The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Tuesday, July 1, 2025

Commission members present:

- Commission President Zachary T. Abraham
- Commissioner Randy Wharton
- Commissioner Donald A. Nickerson, Jr.

Staff Members Present:

- County Administrator Randel A. Russell
- County Solicitor Donald J. Tennant
- Facilities Director Melissa J. Marco
- Director of Emergency Management Louis J. Vargo
- Assistant Director of Emergency Management Anthony Campbell
- Director of 911 Communications Rickie Pritt
- Sheriff Harry 'Nelson' Croft
- Sheriff's Chief Deputy Kent Lewis
- Commission Staff: Rebecca Coyne and Kimberly Lemley

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 510 of the City County Building at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America. President Abraham asked for a moment of silence for the nine souls lost during the catastrophic flooding that took place on June 15, 2025 in Ohio County.

President Abraham thanked all of the first responders from the County and the City of Wheeling, our Emergency Management Department, and the Ohio County Sheriff's Department. He stated all of the departments worked amazingly well together and was overwhelmed by the teamwork. Commissioner Wharton seconded President Abraham's thoughts and said the County will continue to work diligently to help the towns affected. He also thanked Lou, Tony, Kent, and Nelson, the National Guard, volunteers, 911 dispatchers, and Bob Herron (City of Wheeling) for their continued hard work. Commissioner Nickerson stated his heart went out to those affected by the flooding. He also stated all of the first responders worked well together and he was proud of their response. He stated this is why we live here – we all come together and support each other during times of need.

Delegations

- Jeff Johnson – Mr. Johnson brought up some safety concerns on the EMS rigs. He stated stair chairs and narcotic boxes had been requested through the opioid funds some time ago but they had not been approved to date. He also stated the Rescue needed struts but it could be paid for through a grant from Southwest Energy. Mr. Vargo stated this was in progress and would be taken care of quickly. An underwater drone was also donated by Wheeling Hospital for which the department was extremely grateful.

- Tom Hoffman – Mr. Hoffman wanted to thank the County Commissioners for their continued support after the flooding. He also inquired if the dumpsters would still be available for residents to use. Mr. Randel Russell stated the dumpsters would still be available for use.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- After review, President Abraham made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with a second from Commission Wharton. Motion carried.

Special Meeting Minutes

- After review, Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes with a second from Commissioner Wharton. Motion approved.

Grants

- Appalachian Regional Council Local Government Grant – This grant, valued at $50,000.00 with no match, will be used for two purposes. One is to purchase project management software. In this software, we can list every piece of equipment we have, the age, maintenance schedule, etc. If something were to need repaired, a work order can be sent out to the team with a timeline for completion, who the job is assigned to, and how long they have to complete the task. The software is $30,169.00 though a company called Brightly. Ms. Marco will work to build the software to meet our specific needs with a Brightly consultant over the next few months and then roll it out. The second part of the grant was for a ten-year comprehensive plan. Ms. Marco will develop milestones for completion and begin to develop the survey process. Motion to approve the purchase of the software made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by President Abraham.

- Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority 2026 – Ms. Marco will be writing the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority Grant for 2026. She would like to write the grant to remodel the courtrooms on the fifth floor. The carpet and pews have already been approved by the Commissioners at a prior meeting, but this will remodel the walls, blinds, and purchase new furniture. Motion to approve applying for the grant made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Community Grants – Action on the community grants was tabled.

New Business

- OCDA Board Appointments – Seven members terms are expiring. They are Donald Nickerson, John McCullough, Robert Smith, Eran Molz, John Olejasz, Mark Griffith, and John Gearry. Motion to approve the reappointment of the seven board members made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Commissioner Nickerson abstained from the vote.

Circuit Clerk New Hire Jocelyn Diaz Frank

- Mr. Randel Russell asked for the advice and consent of the Commissioners to hire Jocelyn Diaz Frank for the Circuit Clerk's office. Motion to approve the hire made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Assessor's Office Purchase of Vehicle

- After placing a vehicle out to bid, the Assessor's office purchased a Ford Explorer for $49,369.49 using PVC funds from Shultz Ford at the Highlands. Recently, the Assessor's office turned over three cars to the County – one is currently being used at the Airport and two of the cars were auctioned. No further action is needed.

Ohio County Sheriff's Office Temporary Hire Craig Knight

- With this temporary hire, there will be no change to the Sheriff's budget. Motion to approve the temporary hire made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board – Board Appointment –

- Ms. Melissa Evick has made the decision to resign from the board of directors. Mr. Michael Haney, the owner of Sport Your Colors in Warwood has expressed interest in the open position. Motion to approve Mr. Haney to fill the term vacated by Ms. Evick made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried. Mr. Kevin Coulter's term on the Executive Committee is also ready to expire. Motion to reappoint Mr. Coulter to the Executive Committee made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Staff and Elected Official Reports

- County Administrator – The City recently held their Spring Auction and we sold several cars at the event. The total proceeds were $45,719.69.

- Growth and Retention – Ms. Stephanie Hockenberry stated a Community Meeting was held and over 190 people attended.

- Facilities Director – Ms. Marco stated the roof is scheduled to be completed this week and will be commissioned the week of July 21, 2025. The second floor will move back next week. We are currently finishing the carpet and vinyl in the County Clerk's office and have some minor touch ups to complete. The next phase of the project will be the former Wheeling Police Department. This phase will take until October to complete. Carpet on the fifth floor is being completed when the Judges are on vacation and will be wrapped up by August. The third-floor carpeting will need completed on weekends. The porticos are in progress and materials will be arriving in the next two weeks. Several items need to be placed out to bid including the front and back doors of the Courthouse and the two air conditioning units at the Correctional Facility. Ms. Marco also expressed her sincere gratitude to Lou Vargo, Tony Campbell, Kent Lewis and Nelson Croft for their incredible response during the flood.

- EMA Director – Mr. Vargo stated the flooding that occurred on June 15, 2025, was the worst mass casualty event in Ohio County. He sincerely thanked everyone for their support. The Governor stated the National Guard will be here as long as it takes and 15 soldiers will stay and assist with clean up. Mr. Vargo also said the support from the Governor and his staff has been incredible. With regards to FEMA, they have a

$1,5000,000.00 threshold to qualify for assistance. At this time, there is $5,6000,000.00 million dollars of damage in Triadelphia alone. He is confident public and private assistance will aid those affected by the devasting flooding. The EMA department will also be holding counseling sessions and will look at EMS operations during the event. On July 17, there will be a prayer service at Liberty Distributors. HUD, SBA, the EPA, and DEP toured the area and were floored by the extent of the damage.

- Sheriff – Sheriff Croft stated Chief Deputy Kent Lewis did an incredible job during the flood and he has full confidence in him. The new handguns have been issued. K-9 Kronos has been called out 22 times and has hit 19 times. They are currently delivering supplies to victims of the flood who cannot come to a distribution site.

- 911 Director – Mr. Pritt thanked the dispatchers for an incredible job. Over the course of three hours, they fielded 655 phone calls with three dispatchers.

Finance

- The bills were approved by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton with no questions.

Purchase Orders

- The purchase orders were approved by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton with no questions.

City Northern Regional Jail Bill

- No update to report.

Exonerations

- There are eleven exonerations for review. There were no questions and President Abraham made a motion to approve the exonerations, seconded by Commissioner Wharton.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Zachary T. Abraham

Randel A. Russell