Ohio County Commission
August 20, 2024

The Ohio County Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President Donald A. Nickerson. The Pledge of Alliance was recited.

Delegations:

- Christy Ferguson from the Elm Grove Business Association spoke to the Commissioners regarding the Elm Grove Fall Festival. They are in need of funds to hold the Festival again this year. Last year, over 3,000 people attended the event.

The minutes from the August 6, 2024, meeting were reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Grants:

- Records Management and Preservation Board – Mr. Russell is seeking approval to apply for $10,000.00 through the Records Management and Preservation Board for off-site storage. Motion to approve the application of the grant made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion approved.
- 1400 Block, WVEDA Grant – The 1400 block of the City has a $13,100,000.00 renovation budget to revitalize the buildings into a The Ohio Valley Food and Innovation District. The Commission has agreed to write a grant for $2,200,000.00. There will be no cost to the Commission except for some administrative efforts. Motion to approve the application of the grant made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Community Grants:

- Wheeling Park High School, State Golf Championships – On a motion made by Mr. Abraham, and seconded by Mr. Wharton, the Commission made a donation of $4,000.00 to the Wheeling Park High School State Golf Championships.
- Elm Grove Business Association Fall Festival – The Commission, on a motion made by Mr. Abraham, and seconded by Mr. Wharton, donated $500.00 to the Elm Grove Fall Festival.

Old Business:

- Barnes et al v. Ohio County Commission, Case #24-C-51 – No new discussion points.

New Business:

- Incremental Salary Increase for Employees – The County Commission is conducting a salary survey to review pay rates on all County positions. They also recognize the cost of health insurance went up this year, although the cost increase to the County was $450,000.00. Mr. Wharton wants to offer a sense of stability to the workforce, but stated the wild card is always the cost of benefits. He further stated a small increase shows we appreciate what our employees do. Mr. Wharton stated the salary survey is a good idea

because we need a better system. He also encouraged all officials to work more efficiently. Health insurance is 1/5 of the County budget, which totals around $4,000,000.00. Mr. Nickerson would like to see the average range of what it costs to insure an employee. Mr. Abraham stated we are working towards a total compensation study that shows all expenses. Mr. Wharton made a motion to approve $800.00 for each employee, with a lump sum payment now, and the employee's rate will go up on July 1, 2025. Mr. Abraham seconded the motion. Motion carried.

- Northern Panhandle HOME Consortium Board Appointments – The Commissioners voted unanimously for Lisa Badia to be reappointed and for Missy Ashmore to replace Paul Ashmore. There is currently an open position which the Commissioners will discuss at their next meeting.
- New Hire Advice and Consent, Sheriff's Tax Office, Shelby Howard – Motion to approve the hire made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Staff / Elected Official Reports:

- Administrator Report – Mr. Russell and Mrs. Coyne attended the State Auditor's Training. Governor Justice has approved Bill 5428 for Fire Protection Funds. This will make $69,817.00 available to Ohio County Fire Departments. Last week, we kicked off the compensation review. Raw data will take 60 days, while the complete survey should be completed in 90 days. Mr. Russell thanked the sponsors of the upcoming Airshow. He also provided an ARPA update. The West Virginia First Foundation will meet on September 26, 2024 at the Highlands Event Center. The meeting will start at 5:30 p.m. The TIF paperwork will be signed on August 29, 2024. The Fire Chief's meeting will be held on August 28, 2024. On September 2, 2024, all offices will be closed for Labor Day.
- Facilities – Ms. Marco reported all of the stone has been removed from the South porch. The West porch will start on Monday. They will work on the West porch in pieces to leave a walkway open for the front doors. Regarding the HVAC project, the bus duct has been pushed to October 18, 2024. The switchgear has been installed. United Electric has been working on the bus duct project in anticipation of its arrival. At the Airport, we still need to finish out the cabinets and the bathrooms. The Airshow will feature five parking lots, a mobile Vet Center, children's activities, food and craft vendors, and a wide variety of aircraft.
- Emergency Services – Lou Vargo – Mr. Vargo reported from the April 2, 2024 flood, $6,036,000.00 has been disbursed. Of this, $922,000.00 went to citizens in Ohio County. From the April 11, 2024 flood, $1,400,000.00 has been disbursed and $121,000.00 has been distributed to citizens of Ohio County. FEMA is still operating until the end of the month at the Armory.
- Mr. Pritt reported a Next Gen 911 meeting will be held in Marshall County on Friday. Next Gen 911 gives dispatchers the ability to find someone if they do not know where they are. The 911 Call Center currently has four people working each shift.
- Sheriff's Department – Chief Deputy Croft reported there is a phone scam going around the valley stating citizens missed Jury Duty. There has also been an uptick in overdoses. The Sheriff's Department is taking large amounts of fentanyl, meth, and cocaine off of the streets.

Finance:

- Mrs. Coyne reported the bills are up to date. Motion to approve the bills made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.
- Unpaid invoices – Some of the invoices were awaiting grant funding. No further action is required.
- Exonerations – Mr. Abraham made a motion to approve the exonerations, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Commissioner Board Reports:

- OVRTA will hold a transportation meeting on September 9, 2024. A new Director at OVRTA is needed.
- Mr. Jim Ambrose stated the 1400 Block Revitalization is a case study for West Virginia. It is wonderful to see the County supporting a City project.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Donald A. Nickerson, President

Randel A. Russell, Administrator

*Executive Session for personnel matters or property transactions: West Virginia State Code §6-9A-4