

# COMMISSIONERS MEETING

February 7, 2024

YORK,ss

At a regular meeting of the County Commissioners of the County of York, begun and holden at the York County Government Building in Alfred, within and for the County of York, being held on Wednesday, January 17, 2024, A. D. at 4:30 P. M.

## COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

County Manager Greg Zinser was present at the meeting.

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

### 02-07-2024      ITEM

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

Janet Drew addressed the Board via Zoom to state that the Board of Visitors report will be out in a couple of weeks. She added that she is excited to hear Emily Flinkstrom's report as she supports the efforts of helping with homelessness and feels it is a major problem.

David Plavin from Save our Shores addressed the Board and stated that the last storms have devastated the coast. He informed all that the SOS Board is looking at a short-term business plan to get the dredge into the water by November. We understand there is an ownership issue to work through, but we don't want to explain to people why the dredge is still sitting in the parking lot in Saco. He added that they do have a plan and just need to work out the logistics with the County.

#### 2      TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS:

- a. Commissioners' meeting of January 17, 2024  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the minutes of January 17, 2024  
Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

#### 3      TO APPROVE TREASURER'S WARRANTS

- a. Warrants to be approved on January 17, 2024 in the amount of \$517,406.81

- Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrant. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.
- b. Warrants to be approved on January 24, 2024 in the amount of \$627,038.51  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrant. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.
  - c. Warrants to be approved on January 31, 2024 in the amount of \$941,403.32  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrant. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

#### **4 TO HEAR ANY REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

None

#### **5 NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Emily Flinkstrom and Megan Shapiro-Ross to give update on Mainspring collaboration  
County Manager Zinser introduced Emily and Megan.  
Emily Flinkstrom stated that it has been over two years since she was there to pitch Maine Spring and that they are continually grateful for the Commissioners' support. To remind all, she explained that Maine Spring is a collaborative of service providers brought together. Emily Flinkstrom added that they have brought together way more partners than they thought they would.  
Fairtide is the organization that she runs to provide affordable housing. There is a thrift store that has moved to a new facility. Ms. Flinkstrom introduced Megan Shapiro-Ross to inform all more about Footprints, the program that she runs that assists with food insecurity. Ms. Shapiro-Ross explained that they have three employees and have seen a 134% increase in need.  
They now have a pet food pantry and in the new building will have a culinary kitchen to teach cooking and nutrition classes and provide meals. They will also have a prepared food program. They are participating in a pilot program for Feed America where there will be an app. that families can order food on as well as lockers to pick their food orders up.  
Emily Flinkstrom continued that they will be working with York County Community Action and will have a full-time WIC program on site.  
Kittery and Marshwood will hold adult education classes in the new facility.  
Emily continued that they are currently administering general assistance for the town of Kittery and most likely will soon be doing the same for the Town of Eliot.  
They are also talking with Pine Tree Legal about offering free legal advice.  
Emily added that they also hope to have programs for victims of domestic violence. There is a local bank that is interested in funding literacy courses.  
Maine Health will be at the new facility two to three days a week to provide free medical care, explained Ms. Flinkstrom as well as mental and behavioral health services and Veteran's services.

Ms. Flinkstrom explained that the central intake/assessment process needs to be allowed to be shared which is not what we do now. This would also allow us to collect aggregate data so we can address poverty as a whole rather than having a silo approach.

Emily Flinkstrom continued that the budget has risen to \$6.3 million with \$4.1 being raised already. She reminded all that 16 units of affordable housing in conjunction with Maine Housing is also happening.

Commissioner Clark stated that there was a huge crowd at the groundbreaking and there was great buy in from the community.

Commissioner Andrews commended them on having showers in their facility for homeless people. He added that recently, he was at a homeless shelter in Manchester where he learned that homeless people like having lockers for the items they cannot keep with them.

Commissioner Chenette asked what the process is to give housing to a homeless person/persons.

Emily Flinkstrom replied that there is a coordinated effort in the State to have an assessment tool that is given to the person(s) and then there is prioritization that takes place and the list is developed from that.

Currently, she explained, they have close relationships with York County Shelter Programs and Cross Roads Housing in N.H.

The Commissioners thanked and congratulated Emily Flinkstrom and Megan Shapiro-Ross.

- b. Introduce ~~Deputy Manager/H.R. Director Corliss~~, County Manager Zinser to seek approval for the hiring/transfer of the following individuals:
  - i. Esmeralda Laporte in the full-time position of Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 5, 2024  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the hiring of Esmeralda Laporte in the full-time position of Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 5, 2024. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.
  - ii. Ernesto Beia in the full-time position of Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 12, 2024  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the hiring of Ernesto Beia in the full-time position of Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 12, 2024. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.
  - iii. Paul LaBrecque in the reserve position of DAR III in EMA with a date of hire of February 12, 2024  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve Paul LaBrecque in the reserve position of DAR III in EMA with a date of hire of February 12, 2024. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.  
DISCUSSION: Commissioner Ring asked who do these positions report to? County Manager Zinser replied to Director Cleaves and Deputy Director Arsenault. She asked if we have 1's and 2's?  
Deputy EMA Director Arsenault explained that 1 is the highest and would have a higher level of qualifications so 3 is more like a generalist. Vote 5-0.
  - iv. Debra Ham to transfer from Deeds to Probate Clerk I with a date of hire of February 12, 2024

Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the transfer of Debra Ham to a Probate Clerk 1 in the Probate Department. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

- c. ~~Deputy County Manager/H.R. Director Linda Corliss~~ County Manager Zinser to announce Years of Service Employee recognition awards for 2022 and 2023. County Manager Zinser explained that it was decided to do this differently and that he and Deputy County Manager Corliss will schedule time to deliver the awards to the employees and will also make the Commissioners aware if they would like to attend. The County Manager informed all that the Sheriff would present his Years of Service Awards this Friday at his Awards Ceremony beginning at 3:00 p.m.
- d. Discussion of contract deputy program  
County Manager Zinser reminded the Commissioners that he had informed them awhile ago of concerns that he and Sheriff King had regarding the contract deputy agreements. There were minor differences within the contracts. For example, one town wanted a deputy backfilled when their contract deputy is out. The Sheriff has long told all that this service provided by his office is not its' mission. The mission of the Sheriff's Office is to provide countywide protection.  
County Manager Zinser continued that in the last contract signed, the issues were worked out with more control within the contract.  
There was a mutual non-renewal of Parsonsfield's contract deputy agreement and Deputy Cyr has gone back to county patrol. That area is now patrolled by the State Police. We believe that we have solved the problems. We have contracting towns that are very grateful for this service.  
Commissioner Dutremble shared that while on a vacation he was given a compliment regarding the Contract Deputy in Acton/Shapleigh by residents of one of those towns. The resident stated that they were very pleased with the Deputy who was contracted to be in their town.  
Commissioner Ring stated that there was always only one contract for all the contract deputy agreements and then about 12-14 years ago, that changed. She continued that it is difficult to administer six to eight different contracts.  
Commissioner Ring stated that she is not a great supporter of contract deputies but for now, that is what is working.  
Sheriff King stated that he continues to tell the towns that our core mission is to provide patrol services to all towns that do not have a police department and they have accepted this.

Commissioner Clark thanked the Sheriff and County Manager for the update and work done.

Commissioner Chenette asked for an update on State coverage.

Sheriff King replied that they have a close relationship with the Southern Regional District/Troop A. He stated that the redistricting went well and he is confident that the citizens of York County are getting adequate police services. Commissioner Chenette replied that it continues to be concerning as the discussion of policing in rural portions of York County continues. County Manager Zinser stated that neither he or the Sheriff have been informed of any changes.

Commissioner Dutremble informed all that at a Hearing Last week, it was clear that everyone wants certain funds. MCCA has a lobbyist keeping track of this

Bill for us. He added that the State Police did not spend all of their budget and are looking for more personnel.

- e. Sheriff King/ Registrar Hammond to speak on fraudulent deed issues  
County Manager Zinser stated that this is a very concerning issue. Sheriff King is here to discuss this issue as is Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond via Zoom.

Sheriff King explained that he, the District Attorney, County Manager and Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond have met to discuss this matter.

He added that he and Register Hammond also met with the FBI and filed a report on their website. These matters are very difficult to solve. The FBI explained that they try to stop the money from the fraudulent land/property sales from being sent out of the United States as it is often sent overseas.

Sheriff King told of three instances in which land was sold by someone who was not the owner of the property.

Sheriff King informed all that he and Register of Deeds Hammond recently met with Senator Henry Ingwersen about the need for legislation. New York, Florida and Hew Hampshire have such legislation. There is a draft version of legislation in the Revisor's office currently. Sheriff King distributed a copy of the draft legislation to the Commissioners.

He stated that there is a need for more proof of ownership and gave an example of having an enhanced Notary signature to include a fingerprint or that real estate agents must pay a surety bond and/or out of state sellers pay a refundable fee.

Sheriff King informed all that they are working on a news story with Channel 13 on this topic. He added that Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond created a draft to hand out to property owners to alert them about this matter.

Register Hammond stated that the biggest issue is making sure the information is out there. Unfortunately, she stated, many victims are out of state and not aware anything is transpiring with their property.

She stated as keeper of the public records, she wants to try to help them secure their property to the best of their ability.

Commissioner Dutremble asked will this legislation be enacted this year, if passed? Sheriff King replied, yes.

- f. To review and approve bid for jail sewer upgrade  
County Manager Zinser explained that the specifications were advertised and that three bids were submitted. He introduced Facilities Manager Rick DeRochemont who referred to the memo given to the Commissioners. He stated that six to seven parties developed plans and a few visited the site. Manager DeRochemont explained that Bullet Point Engineering conducted the actual bidding process for us as it was part of their contract as the engineer. We met with the bidder afterward to review their bid. He added that a contingency was added.  
Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the purchase of the jail sewer grinder to Phelan Construction, LLC in the amount of \$1,374,883.00. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.  
County Manager Zinser specified that the funds to purchase this item would come out of the jail capital account.

- g. EMA request for Disaster Declaration  
Deputy Director Megan Arsenault gave the Board an update on the disaster declaration using a PowerPoint presentation. She stated that damages in York County range from \$15 million to \$20 million. Deputy Director Arsenault explained that they are working with Maine Emergency Management Agency to get the numbers. She added that there have been some challenges with individual submissions.  
(POWERPOINT PRESENTATION ATTACHED AS RECORD)  
Commissioner Chenette asked if the RAVE system was used in OOB and EMA Deputy Director Arsenault said it was. He asked who will be in touch with those who submitted disaster forms? Deputy Director Arsenault said she has gone to some of their homes and will make sure that all are contacted.  
Commissioner Chenette asked about resiliency and what can York County EMA do to assist so that these disasters do not keep happening? Deputy Director Arsenault replied that the towns are talking about areas that get hit often. They are working on mitigation plans such as asking the D.E.P. to allow higher seawalls.  
EMA Director Cleaves commented that there will be a meeting on March 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss.  
Commissioner Ring asked why the homeowner's property insurance wouldn't cover their damages.  
EMA Deputy Director Arsenault explained that some are not insured or underinsured. Therefore, any monies after insurance payments would be what the homeowner would put in a claim for.  
Commissioner Ring asked why wouldn't one have property insurance? Deputy Director Arsenault replied that perhaps it is too expensive or some do not have flood insurance so their damages might not be covered by their homeowners' policy. She continued that there are ancillary services that are covered by MEMA, also.  
DISCUSSION: Commissioner Chairperson Dutremble, on behalf of all the Commissioners, thanked EMA for the work that they do.

Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the Disaster Declaration.  
Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

## 6 OLD BUSINESS

- a. Dredge discussion  
County Manager Zinser explained that after the recent storms, the coastline has been decimated. Commissioner Chenette had requested that this item be put on the agenda. He continued that the process has been lengthy and that the Government is questioning whether the purchase of the dredge with ARPA funds is an allowable use. We answered all of their questions and are waiting to find out if they will allow the transfer of the dredge.  
Commissioner Chenette asked the County Manager if he needed any other assistance. The County Manager replied that he feels that we have answered all of their questions sufficiently. We submitted the answers last Friday and have not heard back yet.  
Commissioner Chenette stated that they should let us know if there are any lingering issues; correct?  
County Manager Zinser replied, yes.

Commissioner Ring commented that we purchased with ARPA funds that we could have used elsewhere, a dredge in the amount of \$1.5 million. Should we look at any other options we might have?

County Manager Zinser responded that this disaster has created a potential silver lining for York County. He continued that he and Art had a meeting and that there is no debate that the dredge needs to be operational. We may be able to operationalize the dredge in six months. The County could take over and use its undesignated funds to buy the equipment. We could front the money and run it through the Declaration. The Dredge Authority, stated the County Manager, is a bit away from getting the dredge operational as they want to use it as collateral.

County Manager Zinser commented that it is a big IF but that they are meeting with the individual who performed the inspection on the dredge to have a general conversation with him. He reminded all that we were told we could not run a testing lab and a vaccination center and get them underway as quickly as we did.

The County Manager continued that there are two avenues with one being the disposition of the dredge and the other using the Federally declared disaster to possibly operationalize the dredge sooner.

Commissioner Chenette asked what happens when the disaster money runs out? Will the taxpayers be on the hook to pay for it?

County Manager Zinser responded that it will allow us to use our own funding within the Disaster Declaration within the confines of Federal law. He reminded all that we are still dealing with disasters from 2015. This is an opportunity to get it going and take care of critical needs. It could most likely take three to four years from now before the disaster is fully repaired.

Commissioner Chenette asked if it would be helpful to involve the regional authorities to brainstorm this.

County Manager Zinser responded that it would be helpful to have a conversation with whomever we would assign it to through EMA.

Commissioner Chenette replied that it impacts those who have been working with erosion issues for quite some time.

County Manager Zinser and EMA Director Cleaves agree that more investigation is needed.

Kevin Roche from Save Our Shores addressed the Board and stated that this sounds like good news and that he totally agrees the goal is to get it working. We have a third option, he suggested. He stated that the Authority has had conversations regarding outsourcing.

County Manager Zinser informed the Commissioners that in other old business, there is a tentative agreement with the Teamsters. He explained that there was a series of circumstances on their part that delayed bargaining. Also, he stated that NCEU requested to get to the table early to begin bargaining for their next contract.

**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)**

None

**9 ADJOURN**

Commissioner Clark motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.