The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Tuesday, September 2, 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
Facilities Director Melissa Marco
Director of Emergency Management Lou Vargo
Director of 911 Communications Rickie Pritt
Chief Deputy Kent Lewis
Fiscal Officer Becky Coyne

Elected Officials present:
Sheriff Nelson Croft

I. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 215 of the City County Building at 8:00am. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

II. Delegations

- None

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- The minutes for the special meeting on Sunday, June 15, special meeting on Tuesday, July 29, and regular meeting on Tuesday, August 19, 2025 were all tabled. President Abraham made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Grants

- United States Department of Commerce Disaster Supplemental Grant Program- Melissa Marco reported Lou & Tony with EMS found this $2-$20 million grant to help flood victims with rebuilding. President Abraham asked if there was any offset and the answer was no. President Abraham made the motion to approve to apply for the grant, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

- SVAW- Administrator Russell reported this is the Stop Violence Against Women grant for $79,275 that has a 30% match that is satisfied with wages. It is a recurring grant that we have been doing for 26 years now. Mr. Russell recommends the Commission approves moving forward

with the awarded grant. President Abraham made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

- Sheriff Croft requested the Commissioners' approval to move forward to apply for the West Virginia First Foundation Grant Program to cover costs related to their canines' training & equipment; purchase, install & train on license plate reader system; hire & train peer support personnel. Sheriff Croft explained there are no matches with this grant, and it allows for a part-time mental health social worker to help with opioid calls, specifically mental hygiene calls. Sheriff Croft stated the license plate reader will have a national tie-in and they will put it in place at The Highlands first, to be used extensively in drug cases. The motion to move forward with the application for this approved grant was made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

- General Grant Discussion- President Abraham said he just wanted to discuss strategic priorities to go after grants for upcoming years. He made the recommendation to write down our top 5 areas where we need to focus our research for what grants are available. Commissioner Wharton suggests all departments weigh in with their recommendations and the Commissioners go from there. The question was posed if we use a third party. Mr. Russell stated in the past there has been angst about paying the retainer. He added that the City uses Matt Ward's group & pays an annual retainer. Commissioner Wharton commented on all the grant money the City of Wheeling has been awarded and able to use. Everyone agreed we just need to list priorities and have a way to research and apply timely. It was agreed Melissa is capable but can't do all that by herself & do her regular duties. The discussion is to continue.

V. Community Grants

- West Virginia Country Roads Festival- Request to sponsor trophies and awards. This event is 2 counties away and sponsorship request is for an event we have not sponsored in the past. Commissioner Wharton made a motion to take no action at this time, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Unfinished Business

- Property Acquisition @ 700 Market St. Wheeling- Administrator Russell requested the approval of the Commissioners to finalize the purchase of the building at 700 Market Street in Wheeling that would be used for storage of Election Equipment and other items. President Abraham made the motion to approve the purchase, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.

VII. New Business

- Mr. Russell requested permission to approve the Audit Committee members according to State Code as: Zach Abraham, Becky Coyne, Mary Pockl and Randy Russell. Commissioner Nickerson made the motion to approve the members, Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Russell requested permission to approve the Airport On-Call Engineer Selection Committee members according to State Code as: Russell Escue, Melissa Marco, and Randy Russell. President Abraham made the motion to approve the members, Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Russell requested permission to participate in the National Opioid Settlement with Purdue Pharma. President Abraham made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Russell requested permission to participate in the National Opioid Settlement with Secondary Manufacturers. Commissioner Nickerson made the motion, seconded by President Abraham. The motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Russell presented a request to name a new road in the Dallas Pike area- Teagarden Drive. President Abraham made the motion to accept the request, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.

- Ohio County SDEX Refunding/New Issue, Piper Sandler Engagement Letter- Mr. Russell explained this is a request for Piper Sandler to be our underwriters for this system. Their representative, Joe, will be at our next or upcoming meeting. Motion to approve Piper Sandler as our underwriters for the Ohio County SDEX Refunding system made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.

- Belomar, Regional Safety Action Plan, Ohio County local match- The County has received a request from the Transportation Planning Director, Sam Richardson, for a $2500 match towards the Regional Safety Action Plan. The intent of this plan is to increase safety & reduce fatalities on the interstate. Commissioner Wharton asked if we had done this before & the answer was yes. Commissioner Nickerson made the motion to make the $2500 match, and it was seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Staff and Elected Official Reports

- Administrator Russell did not have anything new to report at this time.

- Facilities Director Melissa Marco reported the following:
  - Prosecutor's office moving into their offices today then demolition of their area to begin right after.
  - Phase 15/former Wheeling Police Dept. area demolition continues.
  - Magistrate's Court building project starts today & due to be done within about 3 weeks
  - Front Porch starting on today again, removing the first layer of concrete and using a treatment to make it last longer, then new pavers. This will be done in two phases.
  - Late October is when last phase will start with the City, combining 3 phases and finishing all in January 2026 instead of April.

- Sheriff Nelson Croft reported the following:

- Re: Commitment ad for vehicles in 2026- Chevy has asked for commitment of vehicles so they can be sent to local dealer. Melissa Marco suggested a "Commitment Ad" vs. a Legal Ad but not exactly sure how to approach this because we've never done this before. We will need to know how many are needed and pricing from the dealer. President Abraham stated we still have to go through the bid process. The initial communication came via email from Whiteside. Mr. Russell stated the administration has worked with local banks about leasing & other purchasing options to rotate the fleet. Sheriff Croft said they are pretty good on vehicles right now. Mr. Russell commented on the challenge being finding a better way to finance these vehicles when needed instead of dropping that huge dollar amount at one time. The subject has been tabled for now with motion made by President Abraham and seconded by Commissioner Wharton.

- EMA/EMS Director Lou Vargo reported the following:
  - August 29th was last day for debris clean-up & a lot was cleaned up with several areas physically checked
  - FEMA here until Sept. 22
  - 519 Registrations so far with $5,915,636 in awards
  - $43,600 average given per home
  - 7am-7pm, Monday through Saturday is when FEMA Pop-up is in operation
  - Reminded folks again to thoroughly read their letters from FEMA if denied; look at reason for denial and appeal by providing verification of information as to why denied
  - Anyone suffering from damaged/missing private bridge needs to apply for assistance
  - Has been made aware of issue of "no assistance" from FEMA so be sure to reach out to local resources
    - Example is issue with Charlie Savage and $43,000 was not enough to cover the rebuild so he was directed to go to churches & other local resources for additional funding
  - Had a meeting with Jason Means w/the State and an additional declaration for assistance is in the works; non-profits will be eligible to apply
  - There is more dredging of the creeks that needs done & they are looking at contractors who can do that.
  - Long Term Recovery Committee recently met, and they have 3 new Case Managers; they help ensure no duplication of funds, look at who has funding available, and look at who has received funds.
  - Two truckloads of nice cherry kitchen cabinets recently received
  - Lots of drywall from Certainteed
  - McKinley Furniture brought truckloads of donated furniture
  - Safety Review was done & an Active Shooter Review at Wheeling Island Casino will be held next week
- Commissioner Wharton said he has had 2 people contact him so far. He wanted to talk about what flood victims got in relation to rebuilding and what is still needed. Where can they go for other items?
  - For Example: If I have a contractor working at my house, is there a way to get money for the contractor? The answer was to contact Stacey at United Way or Suzie at Community Foundation or call 211.
  - Commissioner Wharton wants to get that information out to people via TV, newspaper and online.
  - Director Vargo said that's the reason for having a Case Manager.
  - Commissioner Wharton stated there will be a lot of people calling because they are just now getting their money.

- President Abraham is inquiring about having volunteers going door to door with information and updates, with flyers, about FEMA deadlines for those that don't have online access; Director Vargo said he will mention that.
- Commissioner Wharton commented on FEMA doing well getting in touch, getting back with people and people getting their money but the problem being the gap- money needed for things FEMA doesn't cover & not being able to completely rebuild for the $43,000.

- 911 Director Ricky Pritt reported the following:
  - He reported that the NextGen equipment was delivered & they are now working on date to get it installed.
  - Ricky stated that new team member Bruce Sommer continues to be working out well & they are now fully staffed.

- Finance- Administrator Russell directed the Commissioners to the following:
  - No Commitments
  - Payables- President Abraham made mention of the $182,000 was what we ended up collecting & sending to Community Foundation; Commissioner Nickerson asked for clarification if the American Legion payment was for the band and the reply was yes; Commissioner Nickerson asked for clarification about the OCDA check for $46,498 & it was for the work the OCDA staff has done here at the City/County building for the renovation project; clarification for the $11,670 to Undo's was stated as money for Sheriff's Dept. PRO Conference. President Abraham made the motion to approve the payable, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of unpaid invoices being held for various reasons. No action required.
  - Administrator Russell advised that there were no budget revisions
  - City/County Jail Bill – same as last update; paid through 3rd quarter of 2024
- Assessor
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of tax exonerations that have been recommended by the Assessor of Ohio County. Commissioner Nickerson moved to approve the exonerations, seconded by President Abraham, motion approved unanimously.
  - No Certificates of Re-Entry

IX. Commission Board Reports

- None

X. Commissioner Comments

- President Abraham wanted to acknowledge & comment on the success of recent local events:
  - Come Hell & High Water Fund Raiser & Community Event held August 23 in Triadelphia
  - B&B Sports Bar re-opening event & fund raiser
  - The Highlands Sports Complex 5-year Celebration and to acknowledge area First Responders

Meeting adjourned at 9:20am

Future Meetings

September 30, 2026 – County Commission, Special Meeting at 6:00pm
October 7, 2025 - County Commission, Regular Meeting at 8:00am *
October 13, 2025 – Columbus Day, Courthouse Closed
October 21, 2025 - County Commission, Regular Meeting at 8:00am *
November 4, 2025 – County Commission, Regular Meeting at 6:00pm
November 11, 2025 – Veterans Day, Courthouse Closed
November 18, 2025 – County Commission, Regular Meeting at 6:00pm
November 27, 2025 – Thanksgiving Day, Courthouse Closed
November 28, 2025 – Day After Thanksgiving, Courthouse Closed
December 2, 2025 – County Commission, Regular Meeting at 6:00pm
December 15, 2025 – County Commission, Regular Meeting at 6:00pm
December 24, 2025 – Christmas Eve, Courthouse Closed at 12:30
December 25, 2025 – Christmas Day, Courthouse Closed
December 31, 2025 – New Year's Eve, Courthouse Closed at 12:30

*Note meeting time change

Zachary T. Abraham, Commission President

Randel A. Russell County Administrator