OHIO COUNTY COMMISSION
2/10/2022

The Ohio County Commission met in regular session on Thursday, February 10, 2022. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 25, 2022, Commission meeting. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Hotel Tax Requests

Beast of the East-Administrator Russell reported that the first request is for the Beast of the East Tournament. This is the 33rd annual Beast of East and is scheduled for June 30th, July 1st ,2nd, and 3rd 2022. He reported that the Commission has donated $3,000.00 in the past. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $3,000.00 for the 2022 Beast of the East. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Taste of the Market-Administrator Russell reported that the next one on the list is from the Rotary Club, which is doing a Taste of the Market event at Center Market on Thursday, May 26, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. -8:00 p.m. The proceeds from the event will benefit the YMCA and Laughlin Chapel. The YMCA is looking to do a handicap assessable playground, while Laughlin Chapel is to benefit their afterschool program. No specific request is made. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $250.00 for the Taste of the Market event which will come from Community Grant Fund. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Wheeling Oglebay Tennis Club-Administrator Russell reported that the club is doing two tournaments. The Jack Dorsey Senior Memorial, and the Bordas & Bordas WV Open which is now a national tournament. They anticipate attracting 125 competitors from outside of Ohio County. In the past the Commission has contributed $250.00 for each event. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve $250.00 for each tournament for a total of $500.00. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

ARP Review Committee-Administrator Russell reported that he has one last potential member to contact for the ARP Review Committee, then he will have the committee complete. He will have members from all municipalities as well as two at large members.

Animal Shelter Manager- Administrator Russell reported that he is pleased to announce that Nelson Croft has accepted an offer to be the next Animal Shelter Manger. Nelson has retired from the Ohio County Sheriff's office where he spent thirty-one years. Administrator Russell reported that he will start February 14, 2022. He will help to select the Animal Control Officer. Nelson thanked the Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

7-1-3U Agreement between The WV Conservation Agency & the Ohio County Commission

Administrator Russell reported that this agreement will allow us to collaborate with the WV Conservation Agency on flood mitigation programs and projects. He heard that we have some money in the bank down there on a project that was slated for Ohio County five to seven years ago that never was completed. He stated that with Commissions approval, he will have this document executed and send it back to the WV Conservation Agency. Solicitor Tennant reported that he has looked over the document and it is acceptable. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the agreement. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

ABCA Request-Celtic Celebration at Levenson Shelter

Administrator Russell reported that we have a no zoning letter request from Oglebay. Oglebay is having a new event called the Celtic Celebration on March 19, 2022, at Levenson Shelter. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve the ABCA no zoning letter for the Celtic Celebration at Oglebay. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

STAFF/ ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORTS

Administrator

Administrator Russell reported that the weather last week caused some issues in Ohio County. The 911 Director would like to address the Commission. 911 Director Theresa Russell reported that she received an email on February 2, 2022, from Frontier that they were planning to do some fiber maintenance from Thursday, February 3, 2022, evening into Friday morning. Emergency Management and 911 were already online with the National Weather service and knew what was coming our way and what we may have to deal with concerning bad weather. So, she made a phone call to Frontier and asked them to postpone the planned outage and the repair until a later date. She was told verbally that a message would be sent out to the maintenance group and hopefully common sense prevails. She reported at about 12:00 a.m. dispatch notified her that the 911 lines were down, and already at that time had 17,000 people between Ohio and Marshall County without power. So that meant there was no way for anyone to call in. She knew Frontier disputed what she had said but facts are facts. She reported 911 did receive a automatic number and automatic location identification which is not a major issue, but our cell phone calls are 3 to 1 over land line and the wireless tones did not work. She knows that to be true as she tried twice from her home. That presented a major concern. She did go to the media and put it out there because, number one she did not want the citizens of Ohio County to lose trust in our ability to do what's needed on their behalf. She reported secondly Frontier is our sole provider in the State of West Virginia. She reported they pay thousands of dollars a year for this service. She stated that she reached out to Congressman McKinley's office and the Public Service Commission, and she did receive a call from Frontier today, and they are willing to work with us so that this never happens again. There were forty-two 911 centers that were affected by this outage. How many of those even realized in the middle of the night that their calls were not coming in. So, my suggestion to them was that they need to communicate with us and need to heed our advice when we tell them what weather we have coming. Commissioner Abraham thanked the 911 Director for all of her assistance with this issue. 911 Director Theresa Russell reported that she spoke with Terry Blakely at the Public Service Commission and, as a matter of fact, she escalated through them as well. She has an opportunity at this point to file a formal complaint. She was able to receive calls on the 7-digit lines through Comcast. The media did get this out.

President Wharton asked if Frontier has the ability for forward the calls to the hard lines when 911 goes down. 911 Director Russell reported she has discussed that today, and yes, they do. President Wharton stated then let's do this.

FACILITIES DIVISION

Administrator Russell reported that we did have one issue with a radio tower and the radio consoles down in 911 that was resolved relatively quickly.

Administrator Russell reported that on the project side he signed an agreement with West Virginia Elevator on an emergency basis to get the public elevator in the Courthouse Annex repaired. Hopefully within five to six weeks they will be working on it.

Administrator Russell reported that on the HVAC project, bidding should happen for a contractor early in March. The Courthouse roof still has some issues, but he thinks they have addressed most of them. Mansuetto has been up there patching. He reported that we are still waiting on some specifications for the roof on the Animal Shelter which is needed badly.

PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION

COVID Testing & Vaccinations-Emergency Management Director Vargo reported good news on January 20, 2022, the United States of America peaked with COVID. As he reported several weeks ago, we had in one week there where almost 900 cases of Omicron. Health Department Administrator Howard Gamble reported is down to about 40 cases a day, so that is down to around less than 300 a week and are hoping that continues. One of his concerns is everyone feels good about it, and nobody is wearing masks. Mr. Gamble is reducing COVID-19 testing at OVMC down to three days per week, Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays beginning on February 28, 2022. Vaccination Clinic is continuing as it is now still at Michael's at the Highlands but beginning on February 28, 2022, all vaccinations will be here at the Health Department. Michaels may be used if they decide that there is a fourth vaccine needed.

Emergency Management Director Vargo reported that the 24-hour EMS has been in service for about a month now, and it has been going well. They had a successful cardiac arrest, delivered a baby, and with the bad weather they had a few fractures they had to assist with. Emergency management Director Vargo reported with Spring coming, Southwest Energy has increased some activities in the last week. Ohio County is going to have two new gas pads being built. One is 165 Boggs Hill, and the other one is at 457 Clearview Avenue. He will begin developing an action plan for these new pads in case anything happens.

OC 911 Statistics 2021

911 Director Russell reported that what the Commissioners have before them are the statistics for operations from 2021 in comparison to 2020. She listed each agency individually and separated their fire, EMS, and law enforcement calls. There are some agencies that are not covered under the 911 ordinance, but they are still agencies that we contact in the system. So, the calls that were dispatched via the radio that we sent is a total of 50,825 in 2021 which is an increase of 5.6% over the previous year. She attributes 2020 of course to COVID. The back side of it is the telephone traffic that the dispatch by telephone is down 1.4% which she also attributes to COVID because a lot of the phone calls in 2020 were a lot of complaints of places where people were saying there were too many people in one place, etc.

FINANCE DIVISION

Finance Director Archey reported that the Commission has a copy of the bills which are up to date. Several meetings back he had talked about whether the Commission is responsible for the mental health phycologists charges. Solicitor Tennant did some review on that and came back stating that the Commission is responsible for those. So, there are six month's worth of invoices there. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve to pay the bills. Second by commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Finance Director Archey reported that there are five budget revisions for consideration. One is moving money from departments for our contingencies. Four are revenue, including the adjustment for the 911 Fee upgrade. Commissioner Abraham made a motion to approve the budget revisions. Second by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

Finance Director Archey reported by code the Commission is supposed to have the property books from the Assessor by February 1. He stated that did not happen and the Assessor addressed that issue at the last meeting. She still does not have them. So, he can't even tell the Commission value wise at this point. He reported that the Commission is going to have an issue with budgeting. Administrator Russell spoke with Ora Ash in Charleston, and he reported that some Counties may have to request an extension outside of the Code, which Ohio County will probably be one of those Counties. He just wanted to make sure that he gets final complete values before the Commission starts making decisions.

Finance Director Archey reported that by the end of next week all the budget request packets will go to all the elected officials and department managers. Again, the dates after that are going to be kind of fluid because of where we are with our revenue numbers. The Commission can still meet with the elected officials hearing their requests, but as he reported, until he gets the full revenue picture, it will be kind of hard to select what the Commission budgets verses not. He reported also by Code the Commission is supposed to set the levy rate on April 19, 2022, and again that may change. He stated that he will update the Commissioners with any information that is received in reference to all of this. The Commissioners asked Finance Director Archey a few questions. He reported that if the Commission would like to meet with the elected officials to hear the requests that he could put something together for March.

EXONERATIONS

Finance Director Archey reported there are nine exonerations before the Commissioners tonight. All are credits reducing a tax and all are recommended by the Assessor. Commissioner Nickerson asked a question about the first exoneration which was a class change. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the exonerations. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

<u>Certificate of Re-Entry</u>

Finance Director Archey reported that this property was purchased from the delinquent lands in Charleston and did not get put back on the books. This will go down state and will be sold in their max land sale. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the Certificate of Re-Entry. Second by Commissioner Abraham. Motion carried with all voting in favor.

ELECTION

Finance Director Archey reported that the Commission has an election calendar in the packet. The next event will be the candidate drawing on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. here in this boardroom.

COMMISSION BOARD REPORTS

President Wharton reported that he wanted to speak about the Public Service District. The time frame that he is speaking about is all of 2021, part of 2020, to bring you up to date on things that have happened and things that have begun during this period. He stated that the sewage collection system in Ohio County is for the most part a vacuum system. He explained that vacuum valves and breathers have been a continuing problem throughout the system so these are projects that have been updated. He stated also in the last few years they have completely rebuilt some vacuum stations and pump stations in certain areas. The cost was $2.5 million dollars. He stated that in the last six to eight years since he has been on the Public Service Board the County Commission has invested probably five to seven million dollars into the Public Service District by way of relief of debt and infrastructure improvements. The meter replacement and the tank inspection project were two-million-dollar projects funded by the Ohio County Commission through the Ohio County Development Authority and included meters which were installed which can be read electronically. This improves the billing process, and time spent by employees walking. Now they drive by and read the meters. The Public Service District replaced the Speidel water tank at a cost of $415,000.00 and replaced the West Alexander water tank. That was a joint project with Tunnel Ridge. The Cedar Rocks and West liberty tanks were rehabilitated. The Highlands and Cabela's tanks were inspected and repaired in 2020. Bells Lane, Sandhill, Northfork, Shortcreek and Viewpoint were all inspected and repaired. President Wharton updated the Commission on more projects that the Public Service District has been able to complete in the past two years. For the Bethany, Chapel Hill, and Dallas Pike tanks, there is a bid package being prepared to paint them and do any rehabilitation that needs to be done. For the GC & P water main replacement that goes from Shortcreek to Route 88, there have been numerous breaks on that line which puts a lot of people out of service. The DOH is on their last nerve with us because we must close the road to repair, then you have potholes, so that is being budgeted at this time to be fixed. Last is there are 600 hydrants in the system that are being checked, repaired, and replaced. The Public Service District uses the maintenance man from the Ohio County Development Authority to do the repairs on their equipment so that saves all around. Commissioner Abraham asked what the shelf life of those pumps and stations that have been replaced are. President Wharton reported probably five to ten years.

Commissioner Abraham reported that he and Administrator Russell attended the West Virginia Association of Counties in Charleston. He and Administrator Russell had a good conference, and he had some good conversations with the Department of Highways folks regarding the second interchange. There is a little bit of a logjam in terms of some federal dollars and that gets pushed into the States. He and Administrator Russell felt they were very receptive, and had a good meeting with Mitch Carmichael, the Commissioner of WV Development. He learned more of what everyone across the State is working on and gave him some insight.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Administrator Russell reported that Monday, February 21, 2022, is President's Day. All offices will be closed except for those that are required to remain open.

President Wharton reported that he wanted to go on record that the Ohio County Commission was scheduled by the State Tax department to have gas & oil hearings on Wednesday, February 9, 2022, but there were none scheduled. If the Commission receive requests, they may come in October of 2022.

Sheriff Howard reported that he wanted to report that he had a lot of good meetings in Charleston also while he attended the WV Association of Counties meeting. Also, he wanted to thank Major Croft for thirty-one years with the Ohio County Sheriff's office in Ohio County. He reported that when you lose someone that does a great job, it is a loss. He worked with Nelson Croft while he was with the Wheeling Police Department. He has worked with him for five years as a Sheriff's deputy and it is a huge loss to the Department. Again, he wanted to thank him for his time. Administrator Russell stated that your loss is our gain.

President Wharton reported that the next Commission meetings will be Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. and at the same time will be the Home Consortium Public Hearing at 6:00 p.m. and then Tuesday, March 8, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. Administrator Russell reported also that there will be an Ohio County Development Authority meeting on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Highlands Event Center. Meeting adjourned.

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President, Randy Wharton Administrator, Randel Russell