The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Tuesday, October 7, 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
Director of Emergency Management Lou Vargo
Chief Deputy Kent Lewis
Fiscal Officer Becky Coyne
Michelle Olejasz

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 regular meeting on Tuesday, September 16 & the special meeting on Tuesday, September 30 were approved as corrected. President Abraham made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Grants

- Local Economic Development Assistance, Newbridge Academy for Kids- Administrator Russell stated State Sen. Laura Wakim Chaplin obtained this LEDA Grant for the Newbridge Academy for Kids for $40,000. Mr. Russell explained that as with all LEDA Grants awarded in Ohio County, the County Commission serves as a pass-through agency. He advised the check has been received from the State and we have issued the check to Newbridge. Now the Commissioners' approval is needed to release the check. President Abraham made the motion to release the check, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Community Grants

- Augusta Levy Learning Center, Dancing with the Stars- Administrator Russell advised that the Augusta Levy Learning Center has requested the Commission's support for their annual fund raiser, Dancing with the Stars event, again this year. Local celebrities partner with dance professionals to compete in a dance competition. This year's event is Saturday, Nov. 1 at the Capitol Theatre at 7pm. In the past, the Commission has supported the event with a grant of $500 and they are asking for that amount again this year. They have provided all required supporting documentation. The request for the Commissioners' approval for this grant was made. President Abraham made the motion to approve the same request of $500, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Opioid Funds, Healthways Inc. Miracles Happen Center- Administrator Russell presented information about Healthways' Miracles Happen Center that is an abstinence-based, nine bed men's residential recovery center in Woodsdale that's been in operation since 1985. They are requesting $150,000, with $106,798 being used for salary & benefits for existing personnel, $2691 for undefined supplies and $40,511 for undefined expenses. Previously it was discussed that funds should not be used for operating costs. Also, WV First Foundation has provided similar guidance regarding existing salaries. Based on the guidance and not enough information about what the rest of the money will be spent on, the recommendation is that the Commission deny this grant request at this time. If Healthways would like to provide additional information, they can resubmit the application and it can be brought back for reconsideration. President Abraham made the motion to table this grant, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Community Grants, General Update- Administrator Russell presented the Commissioners with an updated list that Melissa Marco prepared, showing all Community Grants. He stated that all grants that have been approved have had checks written and they have gone out. Mr. Russell did apologize for the delay in getting some of the checks out but stated again that they have all gone out now. No further action is required at this time.

VI. Unfinished Business

- Opioid Funds- Administrator Russell presented the Commissioners with updated account information on the County's Opioid Funds. His recap included the County receiving $575,364.53 from the WV Fire Foundation and $337,450.45 has been committed by the Commissioners, with a balance of $237,914.08. Mr. Russell stated he anticipates receiving more funds from the Foundation. There were no questions. Mr. Russell said there was no action required.

VII. New Business

- Circuit Clerk, New Hire, Shelby Bell, Full-time- Administrator Russell stated Circuit Clerk Brenda Miller is seeking the Commissioners' advice and consent on the hiring of Shelby Bell as a deputy circuit clerk in her office. No issues or concerns. President Abraham made the motion to approve the hiring of Shelby Bell, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the motion passed unanimously.

- Sheriff, Courthouse Security, Abigal Gurney, Part-time- At a prior meeting, Sheriff Croft was given authorization to hire three part-time courthouse security officers. One of the three did not work out so Sheriff Croft is seeking the Commissioners' advice and consent to hire Abigal Gurney as a part-time courthouse security officer. There were other candidates, but they were not as qualified. No issues or concerns. President Abraham made the motion to approve the members, Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

- Addressing, New Road Name, Empowerment Lane- Mr. Russell addressed the Commissioners by stating that there is a residence being constructed behind Florence Crittenton and the current road name is Hervey Lane. Our addressing coordinator felt that name was too similar to Harvey Lane, which is also in our county. Therefore, the recommendation is to change the name from Hervey Lane to Empowerment Lane. There are no other properties that are addressed on that lane. Mr. Russell recommends the approval of the name change request. President Abraham made the motion to approve the members, Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

- Ohio County Fire Board, Appointment, Thomas J. John- Mr. Russell addressed the Commissioners by explaining they are required to appoint three citizen members to the Ohio County Fire Board, one from each magisterial district. Each of their terms is three years with a two-year term limit. Currently, Mike Trabert of District 2, termed out June 30th of this year but agreed to serve until his replacement could be appointed. Last week, Mr. Thomas John expressed an interest in serving on the Fire Board and he is a resident of Magisterial District 2. He retired from the Wheeling Fire Department after serving 25 years and was also a certified nurse. His resume was provided. Mr. Russell recommended the Commissioners' approval of Mr. John's appointment to the Ohio County Fire Board. His three-year term would commence immediately and expire on June 30, 2028. There were no issues or concerns. President Abraham made the motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Thomas J. John, Commissioner Wharton seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Staff and Elected Official Reports

- Administrator Russell shared that there will be an upcoming SBA training session for elected officials in the area on November 1, 2025, 9am-1pm. Commissioners will be getting an invitation with details.

- Facilities Director Melissa Marco reported the following:
  - South Portico finished; amazing job matching stone
  - West Portico to be finished within next 2 weeks
  - Finance & Water Department moving to former Wheeling Police Dept. next week
  - Health Department moving by end of this month
  - Magistrate's building coming along and they even gave positive comments & feedback
  - Apron & Tower projects at the Airport are going on- reviewing new numbers

- Sheriff Nelson Croft reported the following:
  - Adjustment to FLOCK License Plate Reader- The department will be able to save $2,000 by using the existing DOH poles
  - They are interviewing 2 candidates for the open Deputy positions

- EMA/EMS Director Lou Vargo reported the following:
  - FEMA has reported paying out $6,986,102
  - Funds now open for Public Assistance
  - Long Term Recovery Committee still meeting every Monday& includes re-building bridges
  - Motorola continuing with updates with very short downtimes
  - Training being given to volunteers
  - Commissioner Wharton asked if the Commissioners could get a spreadsheet of who received how much & Director Vargo responded it hasn't been available yet due to PII & MOUs but is forthcoming. Mr. Vargo also commented that since we have a document in place now with FEMA, State & County that it should not take nearly as long if a similar event were to happen again
  - President Abraham inquired about the Public Assistance and Director Vargo stated there is a 25% Match and it has a 60-day turnaround. For clarification, the Public Assistance is for the 2 Towns, Volunteer Fire Departments and various agencies to replenish funds, replace equipment, etc.

- 911 Director Ricky Pritt was at training, so Administrator Randy Russell reported the following on his behalf:
  - The radio updates continue

- Finance- Becky Coyne directed the Commissioners to the following:
  - Payables- The list of payables totaled $1,881,598.46 including payroll. There were 2 inquiries for clarifications regarding vendors which Becky answered. President Abraham made the motion to approve the payables, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.
  - Unpaid invoices being held for elected official's approval or department manager approval before paying. No questions/inquiries. No action required.
  - Becky advised that there were no budget revisions
  - City/County Jail Bill – Administrator Russell stated it was reconciled through September of 2024, and we were expecting a check this week for approximately $11,000 for two quarters.

- Assessor
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of 29 tax exonerations to reduce taxes in the amount of $5474.43 that have been recommended by the Assessor of Ohio County. Commissioner Nickerson moved to approve the exonerations, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, motion approved unanimously.
  - No Certificates of Re-Entry

IX. Commission Board Reports

- President Abraham attended a RED Board Meeting but has nothing to report to this Commission meeting.

X. Commissioner Comments

- None

Meeting adjourned at 8:30am

Future Meetings

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