The Board of Commissioners of Ohio County, West Virginia
Minutes of a Regular Session for Thursday, January 22, 2026

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 Don Tennant
Facilities Director Melissa Marco
Director of Emergency Management Lou Vargo
Assistant Director of Emergency Management Anthony Campbell
Chief Deputy Kent Lewis

Elected Officials present:
Sheriff Nelson Croft

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

- Commission President Abraham convened the meeting in Room 215 of the City County Building at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

Delegations

- Ms. Susan Drake from the American Legion Post 3 spoke about the District Conference to be held at Oglebay on February 12-14, 2026. They are expecting 400 people to be in attendance. The money raised helps Veterans in need and for children to learn about Veterans. Ms. Drake is asking the Ohio County Commission to help sponsor the hospitality tent with a donation of $3,000.00. The total price is $5,000.00 to $6,000.00. President Abraham thanked Ms. Drake for appearing before the Commission. He stated that the Ohio County Commission has been asking organizations to provide financials and a list of other sponsors when reviewing their request. Ms. Drake said she would provide that information to Ms. Melissa Marco.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- The minutes from January 6, 2026, were reviewed. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Grants

- None

Community Grants / Opioid Funds

- The Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center sent in an application for County opioid funds. Their application sought to fund the salary and benefits of Ms. Michelle Moseman who was hired in 2025 after Dr. Ellen Kitts retired. Mr. Randel Russell read their application and asked Ms. Melissa Marco for her thoughts. Ms. Marco stated the West Virginia First Foundation would like

counties to fund projects that specifically meet one of five criteria set by the state. Ms. Marco felt this position did not meet the criteria. Commissioner Wharton stated he was dedicated to helping children in need. He asked Ms. Marco to work with Betsy Bethel-McFarland at Easter Seals to revise their application. The application was tabled.

- Holy Family Child Care and Development Center; dba The Village Crisis Nursery also submitted an opioid application. The application looked to hire an Operations Manager and to fund $10,000.00 of the sprinkler system. Ms. Marco stated the Operations Director would not have direct patient / client responsibilities and also thought the application did not meet the criteria set forth. Commissioner Wharton again stated his commitment to helping children and asked Ms. Marco to work with The Village Crisis Nursey on their application. The application was tabled.
- The State Hockey Championship, to be held at WesBanco Areana, will feature four local teams. In the past, the Commissioners have donated $4,000.00 to this event. Commissioner Wharton made a motion to approve a $4,000.00 donation to the event, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

New Business

- Sheriff, Patrol Vehicles – The Sheriff is requesting six patrol vehicles for the fiscal year. Sheriff Croft and Chief Deputy Lewis have stated they would like to move into Administrative vehicles. They have identified ten vehicles they can send to the next auction. The last 2025 that was ordered is being striped this week. Instead of purchasing these vehicles, the County is exploring the option to lease, costing approximately $1,000.00 per vehicle per month. The lease term would be five years to keep the fleet up to date. Mr. Randy Russell is exploring the option with the State Auditors' Office on how this would be set up and implemented. Commissioner Wharton noted on the auction sheet, the Ohio County Sheriff's Office was going to send a transit van to auction. He felt the van could be used by the Ohio County Development Authority. This van was originally purchased to transfer mental hygiene patients, but with today's patients they must be transported one at a time for safety issues. President Abrham made a motion to lease the vehicles, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

Community Grant Process – This process was tabled to gather further information.

Letter of Support Request from WVUM for Dr. Asmi Chattaraj – The letter of support was tabled while Commissioner Nickerson seeks to obtain some additional information from West Virginia University Medicine.

Airport, On Call Engineer Master Agreement with Chapman Technical Group – The Master Agreement was presented to the Commissioners and has been read by Mr. Tennant. Motion to accept the agreement made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Wharton.

Airport, On Call Engineer Master Agreement Task Order 1 – The first task order is for Chapman Technical Group to come to the Wheeling-Ohio County Airport on an hourly basis to tour the Airport. They are already working on the first project which will kick off later in the year. Motion to approve Task Order 1 approved by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Wharton. Motion carried.

Ohio County 911, New Hires, Advice and Consent – The Ohio County 911 is currently down two employees. Mr. Rickie Pritt is asking the Ohio County Commission for their advice and consent to hire Jani Rush and Heather Hernandez. Mr. Pritt will have to train the new hires. Motion to approve the hiring made by President Abraham, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

Staff and Elected Official Reports:

- Administrator Russell reported the audit is still in process and we should have all the information to KHT by mid-March. Budget planning is also underway. The Commissioners agreed to start the budget hearings on March 3, 2026 directly after the 8:00 a.m. County Commission Meeting. They will need approximately three and a half hours to complete the hearings. The Levy will be discussed on April 21, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

- Facilities Director Melissa Marco reported the following: The HVAC project is in its final stages. The work on the first floor will be completed by the contractor on January 29, 2026. From there, paint and carpeting will begin. The project commissioning will continue until early March, but this will not affect general operations. No one will be affected by the commissioning. We fixed 20 lintels on the Annex building. Once the weather improves, masonry work needs to be completed on the west and south end of the building. We are working diligently on several maintenance items at the Ohio County Correctional Facility. We also have a plan should the snowstorm that is being predicted hit the area. The four buildings downtown and the parking lots will be maintained by Maintenance and a crew from the Ohio County Correctional Facility.

- Sheriff Nelson Croft reported the following: The Sheriff, H. Nelson Croft, also stated his department is preparing for the snow. They have authorized overtime, but they are not calling anyone out as of yet. The General Fund received $8,000.00 in unclaimed property. Canine Zoro will retire at the end of the month. The new canine, Orry, will arrive soon and his training will begin in March. Sheriff Croft also reported three deputies are in EMT class and that will make five deputies certified EMTs when completed.

- EMA/EMS Director Louis Vargo reported the following: Mr. Louis Vargo reported that he was proud of Sheriff Croft's deputies that are or have completed the training. The help at accident scenes is vital to paramedics. He is working with various agencies to prepare them for the predicted 13 inches of snow. Unfortunately, after the predicated snowfall, a cold front will pass through the area making it feel well below zero. The temperatures will be life threatening. A tabletop exercise will be held on April 5, 2026 with the Board of Education.

- 911 Director Rickie Pritt stated the Next Gen system will be finalized on February 23, 2026. They still need to connect to the First Net GIS portion and this has been a daunting task. The department statistics for 2025 were presented to the Commissioners. They trended at about the 2024 average.

Finance:

- Payables- The list was presented to the Commissioners. Mr. Abraham questioned the payment made to Flaherty, Sensabaugh, Bonasso, PLLC. Mr. Randy Russell stated this was for the roof. President Abraham made the motion to approve the payables, seconded by Commissioner Wharton, the motion passed unanimously.

- Unpaid invoices- The list was presented to the Commissioners. No questions/inquiries. No action required.

- Mr. Russell advised that there were no budget revisions.

Exonerations:

- Administrator Russell directed Commissioners to the list of 12 tax exonerations that would reduce taxes. They have been reviewed & found reasonable. President Abraham made the motion to approve the Exonerations, seconded by Commissioner Wharton; motion approved unanimously.
- Certificates of Re-Entry – There was one certificate of re-entry provided for a property from 2012. This home was not entered into the land books. Commissioner Nickerson made a motion to approve the Certificate of Reentry, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson. Motion carried.

Commission Board Reports

- Commissioner Nickerson commented the jail bill had been deleted from the agenda. He would like to see this added to every agenda moving forward. Mr. Randy Russell stated the City has received and reviewed the invoices through December.

Commissioner Comments: None

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Zachary T. Abraham, Commission President

Randel A. Russell County Administrator