The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Tuesday, May 20, 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 Michelle Olejasz

Other Elected Officers present:
Assessor of Ohio County Tiffany Hoffman
Circuit Clerk of Ohio County Brenda Miller
Sheriff of Ohio County Harry "Nelson" Croft Jr.
Clerk of Courts of Ohio County Michael E. Kelly

I. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 220 of the City County Building, and was called to order at 6:00pm. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the regular meeting of Tuesday, May 6, 2025. Commission President Abraham moved that the minutes be approved as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Delegations

- Mr. Joseph Nassif from Piper Sandler and Ms. Carrie Cecil from Frost Brown Todd provided Commissioners with an update on the Special District Excise Tax in place for the Fort Henry Economic Opportunity District, and the viability of refinancing and or issuing new SDEX bonds this calendar year. Mr. Nassif and Ms. Cecil plan to update Commissioners as additional information is available.

- Ohio County Clerk of Courts Michael E. Kelly requested that the Board of Commissioners adopt a policy to address overpayments of fees to his office. Clerk Kelly explained that the cost of issuing small refunds far exceeds the amount of the refund, and that frequently the checks for those small refunds are not getting cashed by the recipient. Ultimately, those uncashed refunds then must be turned over to the State Treasurer's office as unclaimed property. He stated that the State Auditor's office has advised that if the Board of Commissioners were to approve a policy authorizing that small refunds are not required to

be issued, it would eliminate these issues. Commission President Abraham requested that County Clerk Kelly seek input from the State Auditor's office and draft a policy for consideration by the Board of Commissioners during a future meeting.

- Ms. Tiffany Hoffman, Assessor of Ohio County, spoke to Commissioners concerning several topics. First, she handed commissioners a memorandum issued by Administrator Russell to employees stating that if an employee and their spouse had a wellness exam and a wellness assessment, their employee contributions to health insurance premiums would not increase during the 2025-26 budget year. Commission President Abraham asked Ms. Hoffman if Commissioners had provided employees with any indication the premium would rise. He continued by saying that the way the cost of the plan looked, the plan would most likely need to change, as the $2.1 million dollar increase was too much for the county budget to bear. He stated that the Commission would be asking each department to look hard at their budgets to see if cuts could be made.

- Ms. Hoffman then advised that she had received a call from County Solicitor Tennant stating that the Ohio County Personnel Advisory Board would be disbanded and not included in the revisions to the Ohio County Employee Handbook. Commission President Abraham stated that the board had not met in over twenty years, but the department heads would be given the opportunity to review revisions to the handbook once they are complete. Commissioner Wharton stated that he disagreed with changing things without input and we would need to discuss the Ohio County Personnel Advisory Board in more detail and further discussions were needed. Commissioner Wharton asked Assessor Hoffman if she would be agreeable to preview the handbook in advance and make any recommendations she thought were needed. Ms. Hoffman stated that she believed all the elected officials and department heads should be part of a collaborative effort to update the handbook. Commissioner Wharton asked Assessor Hoffman if she was giving her staff additional time off. Assessor Hoffman responded that she was not. Ms. Hoffman stated her main concern was fair pay across the departments. She stated if each office had a Deputy Clerk they should all be paid the same, not different amounts as set forth in a budget.

IV. Grants

- Homeland Security Grant Program 2025 – Cybersecurity for EOC and 911 Center
  Administrator Russell explained that this grant request is in the amount of $41,937.00 and would be used to implement cybersecurity measures in the Ohio County Emergency Operations Center and the Ohio County 911 Communications Center. There is no county match required for this grant. 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.

- Homeland Security Grant Program 2025 – Radio Tower Security System
  Administrator Russell explained that this grant request is in the amount of $49,905.00 and would be used acquire and install security cameras at the radio tower sites. There is no county match required for this grant. 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.

- Local Emergency Planning Committee Grant 2025
  Director Vargo explained that this grant request is in the amount of $3,000.00. A Commodity Flow Study was completed last year. This grant is for the operation of the LEPC expenses, for drills, and educational programs put on by the department. Commission President Abraham moved that the grant application be submitted, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

V. Community Grants

- Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce Lunch with Leaders Program
  Administrator Russell explained that the Chamber is seeking financial support for this year's Lunch with Leaders Program with a sponsorship in the amount of $1,500.00. This year's speaker is Brad Smith, President of Marshall University. The event will be on Thursday, June 12, 2025, from 11:30am to 1:00pm at Wheeling Park's White Place. Commissioner Nickerson moved that this matter be tabled, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. Unfinished Business

- Wheeling Ohio Couty Airport – Jacobs Engineering Task Order #11
  Administrator Russell explained that this item had been tabled during the May 6, 2025 meeting, pending additional information. Task Order #11 is for the design of the Air Traffic Control Tower Rehabilitation Project – Phase 2, the cost of which is not exceed $417,761. FAA's regional office has been contracted and has advised that the grant for this project has already been approved and funded by Congress under the Bilaterial Infrastructure Law. Ohio County simply needs to have the project designed and built to the specifications submitted in the grant, and the grant will reimburse the costs. The administrator recommends and seeks approval to execute the task order to get the project moving forward. Commission President Abraham moved to approve the execution of the task order, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion was approved unanimously.

VII. New Business

- Dilapidated Housing Ordinance
  Administrator Russell explained that he was asked to put this on the agenda for discussion. Before Commissioners is a draft of an ordinance that Solicitor Tennant prepared as a starting point. Commissioners were asked to review the ordinance for additional discussion in the future. No action taken.

- Workforce WV Board Appointment
  Administrator Russell explained that term of one of the County Commissions appointments to the Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board is set to end on June 30, 2025. West Liberty University Provost Dr. Cathy Monteroso currently holds that seat and has expressed an interest in being reappointed. The administration recommends the reappointment of Dr. Monteroso to this board. Commission Nickerson moved to reappoint Dr. Cathy Moneroso to the Northern Panhandle Workforce Development Board, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

- Northern Panhandle HOME Consortium – Resolution

Administrator Russell explained that a resolution pledging Ohio County's continued cooperation and participation in the HOME Consortium was before Commissioners. The HOME Consortium is invaluable in assisting prospective homebuyers. The administration recommends approval of the resolution. Commissioner Wharton moved that the resolution be approved, seconded by Commission Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Road Name Request – Rockfish Lane

  Administrator Russell explained that Mr. Lloyd Klages continues to develop housing in Ohio County in the area of Dallas Pike and New Alexander Road. Mr. Klages has requested an additional road to be named Rockfish Lane, which will be off Coventry Road, with intersects with New Alexander Road. The administration recommends approval of the new road. Commissioner Wharton moved for the approval of the new road name of Rockfish Lane, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.

- Ohio County Personnel Advisory Board
  Administrator Russell explained he was asked to put this on the agenda for further discussion. This item was discussed during delegations, and there was no further discussion.

- Ohio County Circuit Clerk – Personnel Matters
  Administrator Russell explained that Circuit Clerk Brenda Miller is present to discuss personnel matters with Commissioners. Administrate Rusell recommended that this be moved to the end of the agenda so that Commissioners could go into Executive Session to discuss. Commissioners agreed unanimously.

- National Emergency Medical Service Week – Proclamation
  Administrator Russell explained that May 18 – May 25 is recognized as National EMS Week. Before Commissioners is a proclamation to recognize this week as EMS Week in Ohio County. The administration recommends approval of the proclamation. Commission President Abraham moved that the proclamation be approved, seconded by Commission Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Staff and Elected Official Reports

- Administrator Russell reported the following:
  - At the end of this agenda are proposed commission meeting dates for June and July. Please review those dates and advise the administration of any conflicts.
  - Monday, May 26, 2025, is Memorial Day. All county offices will be closed for the holiday.
  - The administration continues toward a resolution of the employee health insurance benefits for the coming fiscal year. It is the administration's plan to have recommendations for Commissioners for the next meeting.
  - The employee compensation study is nearing completion. It is the administration's hope to have the study available by the next meeting.
  - The County Commission Association is having their annual conference at Stonewall Resort on June 8 through June 11. He is unable to attend but if the Commissioners are able, to advise Melissa to make arrangements.

- This year, Ohio County will again be participating in the City of Wheeling's annual equipment auction. The auction will be held at the City's Operation Center on June 1.

- Project Coordinator Marco provided updates on the following:

  - The second-floor roof is ready for inspection and the fifth-floor roof is being completed in four parts. The second floor will be completed on May 28 except for the Prosecutor's build out. This project will be completed at the end of June. Although construction is on schedule, the carpet may delay the departments moving back until the week of June 9, 2025. The next phase of the project will move to the first floor, and we may be able to finish the project early based on the original timeline. The portico paver project will start in June, and the lintels will start in late summer. The dishwasher approved at the last meeting for the Correctional Facility has been ordered. The project at the Magistrate Building will officially begin soon. Ms. Marco explained to the Commissioners why the delay occurred in ordering materials and getting the project off the ground.

- Director Vargo reported the following:
  - Director Vargo expressed his sincere appreciation for the equipment that was recently ordered for the departments using the opioid funds. It has already saved lives across the County. Director Vargo also thanked the Commission for the EMS Proclamation and the tireless work the staff and volunteers put in to keep the community safe.

- Finance
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list titled Purchase Orders. Since the last meeting purchase orders 25-171 through 25-182 have been approved totaling $275,135.50. Commissioner Wharton moved to ratify the issued purchase orders, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. The motion passed unanimously.
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of invoices to be paid. Commission President Abraham moved that all invoices listed by 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 no budget revisions for consideration at this meeting.
  - Administrator Russell advised that the Commission is up to date on billings to the City of Wheeling for Northern Regional Jail incarcerations. City Solicitor Warmuth has reconciled and paid January 2024 through June 2024, and is currently working on reconciling July 2024 through April 2025.

- Assessor
  - Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of ninety-six (96) tax exonerations - ninety-five (95) mineral and one (1) personal property that have been recommended by the Assessor of Ohio County. All ninety-six are corrections to tax bills for a total credit of $3,582.54. Commissioner Wharton moved to approve the exonerations, seconded by Commission President Abraham. The motion passed unanimously.

- Administrator Russell advised that there are no certificates of re-entry for this meeting.

IX. Commission Board Reports

- None

X. Commissioner Comments

- None.

XI. Executive Session

- Commission President Abraham moved for Commissioners to go into Executive Session pursuant to W.Va. Code 6-9A-4(B)(2)(A) to discuss matters related to employment, disciplining, discharging, dismissal, or compensation of a public officer or employee, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously. Circuit Clerk of Ohio County, Brenda Miller, was asked to stay for the Executive Session.

- Commission President Abraham moved that Commissioners come out of Executive Sessions and return to Regular Session, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. The motion passed unanimously.

- There was no action taken from the Executive Session.

XII. Commission President Abraham adjourned the meeting at 7:48pm.

These minutes were approved unanimously by all Commissioners present at the June 3, 2025, meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Ohio County.

Zachary T. Abraham, Commission President

Randel A. Russell, County Administrator