OHIO COUNTY COMMISSION
2/22/2022

The Ohio County Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC HEARING-HOME CONSORTIUM

President Wharton stated the Ohio County Commission will convene to go into a public hearing for the Home Consortium. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to go into the Public Hearing. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Melissa Thompson with the City of Wheeling reported that the City of Wheeling is the lead agency for the Northern Panhandle Home Consortium. The Consortium is made up of the Counties of Brooke, Ohio, Hancock, Marshall, and the Cities of Weirton, and Wheeling. She reported every year that she receives a grant from HUD for the purpose of affordable housing and the Consortium is required to hold a public hearing in each jurisdiction to receive public comments. She reported she does noy have the 2022 budget yet so for planning purposes she is using the 2021 allocation which was $305,207.00. After 10% was used for administration, and 15% for a community housing development project, which left about $228,000.00 to be used for the first-time home buyer program which provides up to $10,000.00 to assist with down payment and closing costs to low and moderate-income first-time home buyers in the Northern Panhandle. Since 1998 when the Home Consortium began, eighty-six home buyers have been assisted in Ohio County, in addition to the 280 buyers that we have had in the City of Wheeling. The Consortium in all has used $9 million dollars to assist 1,033 home buyers. Melissa asked if there were any questions. Commissioner Abraham asked Melissa if her report meant that it helped support about twenty-two households. Melissa replied yes in the Northern Panhandle. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing and to go back into regular session of the County Commission meeting. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor. The Commissioners thanked Melissa Thompson for the presentation of the public hearing.

Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2022, Commission meeting. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

President Wharton asked if there were any delegations tonight. Administrator Russell stated yes, Amy Wade.

Delegation-Amy Wade reported that she is the Northern Panhandle Conservation District Supervisor, and this is an elected position. The Northern Panhandle Conservation district represents Brooke Hancock, Ohio, and Marshall County. She explained the history. Just think all the way back to the dust bowl. What we're looking at is in the Midwest where there was tremendous drought, and the tractor was just becoming widely available to farmers, so as that was happening, they were buying more land, crop prices were high and so in the process of all of that this tremendous drought hits, so you have all of this land that the farmers could not sell. Their crops were left to rot so we ended up with an absolute disaster. Hugh Bennett was a gentleman who believed in taking care of the soil. He was in Washington, DC in 1935 at the Capitol trying to create the Soil Conservation Service and he waited for dust to blow in from the mid-west, the actual dust cloud arrived, and he said therefore there is a need for the Soil Conservation Service. She reported what she does is practice best management practices. The district

consists of eight elected members, two from each County, and it is a nonpartisan position. She was elected for a four-year term and has two years remaining. Bob Luchetti Sr. is not running this election, but his son is running, which is Bob Luchetti, Jr. One of our members is elected to serve on the Solid Waste Board of every County, one of our members is chosen to serve on the Wheeling Creek Watershed Commission. We have a Northern Panhandle Resource Conservation & Development Council, which she is the Secretary for that organization and within the past year we have provided grant money to non-profits. She went on to explain what the Northern Panhandle Conservation District does. She reported that that they are funded by the Federal Farm Bill, and then that money is funneled to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, then to the West Virginia Sate Conservation Committee. From there the funds are distributed to the fourteen Conservation Districts across the State. She refers to herself as local boots on the ground. Her husband and herself encourage landowners to use best management practices, such as exclusion fencing, rotational grazing, etc. through a cost share program. She reported the last thing she is involved with is the watershed dams. She stated that back in the sixties the federal government started throwing a lot of money at flood control. So, conservation districts across the nation became a logical partner since we were already in place. We were already focused on soil and water quality, so they sent their money through us. As they did that, they had to have partners at the local level and agree to look at those dams. She left business cards for everyone.

President Wharton asked Roseann Ferro if she would like to speak. Roseann Ferro reported that she is with Senator Manchin's office. She just came as a visitor tonight.

Hotel Tax Requests

MEC Basketball Tournament-Administrator Russell reported that the first request is for the MEC Basketball Tournament which starts Wednesday, March 2, 2022, with championship games on Sunday, March 6, 2022. They are requesting a three-year commitment of $10,000.00 per year. Last year the Commission gave $5,000.00 because it was abbreviated due to Covid-19. In the year prior the Commission gave $10,000.00. This does bring in a large amount of people to the area. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $10,000.00 for the MEC Basketball Tournament. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Winter Blues Event-Administrator Russell reported that next we have the new 2022 Winter Blues Event that is being held at the McClure Hotel on March 18, 19, & 20, 2022. Commissioner Abraham asked if this is a separate event form the Bluesfest in August. Administrator Russell responded yes. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $1,000.00 for the Winter Blues event. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Community Grants

Inclusion on Ice Event-Administrator Russell reported that the next request is from Easter Seals and Augusta Levy with a new event which is called Inclusion on Ice. It is intended for all children of all abilities, and the Wheeling Nailers are hosting the event. It will be held at the J.B. Chambers Memorial Ice Rink at Wheeling Park. The request is for $1,000.00. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $1,000.00 for the Inclusion on Ice event. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Route 2 I/68 Authority- Administrator Russell reported that the next request is from the Route 2 I/ 68 Authority that is working on the Highway projects throughout the Northern Panhandle. The Commission gave $4,000.00 last year. Finance Director Archey stated that if the Commission plans to give funds that it be after July 1, 2022, because the Commission gave last year in August of 2021 which would have been in fiscal year 2021. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $4,000.00 to the Route 2 I/ 68 Authority, but to be given after July 1, of this year. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

OLD BUSINESS
None.

NEW BUSINESS
Revisions to Employee Handbook-Administrator Russell reported that there are two revisions to the Ohio County Handbook for the Commission's approval tonight. One regarding vacation leave and the other regarding sick leave. These two modifications are intended to simply normalize vacation and sick time accrual across the board. This was necessary because the authors of the original employee handbook never anticipated employees working 24-hour schedules. Commissioner Nickerson asked about the carry over provision on vacation time. Administrator Russell reported that the carry-over is the maximum amount that they can earn in one year. Commissioner Abraham reported that with having the EMS it has forced us to take a good look at it now, as we look at other pieces of the handbook on which we are working. The only change was from days to hours. Solicitor Tennant reported that it is legal, and it was necessary. He also reported that there are other areas in the handbook that need to be revised because it was simply done too long ago. He stated he is sure there will be more understandable language in this handbook as it is revised. Administrator Russell reported that the sick time was also changed from days to hours. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve the revision of the vacation and sick leave policies. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

ABCA No Zoning Request-Summer Kickoff-Oglebay
Administrator Russell reported there is a request from Oglebay Park. They are having a Summer Kickoff event at Levinson Shelter on May 27th & 28th, 2022, and are asking us for a no zoning letter to send to the ABCA. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve the no zoning letter. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

STAFF/ ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORTS
Administrator-Administrator Russell reported that we are well into the budget process. All elected officials have their budget packets. All remaining department heads will have theirs in the next day or so. He stated that hearings will be scheduled soon. There is still the issue of the Assessor certifying values on time. The State Tax department is still working on it. The Commissioners asked Assessor Hoffman what she is hearing. She reported that she heard today to be aware that the public utilities in every County have gone down significantly. The State Tax Department is working with less people than they used to have. Ora Ash has not given us clarification on what to do about certification which is next week on March 3, 2022.

FACILITIES DIVISION-Administrator Russell reported that on the HVAC project he is finalizing the bid documents now. This should go out to bid very soon. Administrator Russell reported that he had a particularly good call with an underwriter that will assist us through this process. Administrator Russell reported that on the Courthouse Elevator project, the materials are not in yet and possibly will take four more weeks. Administrator Russell reported that on the Airport Runways 16-34 rehab will begin as soon as the weather breaks in early April and on Runway 3-21 the bid documents are being prepared now. That should go to bid in late March. Administrator Russell reported that at the Airport tower there may be some infrastructure money coming from the FAA for rehab. Administrator Russell reported that the Ohio County Development Authority maintenance had to perform plumbing issues at the Animal Shelter, and he received the specs for the roof project.

PUBLIC SAFETY-Emergency Management Director Vargo reported that with COVID-19 the numbers are down. Last week we had cases in the single digits as compared to weeks ago. He reported that there were three deaths last week. Health Department Administrator Gamble does not see any new variants currently. The vaccination clinic at the old Michaels store will be ending this Friday, and the Health Department will do vaccinations here at the City County building everyday beginning February 28, 2022. Emergency Management Director Vargo stated that the vaccination for the 6-month-old to six-year old's will not be available until late summer. Commissioner Abraham asked if Mr. Gamble seeing any more effectiveness with the vaccine. Mr. Vargo reported at the State level that if you have your booster, you should be good against the variants that are around now. Solicitor Tennant stated the other key question that has not been clearly answered if that if you had two shots before the booster you had 93% efficacies but then they said every month you lose 6% efficacy to guard against severe illness. He stated what has not been heard is what occurs with the booster and how long is there a wear off period like with the two shots. Emergency Management Director Vargo reported that the hospital was able to close one of their COVID units. He also reported he used to have conferences three times a week, but those have been stopped. He reported that on the EMS side things are going well. Deputy Director Campbell will attend the next Commission meeting and will give the Commission a report of the first six weeks of going to twenty-four-hour shifts.
He also reported that he has been collaborating with Administrator Russell putting together a continuing education class for the volunteer fire departments, for fire and rescue mainly. He stated that he will talk about that at the next fire chief's meeting. He also reported that he is working on an EMS regional seminar for a new type of equipment called left ventricular assist. If a 911 call goes to a person's home that has one of these, the pump is not pulsatile it is continuous flow, so if he went to check Don's pulse, he would not have one, but he could be sitting there talking to us. This is a very modern technology. This would be an incredibly good seminar that is needed, and he would invite everyone in the region because they are being used now.

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 Inspirion Logistics. Finance Director Archey responded that is the reverse 911 service. Commissioner Abraham asked about the Labella Associates charge. Finance Director Archey reported it is the architect on the HVAC project. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve paying the bills. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

EXONERATIONS-Finance Director Archey reported there are four exonerations for the Commission's consideration tonight. He stated that all are recommended by the Assessor, and all are credits reducing a tax. Commissioner Abraham asked Assessor Hoffman about the Minerals Double Assessed exonerations, the adjustment is $0. Assessor Hoffman reported the adjustment is the $100, and that is just the way it is typed up. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to accept the exonerations. Second by Commissioner Nickerson Motion carried with all voting in favor.
ELECTIONS-Finance Director Archey reported that next in the packet you have the election calendar for the next few days. The candidate drawing was this morning and each of the Commissioners has a copy of how the drawing went and the order the candidates will be in on the ballot. This was sent to the printers today. Hopefully within two weeks a ballot proof will be sent for the ballot commissioners to proof.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS
Nothing from the board.

FUTURE COMMISSION MEETINGS
President Wharton reported that the next three Commission meetings will be Tuesday, March 8, 2022, Tuesday, March 22, 2022, and Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. Also, there is an Ohio County Development Authority meeting this Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., at the Highlands Event Center. Meeting adjourned.

President, Randy Wharton

Administrator, Randel Russell

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