Ohio County Commission
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
October 1, 2024

## I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by County Commission President Donald A. Nickerson, Jr. at 6:00 pm. Those in attendance included: President Nickerson, Commissioner Zach Abraham, Commissioner Randy Wharton, County Administrator Randy Russell, County Solicitor Donald Tennant, Facilities Director Melissa Marco, Senior Accountant Becky Coyne, Emergency Management Director Lou Vargo, Deputy Chief Nelson Croft, Deputy Director of 911 Rickie Pritt, Elections Coordinator Erin Whitchey, and Accountant Kimberly Lemley.

President Nickerson led those in attendance with a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

## II. Delegations

Residents of Long Vue Acres – Three residents from Long Vue Acres attended the meeting to discuss a home that has been vacant for over 40 years on the lane. They are having issues with raccoons, snakes, and debris from storms. They have made the owner offers to purchase the home, but they are unwilling to sell. The Commissioners have asked that Mr. Tennant look into an ordinance that the Commissioners could adopt to handle dilapidated homes like this in the area.

Salvation Army – Lt. John Lawrence from the Salvation Army stated the facility runs a shelter for men offering a food pantry, sleeping quarters, and even youth programming in South Wheeling. They are hosting a Kettle Kick Off on November 16, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at Cabela's at the Highlands. Last year, their goal was $100,000.00. This year, their goal will be $200,000.00.

Tiffany Hoffman, Assessor of Ohio County – Tiffany Hoffman presented the Commissioners with a letter. She would like to move her Real Estate employees from the Annex into the Courthouse during the HVAC project. She has been speaking with Mr. Russell and Ms. Marco to find the appropriate space. Ms. Marco showed her the Prosecuting Attorney's space and she feels that will work for her staff. Ms. Marco will work with the Assessor's Office and the Contractor to see if the changes can be made.

Harry Danford – Mr. Danford spoke concerning the Bob Holmes one man volleyball team. Mr. Holmes will be in the schools October 7-10 to discuss depression, anxiety, suicide, vaping, and alcohol.

## III. Approval of Meeting Commissions

President Nickerson: Before you are the minutes of the regular meeting held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. Please take a minute to review the minutes. The minutes were approved by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

## IV. Grants

**Airport Terminal and Tower Project – Wheeling-Ohio County Airport**
Mr. Russell reported we would like to apply for a grant under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – Airport Tower Program (ATP) in the amount of $1.6 million to repair the air traffic control tower cab windows which are now beyond their expected useful life, and to make repairs to the pre-engineered metal structure that was added on to the terminal building in 1991, where we are having severe water infiltration. There would likely be a 20% match for this grant which would amount to $320,000. We seek your approval to apply for the grant. Motion to apply for the grant approved by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

**FEMA Grants**
A. Mt. Zion Cemetery
Mr. Russell stated that last week we were approached by Belomar Regional Council to be the applicant for a grant through FEMA for repairs of the land slide at the Mount Zion Cemetery. Most FEMA grants require that a State, Local, or Territorial Governments be the applicant for grants. Commissioners will recall that The Wheeling Mt. Zion Cemetery Association received a $2 million grant from the State of West Virginia to assist with the slide repair. Belomar has control over those funds. At this time, we do not have details regarding the grant or the amount of the grant, we are seeking your approval to move forward with the process. Once the application is complete, we will bring this issue back to Commissioners for formal approval of the grant application.

B. Castelyn Drive
Mr. Russell stated he does not have details regarding Castelyn Drive, so he will ask Emergency Management Director Vargo to speak to this request. Director Vargo stated a public hearing would likely need to be held to inquire if there were any other slips throughout the area. The Hazard Mitigation Grant would cover 75% of the costs and 25% would be a match. Mr. Abraham made a motion to hold a public meeting to discuss the items, while Mr. Wharton seconded the motion. Motion carried.

## V. Community Grants

Ohio Valley Night to Shine
Mr. Russell reported The Ohio Valley Night to Shine is a prom for local special needs individuals, sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and is hosted locally by the Limestone Presbyterian Church. The event is scheduled for Friday, February 7, 2025. At last year's event there were 250 registered guests, approximately 40% were Ohio County residents. The

event holder has provided their financial information. The past two years, the Commission has provided support for this event in the amount of $500.00 each year. We seek your approval for a Community Grant in the amount of $500.00 Motion to approve $500.00 made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Mountain East Conference Basketball Tournament
Administrator Russell: We have received a request for a multi-year sponsorship commitment to support keeping the Mountain East Conference (MEC) Basketball Tournament in Wheeling at the Wesbanco Arena. The MEC is an NCAA Division II league consisting of 11 colleges and universities including two local institutions, West Liberty University and Wheeling University. The economic impact to the Ohio Valley is projected to exceed $3,000,000.00 each year. While financial information for the tournament is not readily available, however, we have discussed the financials with local organizers and believe that we have sufficient information to recommend a sponsorship. Last year, the Commission provided a sponsorship in the amount of $5,000.00 We seek your approval to agree to a multi-year sponsorship of $5,000.00 per year over the next three years, subject to the budget appropriations clause. Mr. Abraham made a motion to approve $5,000.00 for the event, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Hil-Dar Playground
Mr. Russell stated Mr. Wharton would like to speak to this request. Mr. Wharton stated the playground serves over 100 families and most attend Bridge Street School. Mr. Wharton would like to approve $25,000.00 of ARPA funds to help renovate this dilapidated playground. Mr. Abraham agreed the playground was in horrible condition and needed repairs immediately. Motion to approve the request made by Mr. Wharton, seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion carried.

## V. Unfinished Business

We have no unfinished business.

## VI. New Business

Jochum Refuse Service - Request
Administrator Russell: We received a request from Jochum Refuse Service to provide a Letter of Support for their desire to have the Ohio County Solid Waste Authority's Commercial Solid Waste Facility Siting Plan revised in such a manner that would allow them to construct and operate a Refuse Transfer Station at this location in the Fulton area of Wheeling. As a result, we have composed and sent a letter to the Executive Director of the Solid Waste Authority. This is not a letter specifically supporting Jochum Refuse Service, but support of a revision of Solid Waste's Comprehensive Litter and Solid Waste Control Plan and their Solid Waste Siting Plan that would permit transfer stations in the County. We are seeking the Commission's ratification of our letter. Motion to approve the Letter of Support made by Mr. Wharton, seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion carried.

Strategic Planning
Mr. Russell stated we have had a number of conversations internally regarding the need for

an overall strategic plan for Ohio County. A good strategic plan would go a long way in assisting us in defining the direction of or economic development initiatives and allocating resources to attain established goals. A strategic plan would open up additional outside funding grant opportunities. We are seeking your approval to put out a Request for Proposals for consultants to assist us in the effort. The decision to move forward with any particular consultant would be brought back to the Commission for approval. Mr. Abraham made a motion to approve the decision to move forward with the request, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Fire Board Appointment
Mr. Russell stated at the June 25, 2024, meeting, Commissioners appointed Triadelphia Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief David Patterson as a fire department representative to the Ohio County Fire Board. Since then, Chief Patterson has realized that his work schedule is such that he will not be able to attend as many meetings as he would like. In his place, he is recommending the appointment of Assistant Fire Chief Kiera Allietta. We recommend your appointment of Kiera Allietta as a fire department member to the Ohio County Fire Board to serve out Chief Patterson's unexpired term. Motion to approve the appointment made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

2024 National 4-H Week – Proclamation
Administrator Russell: 4-H is the largest youth development organization in the United States with over 6 million participants. October 7th through 12th is National 4-H week. We have prepared a proclamation designating October 7th through 12th as National 4-H week in Ohio County. We seek your approval of the proclamation. Mr. Abraham made a motion to accept the proclamation as written, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

## VII. Staff and Elected Official Reports

Administrator Russell:
The West Virginia Association of Counties is meeting at Wheeling Island Resort starting Sunday, October 6 through Tuesday, October 8. We plan to attend segments of that meeting. The County Commissioners Association of West Virginia has a board meeting scheduled for Sunday and Monday, October 20 and 21. We plan to attend segments of that meeting as well. We plan to have a short meeting with Senator Capito and her staff soon. The November 5 General Election is fast approaching. We have a lot going on in the office. The County Commission's emergency towing policy is up for its three-year review. We have sent information out to the tow companies and all emergency service agencies for review.

Facilities Director Marco:
Ms. Marco reported we may experience another delay with the delivery of the bus duct. We will find out next week when the part is scheduled to ship. At this time, all work that can be completed has and we are virtually at a standstill. The Porch Project is progressing well, and the Main Entrance should be completed shortly. We have been in contact with the contractor to start the remediation project on the Annex.

Elections Coordinator Witchey:
Ms. Witchey provided the Commissioners with a handout on upcoming dates to remember concerning the election.

Chief Deputy Croft:
Deputies responded to a crash on Two Mile Hill that left traffic shut down for several hours. On October 8, Chief Deputy Croft and the Sheriff will be attending a PenDot conference in Claysville. The mine will be drilling under I-70 again, near Claysville, that will affect traffic eastbound. There is a disease going around that causes fever in deer. The Oglebay area and Shawnee Hills have noticed deer with the disease. On October 4, a safety meeting will be held at Wheeling Park High School.

Emergency Management Director Vargo: The two hurricanes have now passed through the southern part of the country and left widespread damage. The Department has now changed from MEDCOM to WESCOM.

911 Deputy Director Pritt: The department is working with vendors on NextGen 911.

**VIII. Finance**

County Disbursements:
Senior Accountant Coyne: Before you are disbursements from the County accounts payable department totaling $3,431,153.11. We recommend your approval to make these disbursements. Motion to approve the disbursements made by Mr. Wharton, seconded by Mr. Abraham. Motion carried.

Unpaid Accounts Payable:
Senior Accountant Coyne: Before you is a list of 6 invoices from the County accounts payable totaling $30,057.72 that are not being paid at this time. Most have simply not been approved by elected officials or department heads. There is one that we are still negotiating. There is no action necessary.

Budget Revisions
Senior Accountant Coyne: We are working on budget revisions for your consideration at the next County Commission meeting. There is no action necessary at this time.

**Assessor**

Exonerations:

Administrator Russell: Before you is a list of 8 tax exonerations that are being recommended by Assessor Hoffman, all of which reduce taxes for a total credit of $4,782.72. Six of these are keying errors, one does not live in Ohio County, and one was a State Tax Department error, which we were able to assist in having corrected. We seek your approval of the exonerations. Motion to approve the exonerations made by Mr. Abraham, seconded by Mr. Wharton. Motion carried.

Administrator Russell: Before you is a fiscal year to date report on all exonerations. To date, you have approved a total of 225 exonerations, 214 reduced taxes by a total of $69,557.07, and 11 that increased or added taxes by a total of $4,420.39, for a net credit of $65,136.88. This is informational only, there is no action necessary.

Certificates of Re-Entry
Administrator Russell: There are no certificates of re-entry at this time.

IX. **Commissioner Comments**

Mr. Abraham reported he attended the Ohio County Country Fair Dinner. There was also a luncheon for the Growth and Retention Initiative and it featured a good turnout. They are hoping to grow the small business eco-system. He is hoping to provide updates every 6-9 months. They are now moving to action and execution phase.

X. **Future Meetings and Important Dates**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Columbus Day | Monday, October 14, 2024 | Courthouse closed |
| County Commission Meeting | Tuesday, October 15, 2024 | |
| Election Day | Tuesday, November 5, 2024 | Courthouse closed |
| Veterans Day | Tuesday, November 11, 2024 | Courthouse closed |
| Election Canvas | Tuesday, November 12, 2024 | |

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Donald A. Nickerson, President

Randel A. Russell, Administrator