

## **COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

**January 21, 2026**

The regular meeting of the York County Commissioners was held on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 4:30 PM at the York County Government Building in Alfred.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

Richard Clark

Robert Andrews

Justin Chenette

Donna Ring

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:**

Richard R. Dutremble

County Manager Greg Zinser, Deputy County Manager Linda Hutchins-Corliss, Sheriff William King, Facilities Director Rick deRochemont, Finance Director Lori Lemieux, EMA Director Arthur Cleaves (via Zoom), Deputy EMA Director Megan Arsenault, and Regional Training Center Director Rod Hooper were present at the meeting.

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**ITEM**

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

None.

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

- a. Commissioners' meeting of January 7, 2026

**MOTION:** Commissioner Clark moved to table the approval of the minutes of January 7, 2026. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.

**Motion carried 4:0**

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

- a. Warrants to be approved on January 7, 2026, in the amount of \$1,806,107.45

**MOTION:** Commissioner Clark moved to approve the warrant dated January 7, 2026, in the amount of \$1,806,107.45. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.

**Motion carried 4:0**

- b. Warrants to be approved on January 14, 2026, in the amount of \$1,072,280.55

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the warrant dated January 14, 2026, in the amount of \$1,072,280.55. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried 4:0**

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

Commissioner Clark reported that a ceremony was held earlier at the York County Regional Training Center, where the County Manager and the President of York County Community College signed agreements supporting collaboration between the two entities. He noted strong attendance, including the County Manager and Director Rod Hooper, who oversees the facility. Commissioner Clark shared that the building is nearly complete, with only minor punch list items remaining, and that classes are already underway. He described the event as a positive milestone for both the county and the college.

Commissioner Andrews expressed strong enthusiasm for the new programs at the York County Regional Training Center, noting that it will have a meaningful impact on residents across York County. He emphasized that the educational opportunities offered there will allow individuals to pursue skills and achievements they may not have previously thought possible, ultimately improving lives for many years to come.

Commissioner Ring stated that she is proud of how York County has used its ARPA funds (funding the construction of the Regional Training Center and the Recovery Center) and extended special thanks to County Manager Greg Zinser and Regional Training Center Director Rod Hooper for their significant contributions to the project. Commissioner Ring underscored that their work is deeply appreciated and has greatly benefited the citizens of York County.

Commissioner Chenette echoed the positive sentiments of others, praising county leadership. He noted that statewide, York County is gaining recognition from legislators and county officials for its accomplishments, partnerships, and efficiency. He highlighted that the project being completed ahead of schedule demonstrates the dedication of county administrators and staff. Commissioner Chenette concluded by expressing excitement for what will come next and confidence that York County's success will inspire similar efforts elsewhere.

County Manager Zinser expressed appreciation for the kind words shared by the commissioners but emphasized that the accomplishments at the Recovery Center and Training Center were truly a team effort. He noted that many individuals across the county contributed at various stages of the projects, and he wanted to ensure that everyone's role was recognized. County Manager Zinser stressed that the success should not be attributed to him alone, credit belongs to the entire county team. He closed by offering thanks for the acknowledgment.

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

- a. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss to present new hires/transfers:
  - i. To seek hiring approval of Jeffrey Cullen in the full-time position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the YC Regional Training Center office with an effective date of February 9, 2026.

**MOTION: Commissioner Clark moved to approve the hiring of Jeffrey Cullen in the position of Reserve Public Safety Instructor II in the YC Regional Training Center office with an effective date of February 9, 2026. Commissioner Ring seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried 4:0**

b. To Review and Approve Acton-Shapleigh Law Enforcement Agreement

County Manager Zinser presented the Acton–Shapleigh Law Enforcement Agreement, noting it is similar to the recently approved (January 7, 2026) Waterboro agreement. The contract takes effect January 1, 2026, and updates the vehicle-use provisions to a lease-style, hourly billing model. Under this approach, the towns pay only for the hours the county is present, the vehicle cost is divided to establish an hourly rate, and billing reflects actual usage. County Manager Zinser noted this structure also eliminates complaints about seeing county vehicles in other towns during overtime.

**MOTION: Commissioner Ring moved to approve the Acton-Shapleigh Law Enforcement Agreement as presented. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried 4:0**

c. Policy Discussion – hiring candidates between 16 and 17 years old

County Manager Zinser explained that the county has been discussing whether to allow the hiring of individuals under age 18, a practice not traditionally used but now relevant due to increasing interest from younger applicants seeking part-time or seasonal work, particularly in outdoor facilities, groundskeeping, EMA and similar tasks.

After reviewing county policies, County Manager Zinser noted that there is no explicit prohibition against hiring 16- or 17-year-olds, although doing so would be a change from past practice. He referenced a memo prepared by Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss outlining the considerations and attaching relevant child labor law restrictions. These laws specify prohibited tasks for minors, including:

- Operating heavy machinery
- Roofing
- Excavation or demolition work
- Driving motor vehicles
- Working with explosives
- Working in confined spaces

County Manager Zinser emphasized that as long as the county avoids assigning minors to these restricted activities, hiring younger candidates for appropriate roles would be permissible. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss clarified that the roles under consideration are *reserve positions*, such as summer help and support roles across various county departments.

Commissioner Ring stated that while the idea of hiring 16- and 17-year-olds has potential benefits, there are also concerns. She emphasized that nearly every county office handles confidential information, making it challenging to place teenagers in administrative environments without risking accidental exposure.

Commissioner Ring further noted that younger workers often require more training and closer supervision than typical employees, which places additional demands on staff who may not be prepared or willing to take on that responsibility. Reflecting on prior summer help, she recalled that overseeing younger workers could be difficult and time consuming. Because of these factors, she stressed that the county must be very

deliberate and careful about the roles delegated to minors and must remain mindful of the increased oversight burden placed on existing staff.

Deputy County Manager/HR Director Linda Hutchins-Corliss explained that the county is considering specific, appropriate placements for 16 and 17 year old candidates, emphasizing that any assignments would be carefully selected and closely supervised. She provided an example of a current 17 year old applicant interested in Emergency Management, where opportunities include helping with general public education efforts, assembling informational packets for community events, and similar nonsensitive tasks. She stressed that minors would never work alone and would always be supervised by staff.

Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss noted that reserve positions do not exist in departments such as Probate, Deeds, the District Attorney's Office, or the Sheriff's Office, so minors would not be placed there. Additional possibilities being considered include summer help for outdoor tasks, such as gardening or grounds support, particularly for students in local agricultural programs. Overall, she reiterated that the county would be highly selective about where minors are placed to ensure their experience is both appropriate and educational.

Commissioner Ring stated that if the county intends to hire a minor for a reserve or seasonal position, she will want to review a clear job description outlining the specific tasks the individual would perform. She emphasized that any such position must have a well-defined scope of duties before moving forward.

Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss explained that the minor being considered would be brought in under a Disaster Assistance Responder (DAR) "reserve general" position. She added that, if the Commissioners prefer, the county can prepare a specific task-based job description tailored to that individual's duties. She stated that doing so would not be a problem and could be provided as requested.

Commissioner Andrews shared that his own early work experiences were positive and influential, thanks to adults who guided him. He noted that opportunities for teens can be meaningful and beneficial, and he encouraged the county to embrace efforts that positively impact young people in the community.

Commissioner Chenette said he valued work opportunities at that age and asked how the proposed reserve roles differ from a paid internship, suggesting an internship structure might offer stronger résumé benefits for youth.

Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss explained that the county does not currently have internship programs, other than in the District Attorney's Office, so the proposed roles would be placed under an existing DAR reserve classification. She noted that internships are typically structured and goal-oriented, whereas these reserve opportunities would be occasional, supervised tasks such as assisting EMA with educational outreach or basic office help that avoids confidential material. She emphasized that minors would only participate when specific opportunities arise, rather than on a fixed weekly schedule, and placing them under the DAR category also ensures proper workers' compensation coverage.

County Manager Zinser noted that while the county offers structured internships in the DA's Office, the roles under discussion would be reserve-type positions, not internships. He suggested focusing youth opportunities in appropriate departments such as the Training Center, EMA, or Facilities, where tasks are hands-on and low-risk. Departments handling sensitive information, like Probate or the DA's Office, would not be suitable. He emphasized that hires would still follow standard processes and that minors'

duties must be assigned carefully. County Manager Zinser added that these reserve workers could help support workload needs while giving teens valuable workforce exposure.

Commissioner Ring clarified that she was not opposed to hiring minors but wanted to note the concerns she raised. County Manager Zinser agreed, stating that some departments are more appropriate for youth placements than others. Commissioner Ring then asked whether hiring minors would affect the county's liability insurance, and County Manager Zinser replied that it would not create any additional liability beyond what the county already has. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss added that as long as minors follow the normal hiring process, including approval for DAR placements, there are no insurance issues.

County Manager Zinser further noted that hiring teens is comparable to youth working in other jobs, provided child labor rules are followed. He highlighted the Training Center as an excellent opportunity to engage interested students, particularly those from Sanford's vocational and firefighting programs, and expose them to hands-on learning experiences that build enthusiasm for future careers.

Commissioner Chenette asked how the county would make youth reserve opportunities visible to local high school students. County Manager Zinser suggested posting and advertising the positions rather than soliciting individuals. Deputy County Manager/HR Director Hutchins-Corliss noted they can add information to the website and share a flyer with school guidance and employment coordinators, using existing contacts. Commissioners agreed this would help broaden awareness. County Manager Zinser confirmed no policy change is required, as current policy does not prohibit hiring minors; this is simply a departure from past practice.

Commissioner Clark expressed support for hiring young people from nearby communities whenever the opportunity arises, stating that it is the right thing to do.

Commissioner Chenette asked if a motion was needed. County Manager Zinser explained that no motion is needed because no policy prohibits hiring someone under 18, noting that the application only asks if the applicant is 18 or older but does not require it. He said the matter was being brought to the Commissioners because it would be a deviation from past practice, and staff wanted to ensure the Board was comfortable with that.

#### d. 2027 Budget Goals and Objectives

County Manager Zinser reported that the current budget is on target, crediting strong fiscal management by department heads. FY27 budget development has begun, and wage and benefit increases will follow existing union and non-union contract terms, generally in the 3-4% range.

He highlighted two major cost pressures for FY27:

1. Significant energy cost increases - The county's electricity rates have more than tripled following the expiration of a favorable five-year contract. This is expected to add roughly \$350,000 in new annual costs, particularly affecting large facilities like the jail and the new Training Center.
2. New buildings coming online - The Regional Training Center will move from a half-year to a full-year budget, adding an estimated \$300,000 in additional operating costs.

County Manager Zinser also warned of potential lost revenue due to proposed state legislation that would further reduce the county's share of the real estate transfer tax, possibly a \$300,000 annual impact. Jail funding remains uncertain and is expected to follow the same challenges of prior years.

He concluded that aside from wages, benefits, energy, and new facilities, no other major issues are anticipated yet, and department-level requests (including any personnel additions) are still unknown at this early stage.

Commissioner Chenette asked how projected Training Center revenue would factor into the FY27 budget as the facility comes fully online. County Manager Zinser explained that the Training Center's operational costs (staffing, consumables, utilities) are included in the county budget, but training program revenue is handled separately, in a dedicated account used to offset training costs and keep courses self-sustaining. He noted that future net revenue, particularly from commercial or private-sector training rentals, could help subsidize training for public safety agencies, but those figures are not yet known.

County Manager Zinser emphasized that while operational expenses will increase as the center grows, training programs themselves have always been self-sufficient and will continue to be. He expects outside entities and potentially state agencies to generate rental income once programming is established. He also updated commissioners on ongoing development efforts, noting that the county has already secured roughly \$500,000 in committed funding and support, not including food pantry donations.

Commissioner Chenette also asked about past compensation discussions for the Probate Judge. County Manager Zinser confirmed that the county granted the judge an additional 10-12 days last budget cycle and that he continues to meet regularly with the judge, including regarding current legislative efforts to shift probate judges to state employment, a proposal County Manager Zinser described as problematic and potentially harmful to local access and accountability.

Commissioner Clark cautioned that the county should take a conservative approach going into the upcoming budget cycle, noting significant unknowns about the full operating costs of both the new Training Center and the Recovery Center. He emphasized that expenses will almost certainly rise but that the magnitude is still unclear.

Commissioner Ring agreed, stating there is not yet enough concrete information to make firm judgments. County Manager Zinser responded that the discussion at this stage is not about specific numbers but about overall direction. He explained that the county has detailed preliminary cost models for both the Training Center and the Recovery Center and will bring forward a responsible budget. The Recovery Center will be phased in, beginning with detox and a 30-day program for the first six months before expanding, because implementing all components at once is not feasible.

Commissioner Chenette acknowledged the need to wait for clearer information before making major decisions.

County Manager Zinser added that current public health funding levels are sufficient to support detox and a 30-day program without revenue, and more accurate long-term projections will become available in the following year as operations stabilize. He committed to sharing detailed modeling and continuing discussions as the budget process moves forward.

Commissioner Chenette recommended that the Commission take an active position on Representative Gattine's emergency shelter bill by sending a formal letter to the county's legislative delegation. He noted that when the Commission collectively signs onto a letter, it carries meaningful weight and strengthens legislators' ability to advocate in Augusta. He asked that staff return at the next meeting with the specific financial impact of the proposed shelter tax changes on York County so a letter can be drafted.

He emphasized that while the County Commissioners Association advocates on statewide issues, local voices, especially from elected county officials, tend to be more influential with legislators. He encouraged each commissioner to share the letter directly with the legislators in their districts, as personal outreach is often more effective than messages delivered solely through a lobbyist.

County Manager Zinser agreed, stating he would prepare a draft letter for the next meeting and acknowledged the importance of following advocacy concerns with direct communication to the Legislature.

## **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)**

- a. Enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (F) review of confidential records pursuant to Title 1, Section 402-paragraph 3 (Public Records) Q- “Security plans, staffing plans, security procedures, architectural drawings or risk assessments prepared for emergency events that are prepared for or by or kept in the custody of the Department of Corrections or a county jail if there is a reasonable possibility that public release or inspection of the records would endanger the life or physical safety of any individual or disclose security plans and procedures not generally known by the general public. Information contained in records covered by this paragraph may be disclosed to state and county officials if necessary to carry out the duties of the office of the officials or the Department of Corrections under conditions that protect the information from further disclosure.”

**Motion:** Commissioner Clark motioned to enter executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (F) review of confidential records pursuant to Title 1, Section 402-paragraph 3 (Public Records) Q- “Security plans, staffing plans, security procedures, architectural drawings or risk assessments prepared for emergency events that are prepared for or by or kept in the custody of the Department of Corrections or a county jail if there is a reasonable possibility that public release or inspection of the records would endanger the life or physical safety of any individual or disclose security plans and procedures not generally known by the general public. Information contained in records covered by this paragraph may be disclosed to state and county officials if necessary to carry out the duties of the office of the officials or the Department of Corrections under conditions that protect the information from further disclosure.” Commissioner Ring seconded the motion.  
**Motion carried 4:0.**

**Motion:** Commissioner Clark motioned to come out of executive session. Commissioner Ring seconded the motion. Vice Chair Andrews noted no action was taken.

**Motion carried 4:0**

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

None.

**9. ADJOURN**

**Motion: Commissioner Ring motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion.**

**Motion carried 4:0**

Meeting adjourned at 6:33pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Murray

Executive Assistant to the County Manager