He described some of the projects he has worked on for the County. When asked how he is compensated for the engineering work, he explained that some of the compensation was set up as stipends negotiated between the Commissioners and himself. The Commissioners requested that all acronyms in the job description be spelled out so that they could be easily read and understood, and to use today's date.
****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the EMA Director job description as revised. Passed unanimously.**

2. Deputy EMA Director job description: Human Resources Director Tracy Benton reported that it is standard practice for the Commissioners to approve and sign the job descriptions.
****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the Deputy Director EMA job description as revised. Passed unanimously.**

3. EMA Planner job description:
****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to approve the EMA Planner job description as revised. Passed unanimously.**

c) EMA Policy: D. Rowley collaborated with the Human Resources Director and noted that this is primarily for FEMA reimbursement. The EMA Director's work time is not reimbursed during a disaster, but overtime worked by the EMA Deputy Director can be reimbursed. Non-EMA employees who assist during a disaster would be reimbursed. 75% from the Federal government is reimbursed relatively quickly, whereas the 15% from the State takes longer. All the policies and procedures must be followed in order to receive reimbursement, and 90% can usually reimbursed. There was brief discussion about Towns' responsibilities in reporting for reimbursement during disasters, etc. and D. Rowley stated that most report very well. Since working for the County, about $8 million in public assistance funds has been brought in to the County. When asked if he needed approval on the policies today, D. Rowley said he would need it soon. The Commissioners tabled approval until the June 4, 2026 Commissioners' meeting.

K. Kelley looked at the County Policy, Section 2-E and noted that the fund account would be identified for payments. Pre-approval and reaffirming approval were briefly discussed. T. Parker stated that all disaster reimbursements should be brought to the attention of the Budget Committee as an unprojected, unbudgeted expense. Declared disaster language was discussed briefly and clarification was requested by the Commissioners. Human Resources Director Tracy Benton recommended also working on the Employee Handbook.

6.3 Information Technology Report – reported by Information Technology Director J-sun Bailey

a) Battery Replacement Project at Communications Center: In September of last year, there was discussion about replacing the battery backup at the Communications Center. A quote has been received from Hedstrom Electric to install and wire the battery backup in the amount of $34,545.00, which would be paid from the Communications Reserve Account 0261. Other quotes were requested but no others were received. The current reserve balance is $99,381.54. It was noted that this has a 3-year warranty. J. Bailey explained that this would replace the individual computer batteries that are about 12-15 years old, would centralize everything, and run all four computers as well as everything in the server room that is not on either the State or 911 networks. T. Parker suggested replenishing that reserve by breaking up the $34,545.00 in one-thirds over three years and bring that to the Budget Committee's attention as it was an unfunded expense. K. Kelley felt it should be discussed during the budget process. There was brief discussion on how the batteries function, the number of radio servers, load testing processes, etc.

****Motion: B. Pinkham Bebb/K. Kelley to approve this expense from designated reserve.** Discussion: K. Kelley expressed concern over expense and only receiving one quote. T. Parker felt it was important to do this and it was more of an issue of an expense being made without a plan regarding the battery backups. J. Bailey noted that the 3-year warranty could be extended, planning could be done in advance to replace the one battery, and that the wiring wouldn't have to be redone. K. Kelley asked if there was a written capital expense plan in place and M. Larrivee said no, but it's been mentioned over the years by the previous technology consultant and the current IT Director. It was noted that it is difficult to hire electricians. K. Kelley still felt it was a public safety concern and had angst about not receiving other quotes. **Motion passed by two; K. Kelley opposed.**

b) Miscellaneous – J. Bailey will be at a two-day cybersecurity training with the Maine Security Council next week.

K. Kelley requested that a capital equipment plan be put in writing including IT equipment, generators, computers, etc.

6.4 County Clerk Report – reported by Office Associate Danielle Murray in absence of the County Clerk

a) Correspondence: None
b) Miscellaneous Updates: Office Associate D. Murray requested that if the Commissioners have any additional names for Spirit of America awards, to please email those to her and the County Clerk B. Arseneau today.
c) The County Clerk Job description has been updated as requested at the last meeting and H. R. Director Tracy Benton will present it with other updates during her report.

6.5 Commissioners Old Business

a) Tabled discussion on 2027 Budget Timeline – non-union COLA; changes to any position(s) wages; date/time changes needed on timeline. There was none.
b) Tabled job descriptions as needed – Human Resource Director presented during the Human Resources Report.

6.6 Commissioners New Business

T. Parker requested that the tree stump, which he felt was an eyesore, be replaced with a flagpole or a firefighter memorial. He would rent a grinder and remove it himself if need be. Treasurer Owen Smith noted that when the Communications Center was built, Waldo was the only County to fly a flag, and the Friends of Fort Knox took care of the base of it. O. Smith expressed that he was in favor of getting a flag pole. It was suggested that this be included in the budget process.

B. Pinkham Bebb requested that a discussion of consideration of hiring a County Administrator be added to a workshop agenda.

6.8 Human Resources Report – reported by Human Resource Director Tracy Benton

a) HR Report: Pay Step Increases; New Hires, etc. 2026 pay scales were submitted but tabled for review.

b) The following updated job descriptions were resubmitted to the Commissioners after corrections: H.R. Director, County Clerk, Custodian, Facilities Director, and Facilities Technician.

****Motion: T. Parker/B. Pinkham Bebb to approve all five (5) job descriptions Unanimous.**

c) Employee Handbook Update: T. Benton submitted a Gantt chart to review new policies. The goal is to finalize one policy and move onto the next, being structured and staying on task. T. Benton has built in department head meetings during each step and would like the polices finished by December for review by the unions. T. Parker commended T. Benton on her many accomplishments and proactivity since coming to work for the County.

d) The workshop will take place after the next court session on June 4, 2026 and include discussion of new benefits, policies and EMA policies from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm. There will be no public comment but anyone may attend.

e) Executive Session for discussion of employment - MRS Title 1§405(6)(A).

****Motion: T. Parker/K. Kelley to go into executive session at 10:22 a.m. for a discussion of employment pursuant to MRS Title 1§405(6)(A). Passed unanimously.**

Reconvened public session at 11:01 a.m.

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to adjourn 11:02 a.m. K. Kelley moved to recall adjourning and instead go to recess until 1:30 p.m. Unanimous.**

****Motion: K. Kelley/T. Parker to recess at 11:02 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. at which time they would go into executive session.**

Public session was reconvened at 1:38 p.m.

6.10 Executive Session for non-public personnel information – M.R.S. 1§405(6)(A)

****Motion: K. Kelley/B. Pinkham Bebb to go into executive session at 1:39 p.m. for a discussion of employment pursuant to MRS Title 1§405(6)(A). Passed unanimously.**

7. ****Motion: K. Kelly/T. Parker to come out of executive session at 2:26 p.m. and adjourned at 2:26 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Barbara L. Arseneau Waldo County Clerk

Barbara L. Arseneau