The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Special Session for Friday, July 18, 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
Assistant Director of Emergency Management Tony Campbell
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.

President Abraham thanked Ms. Marco and others for getting back in our updated boardroom.

II. Delegations

- Sara Hall- no show

- Susie Nelson, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of the Ohio Valley, and Staci Stephen, Executive Director of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley, were asked by President Abraham to come & speak to the county on how the donated funds for the flood victims were being distributed. Susie gave some stats from WV VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters), a statewide agency:

  31 homes completely destroyed, 21 of which were owner occupied; 74 cars destroyed; approximately 1000 households impacted. WV VOAD was recently active in McDowell County. Susie stated they were now in the Recovery Stage with WV VOAD which involves identifying service providers, forming committees, getting volunteers to assign case numbers to those in need, needs are paired with funding sources and case numbers are assigned to case workers. They are working on identifying agencies and representatives from those agencies to serve on committees. They are in communication with Randy Russell and Stephanie Hockenberry to find out who is best at what as part of working on the Long-term Flood Recovery Committee. The money will go through that committee and training for case managers for this & other committees is coming as early as next week.

  Staci said temporary and long-term housing needs are being worked on and met. Over 60 people are currently in hotels; over 10 families have been helped with housing. The WV Housing Fund has been able to help cover costs until September. Everyone was also working together to not duplicate services.
  Ms. Stephens also wanted to thank everyone for the outpouring of support & donations.

Commissioner Nickerson asked about administrative costs and was told there were no fees. Ms. Nelson added that case managers are physically out in the field in Triadelphia and Valley Grove.

There were questions/discussions about basic needs such as HVAC, secure doors, drywall, and cabinets and if FEMA would help with that. Tony Campbell with EMS said that several homes were non-livable. Don Tennant questioned what happens if FEMA offers something that has already been provided? Does that funding source get reimbursed or does that pot of money just get depleted? It was stated that FEMA does not reimburse for something already provided.

Don Tennant suggested someone publish the information about those that are remodeling or rebuilding must submit an application to the Flood Plain Manager based on the Ohio County Flood Plain Ordinance. He stressed that no one is exempt & there is no "grandfather clause." David Weaver is the contact & he determines what needs done. Ms. Nelson and Ms. Stephens mentioned that flood victims will need help completing those applications so they will make the case managers aware also. Commissioner Wharton asked if our flood plain could be re-drawn but the response was maybe but probably not just for us. Tony Campbell said Flood Plain Managers are writing letters to people stating the amount of damage for insurance companies, as 50% and above is considered destroyed. When asked who considers a home condemned, Tony stated Flood Plain Managers make that decision. Commissioner Wharton commented on those in the City that will be dealing with Inspection Departments and Mr. Russell commented that Triadelphia has codes & restrictions and he thought Valley Grove had some as well.

Commissioner Wharton asked if a process could be put in place to prevent price gouging and Staci stated they were already working on something to address that plus they are encouraging services to be donated.

When asked about how much the Commission has in donations to date, Mr. Russell stated we have $139,000, not including the OCDA check of $30,000.

When asked how much their organizations have to date, Ms. Nelson and Ms. Stephens answered over $450,000 and they are expecting more. President Abraham asked where the Ohio County Commission funds should be directed and the response from Susie & Staci was to send the donations to United Way or Community Foundation and they stressed that every penny would go to the residents.

- Amy Pritt with Valley Grove VFD thanked the Commission for their support over the last two years. She announced their EMS paid crew are able to start as of August 4, Monday through Friday, 8a.m. to 5 p.m. to help with missed calls. They will have two full-time people there and others part-time or casual, for a total of 8. Janet Blacker & Scott Stewart are the full-timers; Amy Pritt, Brian Zink, Grace Smith, Kayla Hancher, Michael Heckathorn and Cortney Pierce are the part-time staff. President Abraham asked for updates on their callouts. Ms. Pritt agreed to get that information to the Commission.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of Tuesday, July 1, 2025. Commissioner Wharton moved that the minutes be approved as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson.

- Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the special meeting of Monday, July 14, 2025. Commissioner Wharton moved that the minutes be approved as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson.

- Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of Tuesday, May 20, 2025 after the requested edits were made. Commission President Abraham moved that the minutes be approved as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Wharton.

IV. Grants

- Department of Justice, Victims of Crime Act Grant (VOCA)- Administrator Russell explained that this grant request is in the amount of $40,215 and is for a Witness Coordinator position in the Prosecutor's office. There is no county match required for this grant. The administration recommends and requests approval to submit the grant application. Commissioner Wharton moved that the grant application be submitted, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion was approved unanimously.

- West Virginia Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG)- Administrator Russell explained that this grant request is in the amount of $37.000 for improvements in the Magistrates Annex building's energy efficient lighting. There is no county match required for this grant. The cost of this project will exceed $37,000 but not sure by how much yet. Melissa Marco stated she has an appointment with the contractor next Wednesday for a quote. The administration recommends and requests approval to submit the grant application. Commission President Abraham moved that the grant application be submitted, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

- WV Division of Multimodal Transportation Facilities- Administrator Russell explained that this grant request is in the amount up to $70,000 with a 5% required county match. The funds would be used on two upcoming projects at the airport and could be used as part of our match for FAA. Commission President Abraham moved that the grant application be submitted, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. Community Grants

- Review of 2025 requests- Commissioners were provided with a spreadsheet of pending requests. The Commissioners went down the list, addressed each request, and approved them for half of the amount requested, the same amount as last year, or tabled. The two tabled requests were the Hockey Club of Wheeling and YWCA, as more information was requested regarding their STEM Empowerment Academy. Commission President Abraham moved that the Community Grants be approved as discussed, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion was approved unanimously. Commissioner Nickerson requested to be abstained from the YMCA's request, so that request was seconded by Commissioner Wharton.

The Commissioners discussed dropping some of sponsorships in the future. President Abraham asked that our policy be updated, and the Commissioners agreed that the goal is to help with Community Grants, but the Commission can't fully fund them and donate to charities. Ms. Marco shared from a recent conference it was suggested to donate directly and not contribute towards a pass-through. Ms. Marco asked about any future requests that come in and Commission President Abraham said to bring them to the Commissioners for review on a case-by-case basis.

- Opioid Funds, Community Grant, Process Recommendation- Commissioner Nickerson asked if we fit the criteria and Melissa Marco answered yes. Chief Deputy Kent Lewis said the cruiser with K9 Kronos is having issues and they will need to use a different vehicle and outfit it properly. She said the funds are already in the budget. Ms. Marco reported half of the requests are for massive amounts of Narcan. She didn't think it was that long ago that the maximum amount was awarded to the State. Commission President Abraham inquired about what we have received and if we will receive regarding opioid grant money. Mr. Russell replied that we will get smaller amounts over the next couple of years, and we have received over $400,000.

  Commission President Abraham asked for a spreadsheet like the "Community Grant" one to have by the next meeting.

- Flood Recovery Donations, Process- The Commission will wait on further direction from Susie Nelson & Staci Stephen as discussed in earlier Delegation presentation. Commission President Abraham shared two upcoming Fund Raisers for flood victims- August 10, 2025 at Quaker Steak & Lube at The Highlands and at the end of the month at The Highlands Sports Complex. Another one is coming from a third party in August. Details forthcoming. Ms. Marco wanted to share that donations are coming from across the country and it's so heartwarming. Donations have come from as far as New Mexico and Missouri. Intern Michael Borsuk wanted to share on behalf of Stephanie Hockenberry our website ovflood.org as the one-stop shop for EMA. He agreed there has been so much community effort. It was also mentioned about so many businesses offering in-kind services.

VI. Unfinished Business

- None

VII. New Business

- Ohio County Sheriff's Office, Cruiser Donation to Town of Triadelphia- Mr. Russell reported that the Sheriff's Department had loaned the Town of Triadelphia a cruiser due to them losing one in the flood. It has high mileage and would like to go ahead and donate that cruiser to Triadelphia. Commission President Abraham moved to donate the cruiser, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.
- Airport, Terminal Apron Pavement Rehabilitation Project, Contract Award to JD&E- Mr. Russell stated that bids were opened on May 15, 2025 and only one bid received and it was from JD&E for $1,295,000. The project's estimated cost is $1.5 million. There are other pending grants to fund the difference. Commission President Abraham moved to approve the bid & project to JD&E, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.
- Management, Personnel and Training- Commission President Abraham moved that this matter be moved to Executive Session at the end of this meeting, Commissioners agreed unanimously.
- WesBanco, Depository Agreement- Administrator Russell explained that they will provide a Bond instead of collateral for deposits in excess of insured amounts. Commission President Abraham

moved to donate the cruiser, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 911 Communications, New Hire Advise and Consent, Bruce Sommer- Mr. Russell described the dispatcher position vacancy in the department and is asking the Commissioners to approve the hiring of Bruce Sommer. Mr. Sommer is a displaced dispatcher from Glen Dale where he used CAD, which is the same system our county uses, he has all his certifications, and he is a former Wheeling Fire Fighter. Commissioner Nickerson moved to approve the hiring of Mr. Sommer, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. Staff and Elected Official Reports

- Administrator Russell reported the following:
    - He attended a Growth & Retention meeting at Oglebay. He met with Highway Cabinet Secretary Tim Rumbaugh along with other Department of Highway staff members. The meeting was about upcoming road projects and was very encouraging.
    - There was a Bel-O-Mar Transportation Advisory Committee meeting this week. Their new representative wants to attend an upcoming Ohio County Commission meeting.
    - Earlier today he met with others to secure a building downtown to house donations for flood victims. This was part of Mr. Russell serving on the Long-Term Recovery Committee. Thanks to Tom Knight, owner of the building, ERB Electric, Bridgeport Equipment and Lee Paul IV helped find the building.
    - Mr. Russell reported that the National Guard has completed their tasks. The area between Cabela's and Hobby Lobby will now be closed.
    - Mr. Russell commented that the team in town that was assessing damage worked with Dave Weaver and he was very helpful.
    - There is an upcoming meeting with West Liberty administration regarding their Aviation Program.
- Facilities Director Melissa Marco reported the following:
- The Second Floor moved back except for Mike Kelly's office, which is moving back next week. The Prosecutor's office, which will have separate offices for attorneys, will be finished by August 6, with the Abuse & Neglect staff being finished about a week and a half later. More work to be done on the desks for the Commissioners. The roof inspections on second and fifth floors will be done on July 31. The next to go into a swing space are the Health Department, the Water Department, and the Finance Department. Work has begun in the back of the old Police Department. If things continue moving quickly, it may get us ahead of schedule. Carpet is laid in Judge Olejasz's court room and jury room. Next is his chambers and Sharon's office. After that is Judge Sim's when he goes on vacation in August. Another working project is related to software. We are coming up with a list of equipment in the building and working with consultants. The south portico is torn up and they are starting to remove stone. The jail's dishwasher arrived and is ready to be installed. The bids on the Magistrate building were not comparable, not even on the same repair items. Both contractors are returning on July 23, 2025 to do a walk-through together, to confirm exactly what needs done then they will have one week to get their new bids back to Ms. Marco. The winning bid is not just based on price, but also when they can begin & finish. The Commissioners asked about the status of the roof issues. Ms. Marco responded that Cattrell identified ten issues with the roofing. Cattrell had Kalkreuth take care of the issues and now both Kalkreuth & Cattrell feel good about the upcoming inspection.
- Emergency Services EMA Assistant Director Tony Campbell reported the following:
    - He is confident that the Governor and the Senator will have the signed disaster declaration soon. The Small Business Administration will come once we get the

declaration. Mr. Campbell said the Armory will most likely be the pop-up site for the SBA and the Triadelphia Community Center will probably be FEMA's main site. There have been concerns regarding if victims were in vehicles, so WVU Medicine/Wheeling Hospital bought us a drone for underwater rescues. Mr. Campbell had the drone with him a gave a brief presentation. The drone is made of titanium and has replaceable plastic propellers. He also explained how it was used in a truck accident just earlier today in Brooke County. Mr. Campbell commented that the drone was compact, efficient, and effective.

- 911 Director Ricky Pritt reported the following:
  - Ricky thanked the Commissioners for their approval to hire Bruce Sommer. He reported his department is moving forward with the NextGen technology. Commission President Abraham asked Ricky to pass on thanks again to the 911 staff for their great job during the flood.

Commission President Abraham asked about expenses departments have absorbed during the disaster. Administrator Russell replied by saying the Commission is keeping track with help from Mr. Vargo & Mr. Campbell with EMS, Brian Taylor with OCDA and Randy Wharton with PSD.

Administrator Russell wanted to address what we are doing for citizens affected by the flood regarding taxes and referred to Assessor Tiffany Hoffman who was in attendance. Ms. Hoffman stated there cannot be any exponentials in the State code for 2024 bills, so they must be paid as they went out; next year's bill will need to have verification. For 2025, owners need to bring in verification of their personal property to be reviewed. Homes are going to be looked at physically in the near future. There are still many questions about this process, and they are hoping that by August or September the agencies will have deemed homes unlivable. Ms. Hoffman commented that her office has received a lot of returned mail, so they are going to try and deliver it personally. Tony Campbell suggested to collaborate with FEMA when they are here as a centralized pick-up location. Ms. Hoffman said the Valley Grove Postmaster told her to bring returned mail directly to her due to the computer not being able to read the mail. Amy Pritt shared that the Valley Grove Post Office was open again as of Thursday, July 17. It was discovered that some mail was routed to West Alexander, PA, and some to Wheeling. The information about the mail is now on our website ovflood.org per our intern Michael Borsuk.

Before going any further, Administrator Russell wanted to apologize to Assessor Hoffman and others for not having budgets out to them earlier. He said they would have them Monday.

- Finance
  - Administrator Russell directed the Commissioners to the list titled Purchase Orders. Since the last meeting, there are 14 new purchase orders for a total of $70,307.44. Commission President Abraham had a question about the one for "Matrix" and Mr. Russell explained that was for the software that the Prosecutor's office uses. Commission President Abraham moved to ratify the issued purchase orders, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of invoices to be paid. Commissioner Wharton wanted confirmation of Moundsville National Guard and Commission President Abraham confirmed them as a yes and went on to move that all invoices listed be paid, 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 are budget revisions, and it is a carry-over from the General Fund. It will be addressed at the upcoming Special Meeting on July 29, 2025.

- Administrator Russell advised that the Commission is up to date on billings to the City of Wheeling for Northern Regional Jail incarcerations and the City of Wheeling is paid up through Sept. 2024.

- Assessor
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the first list of eight (8) tax exonerations – five (5) personal property and three (3) real estate from 2024 tax bills for a total credit of $2,372.96 that have been recommended by the Assessor of Ohio County. Commissioner Wharton moved to approve the exoneration, and it was seconded by Commission President Abraham. The motion passed unanimously. The second list of 16 (16) tax exonerations – fourteen (14) personal property, one (1) real estate, and one (1) mineral from 2025 tax bills for a total debit of $104.69 that have been recommended by the Assessor of Ohio County. Commission President Abraham moved to approve the exonerations, and it was seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Commission Board Reports

- None

X. Commissioner Comments

- None

XI. Executive Session

Future Meetings

Ohio County Commission, Special Meeting, Tuesday, July 29, 2025 at 6:00pm
Ohio County Commission, Tuesday, August 19, 2025 at 6:00pm
Ohio County Commission, Tuesday, September 2, 2025 at 6:00pm

Zachary T. Abraham, Commission President

Randel A. Russell County Administrator