The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Special Session for Tuesday, July 29, 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 Marco
Director of Emergency Management Louis Vargo
Director of 911 Communications Rickie Pritt
Commission Staff: Michelle Olejasz

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 215 of the City County Building at 6:00pm. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

II. Delegations

- James Sheedy, of Highland Lane in Bethlehem, bought his property in 2014. The underground sanitary pipes were broken, but have since been fixed. He has tried to work with Bel-O-Mar to sell the property for its value, but the Village of Bethlehem has to take ownership of the land. He has requested the Ohio County Commission's help to try to resolve this issue so his family can move to someplace safer in the community.
- Scott Bailey from Bequil, a tiny home builder, is looking to help displaced residents in Triadelphia and Valley Grove. These homes could be temporary or permanent and they can place 32 to 34 homes on one acre of land. All of the homes would meet state and local building codes. At this time, Mr. Bailey is asking for two commitments: 1. Consideration for himself and Stephanie Hockenberry to help solidify commitments throughout the area, and, 2. Getting a plan certified. President Abraham stated he would speak further with the Commissioners concerning the idea.

III. New Business

a. Elections Department, Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Grant Application – Mrs. Allietta is seeking reimbursement for the batteries for the tabulation equipment. The Ohio County Commission can apply for 50% of what was spent. The batteries were at the end of their cycle. Motion to approve the application made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.
b. Emergency Management, Homeland Security Grant Application – The application will be available on August 7, 2025 and will focus on election security, border security, and soft target hardenings. Motion to approve the application made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.
c. Request to extend the deadline to consider a sewer rate increase proposed by the Ohio County Public Service District – A resolution from the Public Service District has been presented to the Ohio County Commission. The Commission has 45 days to make changes, contingent on the Public Service District. The Commission would like to extend the date to August 19, 2025. Motion to approve the extension made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

d. Proclamation, West Virginia Goes Purple – Tara Mason would like for the Ohio County Commission to proclaim September as West Virginia Goes Purple to raise awareness for mental health and addiction. Mr. Randy Russell read the proclamation to those in attendance. Motion to approve the proclamation made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.

e. Appointment to the Ohio County Fireboard, Fire Association Representative – As of July 1, 2025, there will be two openings on the Fire Board with one being a citizen representative from Magistrate District Number Two which is currently held by Mike Trabert. Mr. Andrew D. Pierce is interested in the role and is currently a Fire Association Member. His term will be from July 29, 2025 to July 29, 2028. Motion to approve the appointment made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.

f. Opioid Settlement Funds, Community Grant Recommendations – To date, the Ohio County Commission has received $510,000.00 in funding and has spent $270,000.00.
    1. Ohio County Sheriff's Office – Chief Deputy Kent Lewis would like to expend $16,500.00 on outfitting a car for the canine.
    2. Youth Service System – Narcan request for $1,500.00
    3. Ohio County Health Department – Narcan request for $5,148.00 and $1,543.48 for a Narcan Simulator and Trainor.
    4. Emergency Management Services – Request for EMS bags and six CPR systems at a price of $36,029.50. Motion to approve the above requests made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.

g. Flood Relief, Donations Received, Use – To date, $169,642.00 has been received by individuals across the country. On a motion made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the Commission agreed to transfer the funds to the Community Foundation. Motion carried.

h. Special District Excise Tax, Bond Issuance, Use of Proceeds – The SDEX bond issuance is required to have a outside financial consultant. Municap has been recommended and worked with the TIF. Carrie Cecil from Frost, Brown, Todd has reviewed the document and found no issues. Motion to approve Municap as the outside financial consultant made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

i. Budget Revision – A carryover amount totaling $1,271,882.00 was not included in the budget estimate. This total will be submitted to the state. Motion to approve the budget revision made by Commissioner Wharton, seconded by President Abraham. Motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the special session concluded at 6:45 p.m.

Zachary J. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, County Administrator