Ohio County Commission Regular Meeting
April 15, 2025

The Ohio County Commission met in regular session on Tuesday, April 15, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President Zach Abraham. The Pledge of Alliance was recited.

Public Hearing:

- Northern Panhandle Home Consortium: The City of Wheeling is the lead agency for the Northern Panhandle Home Consortium, which is made up of Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall Counties, as well as the cities of Wheeling and Weirton. Each year, they hold a public hearing in each jurisdiction to gather public comments regarding housing needs and how HOME funds should be used for affordable housing. They do not have allocations yet for Fiscal Year 2025, but in Fiscal Year 2024, they received $302,231.65. Of this $226,673.75 went to the First Time Homebuyer Program. The First Time Homebuyer Program provides up to $10,000.00 to assist with downpayment and closing cost assistance for low and moderate income first time homebuyers in the Northern Panhandle. The loan is forgiven if the buyer occupies the house for five years. Since the beginning in 1998, they have helped 89 homebuyers in Ohio County and 303 homebuyers inside the City limits. The Consortium in all areas has now assisted 1,137 homebuyers.

Delegations:

- Mr. Fred Wetzel spoke on utilities throughout the County. He voiced displeasure with Frontier and stated no one is regulating the industry, where they lay their lines, etc. He understands the Commission cannot act alone to fix this issue but hopes they will work with State and Local Government to help alleviate some of the problems.
- Presentation: On Thursday, March 27, 2025, the Ohio County Commission purchased ResQCPR machines. These machines were presented to various local volunteer departments in attendance, as well as the City of Wheeling Fire Department.

The minutes from the March 12, 2025 special meeting were approved by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

The minutes from the March 24, 2025 regular meeting were approved by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

The minutes from the March 27, 2025 special meeting were approved by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Unfinished Business:

- City of Wheeling NRJ Reimbursements – The jail bill for the first two quarters has been reconciled.
- Sheriff's Department Personnel Matter – This issue will be moved to the end of the meeting.
- Sheriff's Department Body Camera Purchase – This issue will be placed on the next agenda for discussion.

New Business:

- Proclamations:
  - National Telecommunicator Week – Mr. Russell read a proclamation in honor of National Telecommunicator Week. Mr. Rickie Pritt was presented with the proclamation.
  - National Animal Control and Care Appreciation Week – Mr. Russell read a proclamation in honor of National Animal Control and Care Appreciation Week. Mr. Eric Murphy was presented with the proclamation on behalf of the Commission.
- Grants:
  - Homeland Security Grant Program Award (FY 2021) – This grant will cover the full cost of updating radios. Motion to approve the grant made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.
  - WVU Research Corp, Ecosystem Engagement and Training (WVU Extension) – The WVU Extension Office received a significant grant to fund a position, provide training, and offer services to the citizens of Ohio County. Motion to approve the grant award made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.
- Bids: Portico Paver Replacement Project: The only bid received for the project was from Angelina Stone and Marble. The original bid was for $340,000.00, of which $100,000.00 will be paid through the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority. Upon further review, the heat mat was removed from the South Portico bringing the price down to $310,000.00. Motion to approve the bid made by Mr. Wharton, seconded by Mr. Nickerson. Motion carried.
- Levy Rates 2025-2026 Review and Approval: Although the County submitted a balanced budget in the amount of $24,000,000.00, revenue is down $4,000,000.00 due to the slow down in construction, personal property, used cars, oil and gas, and Tunnel Ridge. The levy rate in Ohio County is one of the lowest in the State of West Virginia. The Commission, on a vote by Mr. Wharton, seconded by Mr. Nickerson, voted to keep the levy rate the same as prior years. Motion carried.
- Opioid Funds:
  - Review of Balance and Commitments – Mr. Russell reviewed the projects that have been funded with the Commissioners.
  - Community Grant Opportunity – The Commission, through a grant process, will award some of their funds to community organizations to combat the drug pandemic. Once an application is complete, it will be advertised on our website and through the newspaper.
  - Sheriff's Department Request to Purchase a Portable Drug Analyzer – Chief Deputy Kent Lewis presented the portable drug analyzer and provided a demonstration. The analyzer will detect the drug without compromising Deputy safety. The Commissioners asked Chief Deputy Lewis to look further into the warranty process and tabled this discussion until the next meeting.
- Staff and Elected Officials:
  - County Administrator – no report.
  - Facilities – Ms. Marco reported the roof will begin tomorrow. A crane will be on site and Chapline Street will be reduced to one lane. The build out for the

Prosecuting Attorney's Office has started. They will now occupy one half of the space vacated by the County Clerk. Over the next week, Ms. Marco will be placing several bids in the newspaper. These ads pertain to the project at the Courthouse, the Annex, and the Magistrate Building. The second floor is progressing and we should meet our timeline of May 28. The next office to move is the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the second floor courtroom. Although the Magistrate Building has been torn up for some time due to water damage that occurred, the project cannot be placed out to bid until we hear back concerning the emergency funding. Ms. Marco also thanked those in attendance for their prayers and kindness after the passing of her Father.

- Law Enforcement – The weapons were ordered at a cost of $51,000.00. All of these funds came from seizure money. Kronos is doing quite well in his training.
- Emergency Management – The airway bags have been delivered. The ResQCPR bags will be delivered tomorrow. Training will be held for all volunteers.
- 911 Communications – Next Gen vendors have equipment and are ready to work on the GIS data.
- Finance:
  - Financial Commitments – Mr. Russell presented $140,817.56 worth of purchase orders. Motion to approve the purchase orders made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.
  - Payables – Mr. Nickerson made a motion to approve the invoices to be paid, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.
  - Exonerations – Mr. Wharton made a motion to approve the exonerations, seconded by Mr. Nickerson. Motion carried.

On a motion made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Nickerson, the Commissioners entered Executive Session based on West Virginia State Code §6-9A-4 at 7:32 p.m. Motion carried.

On a motion made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Nickerson, the Commissioners voted to exit Executive Session at 7:55 p.m. Motion carried.

The Commissioners asked the County Administrator to contact the previous Sheriff about travel for a Magistrate training. He was asked to gather details and follow up to a previous letter sent to him and to establish next steps.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Zachary T. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, Administrator