The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Tuesday, June 3, 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 J. Marco
- Director of Emergency Management Louis J. Vargo
- Director of 911 Communications Rickie Pritt
- Sheriff's Chief Deputy Kent Lewis
- Commission Staff: Rebecca Coyne, Kimberly Lemley, and Michelle Olejasz

Other Elected Officers present:

- Sheriff of Ohio County Harry "Nelson" Croft, Jr.

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 510 of the City County Building at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Alliance to the United States of America.

Delegations

- Mr. Chad Francis with the United Mine Workers announced many of the 911 Dispatchers decided to join the United Mine Workers of America. He requested a working group with the Commissioners to address topics of concern for the dispatchers.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- After review, President Abraham suggested two edits to the minutes dated May 20, 2025. The minutes will be amended and brought back to the Commissioners. The minutes were tabled until the edits were made.

Community Grants

- Ms. Marco presented the Commissioners with a list of the Community Grants that had been received to date. President Abraham inquired if further requests would be presented to the Commission Office. Ms. Marco stated they received about 95% of the requests received at this time last year. The Community Grants will be reviewed at the next Commission meeting.

New Business

- Wheeling Ohio County Health Department – Mr. Tom Tuttle's five-year term is set to expire. Mr. Tuttle has expressed interest in continuing to serve the Wheeling Ohio

County Health Department. Motion to approve the re-appointment of Mr. Tuttle made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion approved.

- Highlands Sports Complex Management Agreement – Mr. Randel Russell stated the Commissioners and the Ohio County Development Authority are reviewing management proposals for the Highlands Sports Complex. No action is needed.

- Ohio County Employee Health Insurance Benefits – President Abraham stated the Commissioners, along with the Cornerstone Group, have reviewed multiple options to maintain current employee costs. At this time, the Commission offers three health insurance plans. This may be reduced to two and the HRA may need to change. Our payout percentage was over 130%, which affects rates. The County Commission office will continue to provide information to employees as it becomes available.

Staff and Elected Officials Report

- County Administrator – Mr. Randel Russell reported the Ohio County Development Authority will meet on June 12 at the Highlands. The annual spring equipment auction will be held on Saturday. Commissioner Wharton inquired if there were any reserves on the cars. Sheriff Croft stated there was not. Mr. Russell stated he would be out of the office on Thursday and Friday and to contact Melissa Marco with any concerns or questions. Offices will be closed on June 19, 2025, for Juneteenth and June 20, 2025, for West Virgina Day.

- Facilities Director – Ms. Marco provided an update on the building renovations. The second floor is nearing completion and the carpet is ready to be installed. The Prosecuting Attorney's buildout and the Courtroom will be completed by the end of June. The fifth-floor roof will be laid in four stages and they are now on stage two. The porticos will begin in June and the lintels on the Annex will start in late Summer. Judge Jason Cuomo will be conducting a civil trial in the building next week and we are exploring all options including Independence Hall and the Federal Building.

- Sheriff – Sheriff Croft stated the new weapons have arrived and the laser tester, purchased through Opioid Funds, was used effectively to find methamphetamine. K9 Kronos conducted four vehicle searches and each tested positive for drug paraphernalia.

- 911 Director – Director Pritt stated the department continues to work on GIS mapping.

- Emergency Management – Director Lou Vargo reported 25 people completed their recent training as part of the local Critical Incidence Stress Distribution Team, which are partners with WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital. Director Vargo also updated the Commissioners on the hillside slips on Highland, Castilyn, Hildreth, and Henry Drive. Bel-O-Mar, FEMA, and DOT are working together to address these issues. Director Vargo also explained that in regards to port security grants, we are now included in the Pittsburgh region and will be competing with large cities across the country.

Finance

- Financial Commitments – Mr. Russell presented the purchase orders. President Abraham made a motion to approve the purchase orders, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

- Payables – President Abraham made a motion to accept the bills, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

- Budget Revisions – Ms. Coyne presented a budget revision to the Commissioners. This is the second revision for the year. Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve the budget revision, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

- City of Wheeling, Share of NRJ Incarcerations – Mr. Russell stated they are working to reconcile the third quarter of 2024 with an estimated payment of $8,000.00.

- Exonerations – Six exonerations were presented. Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve the exonerations, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned by President Abraham at 6:33 p.m.

Zachary T. Abraham, President

Randel A. Russell, Administrator