

## COMMISSIONERS MEETING

January 15, 2025

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 15, 2025, A. D. at 4:30 P. M.

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

County Manager Greg Zinser and Deputy County Manger Linda Corliss were present at the meeting.

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

01-15-2025

### ITEM

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

David Plavin, Vice President of SOS Saco Bay thanked County Manager Zinser and the EMA team, especially Deputy Director Megan Arsenault, Director Art Cleaves and emergency Preparedness Coordinator Chris McCall with their efforts to get a countywide beach management program in place. Mr. Plavin added that it is disappointing that we are not getting greater participation from York County Coastal communities. We need to get MOAs from all towns signed. A coalition of nine communities trying to get funding is much stronger, stated Mr. Plavin. He asked if the county will continue on this push? County Manager Zinser replied, yes and we also need to move forward with the towns that want to work with us. Some towns are expressing some hesitation, but we will focus on towns that want to work with us and as we move forward other towns hopefully will come along, explained the County Manager. He added that we are not giving up hope and continue to push and keep inviting them to our meetings. We need to start focusing on the work.

David Plavin commented to please reach out if we can do anything and added that we have a lot of support from (Senator) Donna Bailey.

Commissioner Chenette asked about the towns that are having hesitation? County Manager Zinser replied that some of the towns don't have beach and dune-related issues. Some had infrastructure issues (Category B). He added that the wheels of government move slow, and we need to give them time to work things out.

Some don't see the need as they aren't going to necessarily be bringing anything to the table.

The County Manager commented that he is hopeful that we will be able to get some work done this season.

County Manager Zinser stated that he wants to continue to stress that the MOAs are great and we want a formalized coalition.

Kevin Roche, President of SOS Saco Bay stated that he wanted to speak specifically to two communities regarding the DEP hold up for Wells and Saco. It needs to be stressed this is an emergency situation especially in Saco. We need to know who at the State we can contact and how we can assist the County to make sure this can be done this season. He added that there have also been a couple of hold ups with the State. Some towns who haven't signed MOU's may have concerns that the State will come in.

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

- a. Commissioners' meeting of January 2, 2025  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the minutes. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.  
Vote 4-0.

**3 TO APPROVE TREASURER'S WARRANTS**

- a. Warrants to be approved on January 2, 2025 in the amount of \$645,697.36  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- b. Warrants to be approved on January 8, 2025 in the amount of \$462,102.53  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the warrants. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.

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

Commissioner Clark reported that he attended the annual Maine County Commissioners' Association meeting in Augusta last Wednesday as proxy for Commissioner Dutremble. There was a discussion of state contribution of funding county jails. Commissioner Clark continued that it is a "heavy lift" they (State of Maine) don't seem to want to contribute. Commissioner Ring also attended the meeting and stated there were many ideas discussed and legislation being put in but the State doesn't have a large appetite to increase funding to jails.

**5 NEW BUSINESS**

- a. To hear tax abatement denial appeal for Richard and Karen Hockney of Limerick-  
County Manager Zinser swore Richard Hockney in via ZOOM.  
Richard Hockney shared a screen to show the tax map depicting his property. He stated that he has owned his cottage for over 30 years. The right of way allows three owners to get to their three cottages. He has been maintaining the right of way for the years he has owned the cottage and it has a lot of water runoff. In 2010, Frank Carroll approached him and asked him to buy the right of way. He bought it and paved it. The town combined that area with his lot 17 and made it one property and then calculated the total area and calculated the whole property to charge him for taxes, he stated.

Commissioner Ring commented that in reviewing the information provided, she doesn't see any comparables other than your (Mr. Hockney) suggestions of what you think the land is valued at. She added that there was no appraisal provided either. Therefore, Commissioner Ring stated that she cannot tell if other similar areas are being taxed the same or not.

Mr. Hockney asked do you mean an assessment that would be provided for the original property or for the whole property?

County Manager Zinser clarified (to Mr. Hockney) that nothing was given to support your requested reduction.

Mr. Hockney offered to provide comparables. County Manager Zinser replied that is up to the Board.

Commissioner Chenette asked are you're saying that row strip shouldn't be added to the assessment, but you own that strip; correct? Why shouldn't the land be considered part of your assessment, asked Commissioner Chenette.

Mr. Hockney replied because it is not usable land and also a right of way for two other properties. I can't build on it, stated Mr. Hockney.

Commissioner Chenette asked Mr. Hockney if he believed there is a difference between buildable and usable. You are using it (the right of way), stated Commissioner Chenette.

Richard Hockney responded he is using it and so are my abutters.

County Manager Zinser swore in Michael O'Donnell, assessor's agent for the Town of Limerick.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that he would like to make a few points.

1. Limerick assessors believe \$455,000 on this property is fair market value. We don't believe this is excessive and no evidence was presented to prevent this.

2. Discriminatory value- many properties shared driveways, etc. so therefore there is no evidence of discrimination.

3. There are some features that we pay more attention to than others. This is a small lot but we may have chosen to add value because of the uniqueness of this property. The majority (of this property) is lake frontage.

The shared driveway is sub optimal, but we could have added more value due to waterfront point on property.

To earn an abatement, you have to show you were meaningfully overvalued and we don't believe this to be true.

No questions from the Commissioners of Mr. O'Donnell and no follow up questions for Mr. Hockney.

Commissioner Chenette motioned to deny Richard Hockney's request for a tax abatement. Commissioner Ring seconded the motion.

Vote 4-0.

County Manager Zinser explained that the Commissioners will be provided with the Findings of Fact to vote on at their next meeting.

b. Deputy County Manager/H.R. Director Corliss to present the following new hires and/or transfers:

i. Justin Hanson in the position of full-time Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 3, 2025

Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the hiring of Justin Hanson in the position of full-time Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 3, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Commissioner Ring asked if there will be an academy any time soon? Deputy County Manager/H.R. Director Corliss thought the first

of March. Sheriff King confirmed that was correct. Vote 4-0.

- ii. Brittany Roberts in the position of full-time Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 3, 2025  
Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the hiring of Brittany Roberts in the position of full-time Corrections Officer in the Sheriff's Office with a date of hire of February 3, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- iii. Catherine Wood in the position of full-time Maintenance Technician I in the Facilities Department with a date of hire of January 21, 2025  
Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the hiring of Catherine Wood in the position of full-time Maintenance Technician I in the Facilities Department with a date of hire of January 21, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- iv. Chris Guay transferring from Legal Secretary to Grand Jury Appeals Manager within the District Attorney's Office effective January 27, 2025  
Commissioner Ring approved the transfer of Chris Guay from Legal Secretary to Grand Jury Appeals Manager within the D.A.'s office effective January 27, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- v. Kendra Smith transferring from Legal Secretary to Trial Manager within the District Attorney's Office effective January 21, 2025.  
Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the transfer of Kendra Smith from Legal Secretary to Trial Manager within the D.A.'s office effective January 21, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- c. To schedule tax abatement denial appeal (recommended date of February 19, 2025)  
Commissioner Clark motioned to approve the date of February 19, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- d. Sheriff's recommendation to promote Corrections Officer Ken Hamilton to Corporal with an effective date of January 20, 2025-  
Sheriff King approached the Board and informed the Commissioners that Ken Hamilton is an 18-year veteran of the Sheriff's Office and is very deserving of the promotion.  
Commissioner Ring motioned to approve the promotion of Ken Hamilton to Corporal effective January 20, 2025. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0.
- e. To discuss 'FY2026 budget (goals, objectives, etc.)  
County Manager Zinser referred to the budget reports circulated to the Commissioners and stated that everything is running just slightly under budget at this time. He explained that he wanted to let the Commissioners know where he sees things heading. He stated that they will be seeing wages and benefits increases across the Board. The County Manager informed the Board that he is already in communications with a couple of Unions as the MSEA and FOP contracts expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Other unavoidable items include electricity. We belong to a consortium and have received \$40,000 in refunds every year so this has allowed us to keep rates level. We have been paying low market rates and unfortunately this is coming to an end in November of 2025. We have started conversations with

our Broker and are assembling our electricity usage reports. We are anticipating a sizable increase.

We will have cost increases for IT, phone and computer software programs. There is a higher utilization by departments.

County Manager Zinser continued that there will be cost increases on the medical side. We have contractual obligations to increase contributions. The jail medical services will see an increase.

The dispatch contract will be going up. There will be some increases for outside agencies.

County Manager Zinser explained that we need to start anticipating some costs associated with the Training Center budget. We are going to be working with York County Community College to turn the Training Center into an EMS Training Center.

County Manager Zinser informed all that we might be taking ownership in late 2025. We will need to set aside money for operational expenses so you should anticipate this in the budget and we will try to get offsets.

We will be bringing the current Layman Way Recovery Center to an end on June 30<sup>th</sup> so we can begin to operationalize the new Recovery Center. The cost to furnish the new Recovery Center is around \$2 million. We will need that money to begin buying items so money from the Layman Way Recovery Center will be directed there. There will be no additional folks as the program will be ending June 30<sup>th</sup> or thereabouts.

County Manager Zinser continued that at some point we will be responsible for paying operational costs for the new (recovery) center. There is a chance it will be ours by the end of the "FY 2026 budget.

We will be funding it with a combination of MaineCare and our existing funding.

We can cover the gap with the \$1.2 million currently set aside for LWRC, explained County Manager Zinser.

Our modeling is based on the current MaineCare rates at 70% utilization with 80 people employed. We will be working with an M.D. We have been talking with a doctor who has agreed to come on to help us (Medical Director).

We will do our best to offset costs. The Governor's proposal does include an additional \$4 million for the jails but we don't know the formula.

We have been housing Oxford County inmates for a while resulting in \$600,000 in boarding revenue. The Jail right now is in an okay position.

County Manager Zinser informed all that we are seeing a little increase in Deeds revenues. We are \$150,000 to \$200,000 over where we were last year so we perhaps can keep revenues where they are.

There was a conversation in early December with department heads to start thinking about their budgets.

County Manager Zinser asked the Commissioners to tell him what their goals might be and what they'd like to see.

Commissioner Chenette asked the County Manager if we are still anticipating that sizable gap? What are we doing to "soften that blow" in not just this budget but the next one too.

County Manager Zinser replied that we are bringing Layman Way to an end. That gives us those available funds to invest into the new Recovery Center. The big issue is the outfitting of the facilities. We have received \$2 million in CDS funding for the Training Center to outfit it. These funds will pay for the burn tower. We just received the bids today for training props. These will be covered by CDS money.

County Manager Zinser stated that we have ARPA money, OPIOID money, reserves and other CDS money and interest that has accrued (\$1.6 million) to help offset costs.

\$21.9 million is the cost of the Recovery Center approved by the Commissioners. We are confident that we may be able to drive that contract down with some cost engineering to see savings of about \$2 million.

We were made aware that Davis-Bacon rules are not required for the Recovery Center. They are only required when FEMA money is used so they do apply to the Training Center.

The County Manager stated that the total cost of the new buildings today is \$43 million. We have about \$41.5 million.

We are having lots of conversations to include maybe having the State Jail Woodshop help us out with furniture. Perhaps York County Community College can provide us with equipment.

The County Manager also reminded all that Landry French has \$1.5 million of contingency built in.

Commissioner Chenette commented that at a future meeting it would be nice to see our development programs, i.e. Naming opportunities, etc.

County Manager Zinser replied that the Foundation Board is meeting the end of this month and I will have Rachel here to explain that to you.

Commissioner Ring stated that she also wants to have a conversation regarding contract deputies regarding where we should go with this.

County Manager Zinser stated that we can have that conversation tonight.

Commissioner Ring stated that they interfere with the union contracts and pit deputies against deputies.

She continued that she believes that rural towns need law enforcement and feels that we should be responsible for providing it.

The County Manager asked but what does that mean as some towns want their person in their town.

Commissioner Ring replied that is difficult to manage. We need to decide on how we are going to do this.

Sheriff King stated that managing the contract deputy program is very cumbersome and takes an inordinate amount of time. We tried to stop the customization of each contract but received a lot of push back from the towns. We have five deputies that are dependent upon those contracts, explained Sheriff King. This limits us from allocating resources.

County Manager Zinser commented that there are a lot of positives here as there are some vacancies. Also, there are three School Resource Officer positions that we have grants for. We can reposition grant monies.

County Manager Zinser reminded all that even if we bring the deputies back, we still have the same area to patrol.

Sheriff King informed all that the grants of today are not grants of yesterday and are very limiting.

Commissioner Clark stated that he takes exception with Commissioner Ring's position. He informed all that he represents five towns that pay 1/3 of the county tax and support their own police departments. And then we have to support towns who do not want to support their police services. People who want services can pay for them, he said. Commissioner Clark added that he doesn't see why it should be shifted to towns and cities that pay for police protection.

Commissioner Ring responded that she thinks we need to get past urban vs. rural as they are the ones that are absorbing the (jail) costs.

Commissioner Clark replied that he doesn't believe that is true.

Residents in my towns look at what they send to the county and ask themselves what do they get for this?

He continued that he believes that it is not unreasonable to ask towns who don't have their own police departments to pay some of the freight.

Commissioner Chenette stated that both Commissioners make valid points.

My district has both. He continued that what he is missing as a commissioner is the blueprint and analysis of this plan. If that shift took place what is the impact to York County taxpayers. I can't make a decision without this information. What would the plan be for rural communities as we shift out? He added that he needs more data points in front of him when it wasn't on the agenda. Perhaps there needs to be a committee to hash this out. Also, put it on the agenda for the public to weigh in.

County Manager Zinser responded to both Commissioners' points and stated that this is easy to put together in terms of the tax rate (impact).

He added that he thinks we will still have to have some semblance of contract deputies.

County Manager Zinser suggested that maybe there needs to be a law like in New Hampshire when you reach a certain population, you need your own police department.

Sheriff King stated that we want a safe York County. Our population in our lake towns increases in some areas three-fold.

Commissioner Chenette stated that in regard to the Probate judge and others before us, we need to look at the structure of that role and if we need to look at should the position be a part-time or full-time role for the judge.

County Manager Zinser replied that he has had conversations with the Judge. He informed all that on a case by case basis, he has been authorizing payment of an additional day to the Judge as necessary. He added that he did contact Judge Houde to have that same conversation (part time vs. full time). County Manager Zinser continued that over the years we have added days to this position and we are probably at a point where we need to look at it again.

County Manager Zinser added that the other issues are reclassification issues. Last year he didn't think the request warranted anything and didn't rise to that level.

As far as the (Probate)Judge, there could be something there. Where that department goes in general hasn't come to me yet. County Manager Zinser relayed to all that he did tell the Department Heads if there are issues with anything, we can have a conversation.

Commissioner Andrews asked has there been any thought about what we are doing with the Layman Way staff? County Manager Zinser replied that they are not County employees as we have a contract.

Commissioner Ring added that they've been planning for this for quite some time. She also stated that she believes they are looking for another location.

**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**

Commissioner Clark motioned to adjourn. Commissioner Chenette seconded the motion. Vote 4-0 to adjourn at 6:26 p.m.