

COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

April 8, 2026

The regular meeting of the York County Commissioners was held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 4:30 PM at the York County Government Building in Alfred.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Richard R. Dutremble
Richard Clark
Robert Andrews
Donna Ring
Justin Chenette

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

County Manager Greg Zinser, Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss, Facilities Director Rick deRochemont, EMA Director Art Cleaves (via Zoom), EMA Deputy Director Megan Arsenault (via Zoom), Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond, Register of Probate Carol Lovejoy, RTC Director Roger Hooper and Finance Director Lori Lemieux were present at the meeting.

YOU ARE INVITED TO RISE AND SALUTE THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

ITEM

1. PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON ANY ITEM(S)

None.

2. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

- a. Commissioners' meeting of April 1, 2026

Commissioner Clark had corrections to the minutes:

- Page 12 change she to he
- Page 13 change she to he
- Page 13 identify Paige as Paige Lilly, contract archivist
- Page 16 identify Rachel as Rachel Stansfield, Chief Advancement Officer
- Page 16 correct spelling of Layman Way

MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the minutes of April 1, 2026, as amended.

Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

3. TO APPROVE TREASURER'S WARRANTS

- a. Warrants to be approved on April 1, 2026, in the amount of \$2,221,048.27

MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the warrant dated April 1, 2026, in the amount of \$2,221,048.27. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

4. TO HEAR ANY REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Clark reported the following (presented during Item 8: Public Comment):

Commissioner Clark expressed concern about a recent newspaper article regarding the use of opioid settlement funds by counties and municipalities, stating that York County was portrayed unfairly. He noted that the article relied on external data suggesting the County had not used opioid settlement funds as intended, despite the County's substantial investment in treatment infrastructure.

Commissioner Clark emphasized that the County has committed significant ARPA funding toward construction of a treatment facility and that the Board has agreed that opioid settlement funds will support that center. He stated that information reflecting this work was reportedly removed during editing and expressed disappointment that the County's efforts were not fully acknowledged.

He further stated that while criticism is appropriate if warranted, broad claims suggesting counties are mismanaging opioid funds are inaccurate and offensive. Commissioner Clark emphasized that both the Board and County staff have invested considerable time and effort addressing opioid-related challenges and should have those efforts recognized. He concluded by stating that if deficiencies exist, they should be clearly identified so they can be corrected, and noted he would make the article available to fellow commissioners for review.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss to present new hires/transfers:
 - i. To seek hiring approval of Moria Townsend in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center office with an effective date of April 21, 2026.

MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the hiring of Moria Townsend in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center office with an effective date of April 21, 2026. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

- ii. To seek hiring approval of Austin Lewis in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center with an effective date of April 21, 2026.

MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the hiring of Austin Lewis in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center office with an effective date of April 21, 2026. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

- iii. To seek hiring approval of Scott Bourque in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center office with an effective date of April 21, 2026.

MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the hiring of Scott Bourque in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the Regional Training Center office with an effective date of April 21, 2026. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

- b. FY 2027 budget review
 - i. Public Agency Review
 - 1. Review and Consider York County Community Action funding request of \$20,000

County Manager Zinser introduced Tom Reinauer of York County Community Action as part of the evening's public agency presentations. He noted that Mr. Reinauer was here to present a \$20,000 request for transportation-related funding, which had been provided to the Board by email and included in the meeting packets. With no questions from the Board, County Manager Zinser invited Mr. Reinauer to come forward and turned the floor over to him.

Tom Reinauer, Transportation Director for York County Community Action, requested \$20,000 to support two countywide transportation programs: weekly local ride services (often referred to as the shopping bus) serving multiple communities, and the York County Transport Program, which provides medical transportation primarily for veterans and older adults. He noted the programs provide thousands of trips annually, serve residents who do not qualify for MaineCare, rely heavily on volunteers, and face rising operating costs as federal funding covers only 50% of eligible expenses.

Commissioner Chenette thanked Mr. Reinauer for his presentation and asked whether any of the transportation programs provide rides to food pantries.

Mr. Reinauer responded that transportation to food pantries can be provided if requested in advance so rides can be scheduled. He noted that during COVID, the program also delivered food and prepared meals, and similar assistance remains available with prior notice.

Commissioner Chenette confirmed that York County Community Action riders are made aware of food pantry options and asked whether staff share that information. Mr. Reinauer responded that pantry locations are shared internally through the agency's Economic Opportunity and WIC offices and provided to schedulers to assist riders.

Commissioner Chenette also asked whether trip data is available by town of residence to better understand service impacts by district. Mr. Reinauer replied that such data is collected, particularly through quarterly reports required by the Area Agency on Aging and can be provided.

Finally, Commissioner Chenette asked for an estimate of how many additional people could be served with the requested funding. Mr. Reinauer stated he could provide cost-per-trip estimates and explained that the \$20,000 local allocation would enable the agency to draw down an additional \$20,000 in federal funds, effectively supporting approximately \$40,000 in total service capacity.

Commissioner Ring asked whether York County Community Action currently serves 13 towns and whether the requested funding would allow service expansion into additional towns. Mr. Reinauer confirmed that the shopping bus operates approximately eight routes covering about 13 communities and stated that the agency plans to expand service, noting recent requests from Lyman, Waterboro, and Buxton that were previously constrained by driver availability and funding.

County Manager Zinser clarified that the Board is under no obligation to act on the \$20,000 YCCA request at this time and could choose to discuss or consider it during final budget deliberations. Commissioner Ring confirmed the request is not included in the current budget. Commissioner Chenette raised a point of order regarding the timing of a vote to forward the budget to the Budget Committee,

noting the request was newly received and warranted further review. County Manager Zinser confirmed the intent to vote on forwarding the budget this evening, and the Board agreed to continue with the budget review, thanking Mr. Reinauer for his presentation.

ii. Continue Administration budget review

County Manager Zinser stated that while administration budgets had begun review at a prior meeting, he proposed skipping further administration review and proceeding directly to the Register of Probate budget review. With no objection from the Commissioners, the Board moved on to hear from Register Lovejoy.

iii. Register of Probate Carol Lovejoy to present Probate budget

Register of Probate Carol Lovejoy presented her proposed budget and a brief operational update. She reported increased activity in passport applications and new probate filings, noted staffing longevity within the office, and described impacts of a new statute making adult guardianship and conservatorship records confidential on public websites. She highlighted recent improvements to courtroom audio-visual systems and back-office workspace reconfiguration.

Budget highlights included decreases for the high-density storage project now moving forward and electronic records costs, reflecting a finalized multi-year contract. The budget also includes funding for four new courtroom tables to replace aging furniture.

In response to a question from Commissioner Ring regarding court security overtime, County Manager Zinser explained that overtime costs for courtroom coverage, previously absorbed by the Sheriff's Office, are now proposed within the Probate budget to cover backfilling and overtime when deputies are required for hearings.

iv. Regional Training Center Director Roger Hooper to present RTC budget

Director Roger Hooper presented the Regional Training Center's budget for its first full year of operation, highlighting strong early utilization and increased operating costs. He reported that the facility opened January 3 and has already logged approximately 1,500 student days, with extensive use by fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. He described successful live-fire and instructor training at the burn tower, noting the center's unique capabilities and growing interest statewide.

Key budget drivers include the cost of operating the new facility, particularly electricity, which remains the largest and least certain expense. Additional changes reflect the transition from planning to full operations, including staffing support for certifications, increased reserve instructor stipends, minor equipment, and building maintenance needs.

Director Hooper explained that professional services funding supports required certifications and licensing efforts to become a licensed EMS training center and a fire service certification agency, with certifications requiring periodic renewal.

In response to commissioner questions, it was clarified that training programs are funded through a separate special revenue account and are designed to be self-sustaining, while the operating budget primarily supports the facility itself. Director Hooper also noted that contingency funds from the prior year have not yet been used, aided by grant funding, but may support the upcoming grand opening planned for May 1.

York County Regional Recovery Center Budget

County Manager Zinser presented the proposed York County Regional Recovery Center budget, noting it represents a significant change from prior years as the program transitions to operations. The proposed request totals \$1.8 million and will be maintained in a separate fund, similar to the jail budget, to meet DHHS and federal accounting requirements.

County Manager Zinser explained that the County plans to launch detox services and a six-month recovery program, modeled after the former Layman Way Recovery Center, with a projected program start date of December 2026. Staffing and licensing efforts are expected to begin in summer 2026, with the State assisting throughout the licensing process.

The budget includes MaineCare reimbursements, interfund transfers from the General Fund, and anticipated foundation support, with staffing identified as the primary cost driver. Detox operations will be nursing-intensive, while the recovery program will require clinical staff. Additional expenses include food service, utilities, licensing, professional services, and furnishings.

County Manager Zinser clarified that existing reserve funds from the Layman Way fund are proposed to remain untouched, while unspent budget amounts will support building construction and furniture purchases as operations ramp up. He explained that expenditures will be managed through interfund transfers, handled administratively, with the Commission kept informed as operations move forward.

Food Pantry

County Manager Zinser presented the Food Pantry budget, noting it has been placed in a separate fund totaling \$111,000. The budget covers personnel costs, benefits, utilities, heating fuel, and general facility operations. He explained that food purchases are largely covered through successful foundation fundraising, primarily sourcing food from Good Shepherd, and that the County has not needed to directly fund food purchases.

In response to commissioner questions, County Manager Zinser stated that staff are regularly deployed to collect food donations, particularly during peak seasons, with the majority of donated food coming from Hannaford. He also noted that recent donations through the Foundation have funded facility improvements, including new flooring, paint, entryway updates, and the donation of new freezers and coolers, eliminating the need for major capital purchases at this time.

County Manager Zinser acknowledged the building's age and the potential future need for roof replacement but stated that sufficient capital reserves are available if needed and that he does not anticipate requesting additional funding from the Commission.

Medical and Dental Benefits/Retirement

County Manager Zinser reviewed remaining countywide budget line items, reporting a projected approximately 7% increase in medical and dental benefits, which he characterized as modest and consistent with prior projections. Retirement contributions were noted to be tied directly to wages, with a projected decrease of approximately \$10,000, attributed to recent higher-salary retirements.

Reduction in Jail Funding

County Manager Zinser advised the Board of a \$407,000 reduction in state jail funding resulting from the exclusion of jail funding from the supplemental state budget. He explained that the reduction was incorporated into the county budget and distributed updated pages reflecting the change.

The reduction shifts costs to the County, resulting in an increase in property tax support for the jail, with the overall jail budget increasing by just over 5%, but the property tax portion increasing by approximately 10%. The reduction increases the overall property tax impact by roughly 1.5–1.6%, contributing to a total county budget increase hovering around 10%, which Zinser stated remains near the middle compared to other municipalities.

County Manager Zinser expressed disappointment with the State's action, noting broad support for jail funding through legislative committees and advocacy groups prior to its removal, and outlined additional administrative burdens placed on counties, including separate audits and reporting requirements. He emphasized that the only new funding request in the budget is a facilities position starting in January, with no other significant expansions proposed.

County Manager Zinser concluded by noting that the updated budget figures, including the impact of the state reduction and any consideration of the Community Action Program request, are now before the Board for deliberation.

- c. To vote to approve the FY 2027 budget and transmit to the Budget Committee

Commissioner Ring expressed support for the proposed \$20,000 transportation funding request, citing transportation as a long-standing and critical need in York County, particularly in rural areas. She noted prior discussions during opioid settlement funding deliberations and emphasized that even modest assistance can have meaningful benefits for residents. Commissioner Ring stated that the amount would not significantly impact the County's budget and affirmed her support for the request.

Commissioner Chenette expressed support for the transportation funding request, noting a preference for directing resources toward service expansion when possible rather than solely stabilizing existing services. He emphasized the importance of expanding transportation access in rural communities, including access to food pantries, and highlighted the value of supporting veterans as a particularly worthy population. He stated that he hoped the funding would meaningfully assist in those efforts.

Commissioner Andrews spoke in support of transportation funding, citing his experience in the medical field and noting that lack of transportation frequently prevents individuals from attending medical appointments. He emphasized that transportation barriers are a real and ongoing issue and stated that any efforts to improve access would be beneficial.

Commissioner Clark stated that he would not support the \$20,000 transportation funding request. He cited concerns about the County's recent \$407,000 increase in costs due to reduced state jail funding and emphasized the cumulative impact on taxpayers. He also questioned the process for allocating funds to individual nonprofit organizations, noting that the County eliminated funding for many charitable and social service organizations years ago despite ongoing needs. While acknowledging the value of York County Community Action's work, Commissioner Clark expressed concern about how funding priorities are determined and how the County justifies supporting one organization over others with similar needs.

Motion: Commissioner Ring moved to accept the funding request from York County Community Action for transportation related funding in the amount of \$20,000 for fiscal year 2027.

Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.

Motion carried 3:2 with Commissioners Dutremble and Clark opposing

Motion: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the County of York fiscal year 2027 General Fund budget in the amount of \$31,643,169. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

Motion: Commissioner Clark moved to transmit the proposed County of York fiscal year 2027 General Fund budget in the amount of \$31,643,169 to the Budget Committee. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

d. Discussion of proclamations in general

a. Review and consider 2 Proclamations – for Men’s Health month and ALS

County Manager Zinser initiated a discussion regarding the Board’s approach to proclamations, noting two recent requests, for ALS awareness and Men’s Health Month, and seeking guidance on whether the County should establish criteria or limits for issuing proclamations. He referenced prior discussions related to flags but was unsure whether a formal policy on proclamations had been adopted, stating that current practice appears to allow requests to be brought forward for Board consideration.

Commissioner Clark expressed opposition to disease- or awareness-based proclamations, stating that while many causes are worthy, proclamations do not materially contribute to solutions and they consume Board time. He emphasized that financial contributions and direct action are more impactful and raised concerns about inconsistency, prioritization, and unintended associations. He indicated greater support for proclamations recognizing concrete local achievements or milestones, such as centennials, Eagle Scout projects, or championship wins.

Commissioner Chenette supported the ability of individual commissioners to bring items, including proclamations, forward for the agenda, emphasizing that such requests should come through a commissioner rather than informally. He stated that the Board retains the authority to vote proclamations up or down and that this process allows for appropriate vetting.

Commissioner Chenette expressed that proclamations can play a meaningful role in raising awareness, affirming county values, and supporting causes that impact constituents, noting that the Board’s public platform can be used to elevate critical issues. While cautioning against overuse, he stated that proclamations brought forward by commissioners who feel strongly about them are appropriate for discussion and vote, and he indicated his support for the proclamations under consideration.

County Manager Zinser clarified that the two proclamation requests were submitted directly to him and did not come through any commissioner. He noted that one request arrived via general email and another by mailed letter, and that he was forwarding them to the Board for consideration since he does not issue proclamations himself. County Manager Zinser stated that if the Commissioners choose not to proceed, a motion to respectfully decline would be appropriate and he would notify the requesting parties.

Motion: Commissioner Ring moved to deny the proclamation requests received. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5:0

6. OLD BUSINESS

None.

7. TO CONDUCT AN EXECUTIVE SESSION ON PERSONNEL ISSUES PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A), ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY OR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (C), LABOR NEGOTIATIONS PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) AND CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (E), REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS PURSUANT TO 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (F)

None.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT(S) ON ANY ITEM(S)

Susan Wiswell, Kittery, spoke. She raised concerns about the proclamation process, questioning why proclamations supported by individual commissioners should take priority over requests from other county taxpayers and noting that proclamations may reflect the values of commissioners rather than the broader public.

Commissioner Chenette responded that proclamations, like legislation, are appropriately brought forward by elected officials, and that constituents may request a commissioner to sponsor an item, with the decision to proceed resting with that commissioner and ultimately subject to a Board vote.

Ms. Wiswell expressed concern that proclamations reflecting commissioners' values may conflict with those of the public and create division, particularly when the subject matter is controversial.

County Manager Zinser clarified that any proclamation must be approved by a majority vote of the Board, regardless of personal views, and that constituents may request a commissioner to sponsor a proclamation for Board consideration.

Commissioner Dutremble noted that differing viewpoints are addressed through the voting process. Commissioner Ring stated that she does not intend to support proclamations, citing concerns about divisiveness and difficulty determining which causes should be recognized.

9. ADJOURN

**Motion: Commissioner Clark moved to adjourn. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.
Motion carried 5:0**

Meeting adjourned at 5:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Murray, Executive Assistant to the County Manager