

OHIO COUNTY COMMISSION
10/4/2021

The Ohio County Commission met in regular session on Monday, October 4, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Present at the meeting was President Randy Wharton, Commissioner Don Nickerson, Commissioner Zach Abraham, Administrator Randel Russell, Finance Director Rodd Archey, and Solicitor Don Tennant.

Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 21, 2021, Commission meeting. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Delegations

Judy Meyers reported that she would like to see some things clarified when it comes to COVID. When she attended the last meeting there was a discussion about vaccinated and unvaccinated at that time. Two people that she knows were vaccinated and they had covid, and two thirds of the people she knows that were hospitalized were vaccinated. She knows people personally who have died that were fully vaccinated and she thinks it is very important that we share numbers. That we don't just say comments like many more, or most. She thinks that they need to know. We need to hear these numbers. With what she has seen the vaccinated are no less at risk as the unvaccinated. There is a difference in treatment but there is no difference. A vaccinated person can get Covid, and we know that they can, and it can spread. We need to be very clear, need to be honest and open. She does not know at what point were hearing dishonesty, or if this is being pulled from somebody above them and this is just how it is. So, it's being trusted, but she is going to continue to look for facts She is not going to look at news reports. She's going to look at people that she knows personally, and she hopes that others will do the same. She thinks it is important that we understand for instance we are often told to look at the CDC recommendations. She has been to the CDC site, she has looked at the recommendations, she has also looked at their studies and their studies do not match their recommendations, so if you go and look at the recommendations you will see one thing and look at their studies, you'll see something different. She really thinks it's important that we remain informed. She reported it is also important to remember that if a person repeats a lie a million times it is still a lie. If a million people repeat a lie it is still a lie. If we repeat a lie we stomp our feet, we shake our fist, we say it very loudly it is still a lie. She reported what she has watched go on around us this past year and a half reminds me she is constantly thinking the emperor is naked, but there is no break in the loin (inaudible). Anyone who does (inaudible). We as a County she entrusted something to be done that will clarify some of these things and if somebody will declare that the emperor is naked and that we can all (inaudible) it fast and make decisions on those facts.

Grants

Administrator Russell reported there are no grants for tonight's meeting.

Hotel Tax Request

Administrator Russell reported that the Commission has a request from the WVSSAC High School Golf Championship which is held at Oglebay. In the past we have contributed \$4,000.00. Commissioner Abraham reported that they are requesting the same amount as the previous years. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve \$4,000.00 for the WVSSAC High School Golf Championship. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Community Grants

Administrator Russell reported that the Commission has a request from the West Liberty University Foundation. This is a request for \$10,000.00 in support of the Belmont Savings Bank Practice Facility. He believes that we had agreed to a \$50,00.00 contribution, we have contributed \$40,000.00. So, this would be the last installment. Commissioner Nickerson agreed that this is the last installment for the request from the West Liberty University Foundation and he made a motion to approve. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Administrator Russell reported that the Commission also has a request from the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. They have decided to engage for a community stakeholder meeting and have decided to engage West Virginia University's Bureau of Business and Economic Research to create a strategic action plan for the upper Ohio valley. The plan would cost approximately \$250,000.00 and he believes they have grant funding of \$200,000.00. The community share of this is \$50,000.00 and they did not specify an amount. Commissioner Nickerson reported when you're reading the letter, they say they have secured a portion of the necessary finding, he is curious what they have secured and who has provided it. Commissioner Abraham reported that this came through by way of the Chamber Board, my predecessor made a commitment of \$5,000.00 and they had asked the board of education and at that time COVID had got in the way and so we did not make any motion. Ever since that he has talked to Mr. Croft about possibly doing their installment of that amount too. They were waiting to see about the timing of everything in the future. He also thinks the city, and the health Plan will be doing \$5,000.00 as well as Wesbanco. The Chamber is going to pitch in too. This was apparently asked of the Commisisoner prior to the election, so Commissioner Abraham was asked to bring this forward to see if we had the ability to do that. The study has been done, its already there and they want to make sure they are collecting on this. Commisisoner Nickerson reported so it sounds like we do have who some of the other participants are and if this was a previous commitment, he feels we should honor it. Commissioner Abraham reported that he is not sure how much each of them donated, we can investigate it decide later. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to table this until we see the amounts that were given. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Process/ Structure for ARP Money Use

Commissioner Abraham reported this has to do with the public process and structure for the ARP money. He reported having some of the public input around the American Recovery Plan money, the \$8.01 million dollars the Ohio County Commission received. We have asked the municipalities for some feedback. He prepared how we may want to allocate funding. Here is a draft, a lot of infrastructure, PSD projects, municipalities outside of the City of Wheeling, the County and then the Community Projects. The other process is how do we form a committee to look at all the projects and then provide the Commission on the feedback of what the best use of that money is. He just wanted to get this out there to have some conversation about it. There are some Airport infrastructure things, some OCC projects and some OCDA projects potentially. Commissioner Nickerson reported this is a good start. President Wharton reported that this is excellent. He would be so inclined as to put this in place as our budget for that. We know all budgets get changed. If we get a year into this and feel we have a greater need somewhere else for some funding, we can always do a revision. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve this budget for the ARP as a starting point and on a formation for a committee on the community projects, and community allocation. Maybe we can reach out to a person from each municipality and ask then to appoint somebody out of their council to be on this committee. Administrator Russell reported that he had sent a letter to each Mayor asking them to name some for the Commission to have the opportunity to choose who to place on the committee. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

ABCC Request- Administrator Russell reported we have an ABCC request from Mountain/ Moonlight-Country Roads Distillery at 100 Harvest Lane, which is off Stone Church Road. There is a map showing where this is located. Administrator Russell reported next we have an ABCC request and a Video Lottery request for 1014 & More at 196 Alexander Road which is the truck stop. There is a map for that location also. They all need a letter stating that there is no zoning in the County. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the three no zoning letters. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Administrator Russell reported that on Emergency Dispatch of Towing Services he feels that we are a little too early to act on so we will move that to old business with your approval. Commissioner Abraham reported that he has some points that could be included in the policy. He will get that out to everyone soon. He thinks that for the most part the zones and towing services, mainly for emergency purposes were fine with the way it is. Commissioner Nickerson reported that he was concerned about was the heavy tow back up, seemed something is unsettled there. Commissioner Abraham reported that he thinks there was a question for rotation for that verses it being for one of the areas.

STAFF/ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORTS

Administrator Russell reported that last Monday we met with the elected officials and department heads to discuss the implication of President Biden's COVID -19 mandate. We had a healthy conversation; he feels everyone is on board if this takes place. Administrator Russell reported he had a meeting at District 6 WVDOH to review current programs, budget, and staffing. Toni will email out copies of the presentation. He reported that DOH is hiring so if you know of someone, please let them know. Administrator Russell reported that the Commission staff is still working on the SUA service

upgrade agreement with Motorola for the emergency radio system. We are working on mending the 911 ordinance, a master agreement with the WV Conservation Agency for stream litigations and we will finalize the policy the emergency policy of towing of vehicles. Administrator Russell reported that he has confirmed that the Acting Deputy Tax Commissioner will be here on Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. to explain the new legislative rule for Oil & Gas valuations. Then we will do the hearings afterwards. He is going to enlist Joslyn King to do an article closer to the event. We will invite all the local legislators and get it out there so anyone that wants to attend may do so.

Facilities Division

Administrator Russell reported that the HVAC project stands at 90%, there were a few modifications made in the last month. The report on the hot water lines in the building revealed we are probably going to have to abandon them and do something different. He reported the broadband expansion and hone passed list both Comcast and MCTV have received the unserved and underserved students in Ohio County. Both entities plan to apply for state money to fund that project. He reported the public elevator over at the AEP building is still down and we have quote for repair and are soliciting a second quote. He reported that Sondra Elson in the office is heading up our integration for the Aurora time keeping system for the countywide. The vendor is currently building the software and we hope to have full implementation by January 1, 2022. He reported the upgrade on the dashcam recording systems for the Sheriff's office, the vendor got back with him today and he expects clarifications by the end of the week. He has Dave Weaver working on street sign installations throughout the County which there are a lot to be taken care of. He reported that the Microsoft office training is to begin Tuesday, October 12, 2021, we have maybe 20 employees interested.

PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION

EMA Director Vargo reported that Mr. Gamble reported 111 new Covid cases. They have performed contact tracing on 20 of those cases which are under the age of eighteen. He reported that there have been 2 deaths in Ohio County with Covid-19. Mr. Gamble continues to conduct a testing site at OVMC everyday from 9-3:30 and last Monday he started the vaccine clinic up at the old Michael's store at the Highlands from 9-3. The first day they gave about 170 boosters. Commissioner Abraham asked how many since it began. EMA Director Vargo reported he would find out and let Commissioner Abraham know. Solicitor Don Tennant asked who is eligible for the booster. EMA Director reported it is the Pfizer and anyone who has had both of their vaccines and if it has been six months since the last shot. Moderna has submitted their data on the booster, but it has not been approved yet. Commissioner Abraham asked Director Vargo if he knows what percentage of the population has Moderna vs Pfizer vs Johnson & Johnson. Director Vargo reported he can ask Mr. Gamble if he has those numbers. EMA Director Vargo reported last week the Fire chiefs had a meeting regarding the EMS of Ohio County going to 24 hours and it was approved. Deputy Director Campbell and himself met with Administrator Russell today to look at the budget and review. EMA Director Vargo reported that Chief Gearry, Mr. Russell and he traveled to Washington County last week to look at the training center they have. He feels we got a lot of good ideas from the trip. John Gearry talked to the Draeger rep who installed a similar facility in Cranberry, Pa. Washington County had a lot of industry participate. They had an old burn building, but a lot of industry donated the gas line equipment and things. Commissioner Abraham asked so this was to see what they had at their facility. This gave us good perspective to see what's possible verses the commercial stuff. Commissioner Abraham asked may we go back to the EMS running

24 hours. John Gearry reported that at the Chief's meeting there was a motion made to go with a 24-hour service and yes it did pass. Several of you know my thoughts on it. He agrees 100% there is a need. He agrees there is a great group of guys providing an excellent service. He just thinks they need to really look at this as a higher level and put a plan in place that's going to be good for years to come. Anytime local government can partner with existing organizations to share all this is more sustainable. He feels there needs to be a full discussion. John Gearry reported that one of the other pieces is strategically out in the County. It started that way and now it seems to be the North end of the County. He thinks that's another piece of it. Commissioner Abraham reported if the Northern part of the County gets developed it could change again. Commissioner Abraham asked how you would phase it in or recalibrate it if you would need to, if it's not working the way you want it. He is talking about cost and expense. He feels that it needs be done. John Gearry reported so like this training center, there is a lot of pieces to this, he does not believe, the volunteerism in general that the scope looks different than it did twenty years ago, thirty years, he does not believe that its dead it just looks different. We have done a poor job as far as the volunteer fire department recruiting. Up until two years ago we provided the only service that was provided for fifty years for basically zero dollars to the County, and we might as well take advantage of this for as long as we can. Having a training center is attractive especially to the young crowd if we could tie that in somehow with the colleges and high schools and get some recruitment. Commissioner Abraham reported that there is some money from the ARP funds that we have allocated to the fire departments. Commissioner Abraham reported maybe we could look at consolidation or different volunteer groups maybe like regions of the County in supporting each other. Commissioner Nickerson agreed, like what is a meaningful phase in, what's that look like, what's the outlay for equipment, he is trying to picture that, and he reported he is not seeing that. Commissioner Abraham reported he knows Valley Grove got some new equipment; Triadelphia got some new equipment. John Gearry reported that were very well equipped for a County. Commissioner Abraham reported how do we centralize all this stuff, how do we look at all the equipment throughout the County, and then to start a replacement cycle, it doesn't matter which department gets it if we have it in the County. It could be one of those things we are looking for. John Gearry reported what he has found with volunteers, he remembers when we had two hundred calls thirty years ago and know we are dispatched to close to eight hundred now. There are a lot of reasons for that there's been a lot of development in the County and the way people use EMS now is a lot different. The volunteers can't commit to as much time as they could in the past, so we need a lot more. EMA Director Vargo wanted to say that he does not believe Ohio County volunteerism is not gone, the Ohio County EMS will always support the volunteers. This is not to replace them this is to promote advanced life support.

FINANCE DIVISION

Finance Director Archey reported that the Commissioners have a copy of the bills as they are up to date. Commissioner Abraham asked about the one with the Airport and Purvis. Finance Director Archey reported it is an allocation and Purvis is the fuel for the Airport. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to pay the bills. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

EXONERATIONS

Finance Director Archey reported that the Commission has a copy of twenty-two exonerations, they are all credits, and all are recommended by the Assessor. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve the exonerations. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

COMMISSION BOARD REPORTS

Nothing from the board tonight.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Commissioner Abraham just wanted to thank Randy, Rodd, Lou, John, and Don he knows that we have a lot of moving parts going around and he just wants to thank you guys and the team's continued efforts. Administrator Russell reported there is a Holiday, Monday, October 11, 2021, Columbus Day. All offices are closed except for those that are required to remain open.

FUTURE MEETINGS

President Wharton reported that the future meetings are all listed at the bottom of the agenda, most we all know of. The November meetings are listed there. These are all subject to change at any time. Meeting adjourned.

President, Randy Wharton

Administrator, Randel Russell