

## COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

**March 18, 2026**

The regular meeting of the York County Commissioners was held on Wednesday, March 18, 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, 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)

David Plavin, Save Our Shores (SOS) Saco, thanked the Commission and County staff for their work in bringing the dredge program from concept to operation over the past five years. He highlighted the successful completion of two dredging projects this year in Wells and Saco, noting positive results despite challenging conditions.

Mr. Plavin recognized key contributors, including County Manager Zinser, EMA Director Art Cleaves, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Chris McCall, and the harbormasters in both communities. He emphasized the program's strong potential to help coastal areas recover sand lost to storms and expressed interest in expanding participation to additional communities. He closed by expressing appreciation for the County's support and optimism about the program's continued growth.

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

- a. Commissioners' meeting of March 4, 2026

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to table the minutes of March 4, 2026. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried 5:0**

#### 3. TO APPROVE TREASURER'S WARRANTS

- a. Warrants to be approved on March 4, 2026, in the amount of \$1,080,680.32

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the warrant dated March 4, 2026, in the amount of \$1,080,680.32. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.  
Motion carried 5:0**

b. Warrants to be approved on March 11, 2026, in the amount of \$599,449.17

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the warrant dated March 11, 2026, in the amount of \$599,449.17. Commissioner Andrews seconded the motion.  
Motion carried 5:0**

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

Commissioner Ring reported that she attended the Senior Safety Fair held at the Regional Training Center the previous Friday. The event was very well attended, with over 100 participants, and received extremely positive feedback. Attendees enjoyed both the training sessions and the food, and she noted that the event was organized exceptionally well. Commissioner Ring expressed support for making the Senior Safety Fair an annual event because of its strong success.

#### **5. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Review/Discuss with possible approval RE: Referendum to eliminate elected Treasurer's position. (heard after item 5.b.)

The County Manager reported back to the Board regarding the potential elimination of the elected Treasurer position, which Commissioners discussed at the previous meeting. He noted that the position is largely ceremonial and holds no significant role in county government operations.

He explained the process required under state law: the Board must vote to abolish the elected Treasurer position, and once that vote is taken, the decision must be submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State within 30 days. To appear on the November ballot, the submission deadline is August 7, 2026. County Manager Zinser provided the requested reference materials in the agenda packet and offered to answer any questions.

Commissioner Ring asked whether the ballot question would read, *"Shall the position of elected county treasurer be abolished and replaced with a treasurer appointed by the county commissioners?"* County Manager Zinser confirmed that this exact wording is required by state law and would be the question submitted to the Secretary of State.

Commissioner Ring then asked whether eliminating the elected position would affect the title or role of the County's Finance Director. County Manager Zinser clarified that it would not. The County would still have a treasurer in a technical sense, but going forward the position would be appointed rather than elected. He explained that, consistent with common practice in municipalities and counties, the administrator or finance director would typically hold the technical treasurer title. He emphasized that within county government this designation functions primarily as a technical title.

Commissioner Dutremble recalled that during the last attempt to eliminate the elected Treasurer position, substantial misinformation was spread to voters. He cited statements made by a past candidate for Treasurer who inaccurately claimed that the elected Treasurer is responsible for safeguarding public funds, receiving revenues, overseeing financial administration, ensuring proper accounting practices, and

managing county purchasing. He stressed that these assertions were incorrect and contributed to voter confusion.

Commissioner Dutremble noted that in his nearly 20 years on the Board, the elected Treasurer has appeared at meetings very rarely, underscoring that the position plays no active role in county operations. He expressed concern that misinformation previously influenced the outcome and implied that this remains an obstacle in addressing the issue.

Commissioner Chenette first confirmed with the County Manager that the ballot language required for eliminating the elected Treasurer position is identical to what appeared in the previous referendum, noting that it must be read verbatim into the record if the Board proceeds.

He then expressed appreciation for the County's professional finance staff, citing their strong expertise and dedication. He contrasted this with financial management challenges seen in other counties across the state and emphasized the value of York County's stable financial practices.

Commissioner Chenette stated that he is reluctant to revisit the referendum because the voters recently chose, by approximately 70%, to retain an elected Treasurer. He stressed the importance of respecting that mandate and not disregarding the will of the voters based on personal opinions about the position's impact or the individual serving in it.

He also noted that the Board has not engaged in recent discussions about how to better utilize or empower the elected Treasurer's role, particularly in areas such as the budget process and public engagement. Because no substantial changes have occurred since the last referendum and given the likelihood that voters would again choose to retain the position, he stated he would not support placing the question on the ballot.

Commissioner Clark stated that, in his nine years as a County Commissioner and prior service on the County Budget Committee, he observed very limited participation from both the current and previous elected treasurers. He noted that the current treasurer has appeared so infrequently over the past four years that the number of appearances could be counted on one hand.

Commissioner Clark emphasized that the elected Treasurer performs no meaningful duties, which led the Board to reduce the position's compensation to \$500 per year. He contrasted this with the County's professional finance staff, who are qualified, trained, and responsible for actual financial management. By comparison, the elected Treasurer position carries no required qualifications, allowing any resident of legal age who gathers signatures to run.

He asserted that many voters likely did not understand the previous referendum question, leading them to vote "no" by default. He described the Treasurer role as a vestigial, pointless position given the County's modern financial management structure. Clark stated he strongly disagrees with Commissioner Chenette's viewpoint and supports putting the question back on the ballot. If voters again choose to keep the position, the County will continue paying \$500 for a role he believes has no functional value.

Commissioner Dutremble reiterated that the elected Treasurer position is obsolete in modern county government. Drawing on his 30 years of experience working for the City of Biddeford, he noted that treasurer responsibilities have long been consolidated under professional finance directors or city managers because the role has fundamentally changed over the past few decades.

He stated that York County now has a competent finance department capable of handling all required duties, making the elected Treasurer position unnecessary and effectively a waste of the \$500 annual stipend. Commissioner Dutremble also emphasized that during the previous referendum he frequently heard from residents who said they did not understand the ballot question, and he believed misinformation contributed significantly to the outcome. For these reasons, he stated he would support sending the question back to voters.

**MOTION: Commissioner Ring moved to table the approval of the elimination of the elected Treasurer position until May 6, 2026. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Motion carried 3:2 with Commissioners Dutremble and Clark opposing**

b. EMA to provide update on Dredge activities (heard before item 5.a.)

County Manager Zinser introduced the agenda item, noting that EMA was invited to provide an update on current dredge operations. He referenced earlier public comments from David Plavin expressing appreciation for the program's progress. County Manager Zinser noted that EMA Director Art Cleaves would deliver the briefing on behalf of EMA.

He reported that dredge operations are winding down for the season. The dredge will be brought back into Wells, dismantled, and stored onshore for the summer while the County evaluates next steps and future planning. County Manager Zinser noted that those discussions will take place in the coming weeks.

He also welcomed Saco City Administrator Ryan Pelletier, who was present for the update. County Manager Zinser then turned the floor over to Art Cleaves for the full briefing and Q&A.

Director Art Cleaves provided an update on the dredge program and recent coastal restoration work. He reported that all coastal community projects have been completed, including the Old Orchard Beach trucked-in sand project and the separate dredging efforts. Director Cleaves thanked David Plavin and Kevin Roche for their advocacy, and the Commissioners for their support, highlighting Commissioner Chenette's assistance with last-minute challenges.

He noted that the project faced multiple hurdles, including permitting issues, unexpected breakdowns, and an overlooked permit application, but all work ultimately concluded successfully. The County is now receiving reimbursement payments from FEMA and MEMA, and communities should receive those funds soon.

Director Cleaves emphasized that the dredge program produced significant cost savings for municipalities, both in procurement and project execution, and that such work would have been difficult for individual towns to complete on their own. The newly restored sand provides critical coastal protection following severe storm damage, and future projects will remain eligible for federal reimbursement.

He reported that one Old Orchard Beach project is already fully approved under FEMA Category G, and the County expects CDS funding for engineering, followed by construction funds. Over the next 18 months, additional projects should advance to Category G as well. Director Cleaves concluded by inviting any questions from Commissioners.

Commissioner Chenette thanked Director Cleaves for his leadership and extensive work on the dredge project, echoing earlier remarks from David Plavin. He noted that the project would not have succeeded

without Director Cleaves and his team dedicating substantial time and effort and emphasized that their work has given coastal communities much-needed hope.

Looking ahead, Commissioner Chenette asked about next steps following the upcoming dismantling and summer storage of the dredge. He inquired whether the goal is to bring stakeholders together to discuss expanding and coordinating future coastal community participation, including potential involvement from towns like Scarborough. He asked what support or resources would be most helpful to EMA in organizing those next steps and stakeholder discussions.

Director Cleaves agreed that stakeholder coordination is an essential next step for the dredge program. He explained that the County has strengthened relationships with state-level partners, including the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund (MIAF) and the State Coastal Resiliency Office, both of which offer important grant opportunities. EMA is also engaging with local coastal resiliency groups in each community, with a few more still to bring into the process, as well as working on habitat enhancement efforts that support additional federal funding eligibility.

Director Cleaves outlined the program's progression:

- **Step 1:** Completing emergency protective measures (recent dredging and sand replacement).
- **Step 2:** Advancing projects to FEMA Category G for long-term recovery work.
- **Step 3:** Developing a sustainable, long-range plan for ongoing beach maintenance, which he emphasized is a significant economic concern for the entire state.

He noted the importance of educating state legislators, particularly those from non-coastal areas, about coastal resiliency needs. EMA is coordinating with statewide partners, including the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) formerly Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) office, and other coastal counties to ensure broader understanding and support. Director Cleaves concluded by hoping his explanation adequately addressed the Commissioner's question.

Commissioner Chenette suggested that, once the legislative session concludes and preparations begin for the next dredge season, it would be beneficial to invite state legislators to see the dredge in person. He noted that firsthand experience would help lawmakers, especially those less familiar with coastal issues, understand the dredge's importance in mitigating coastal erosion and supporting local economies.

Director Cleaves agreed, stating that such outreach is already underway. He has spoken with Representative Gramlich and Senator Bailey about scheduling a visit, and noted that staff from the MOCA office, who previously toured the site under harsh weather conditions, expressed strong interest in returning. Cleaves emphasized the need to continue these engagement efforts and thanked the Commissioner for his support.

David Plavin emphasized the importance of establishing a strong connection with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, noting that the County-owned dredge is now capable of performing work in federal waters. He identified several locations with federally maintained channels, such as Saco, Scarborough, Ogunquit, and Kittery, where the Corps traditionally conducts dredging and where future collaboration could be beneficial.

Mr. Plavin stated that the Saco River federal channel is in particular need of dredging and suggested that the County should make the Corps aware that its dredge is available and capable of assisting with these projects. He also highlighted the positive working relationships developed during recent dredge

operations and stressed the value of maintaining those partnerships. He concluded that the Army Corps will be an essential partner in the program's future success.

County Manager Zinser confirmed that discussions with partners, including the Army Corps and others, are already underway and will be critical moving forward. He stressed that long-term success of the dredge program will ultimately depend on securing adequate funding.

County Manager Zinser explained that EMA is actively pursuing additional funding opportunities, and the next major milestone is advancing projects to FEMA Category G, which requires substantial engineering work on impacted beaches. He expects the County will begin by collaborating with a "coalition of the willing", the municipalities most eager to participate, and expanding from there.

He also noted that the County will submit another Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) request this year for additional dredge equipment to continue building program capacity. County Manager Zinser closed by commending EMA for its extensive work and leadership on the initiative.

- c. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss to present new hires/transfers:
  - i. To seek hiring approval of Mateus Zola in the position of full time Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's office with an effective date of March 23, 2026.

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the hiring of Mateus Zola in the position of full-time Correctional Officer in the Sheriff's office with an effective date of March 23, 2026. Commissioner Andrews 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)**

None.

**9. ADJOURN**

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

Meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Murray  
Executive Assistant to the County Manager