

## COMMISSIONERS GENERAL SESSION

July 17, 2023

### Present at the meeting were

#### Commissioners:

Brian S. Allen – Chairman  
Brenda L. Watson – Vice Chairman  
Larry F. Reisinger – Secretary  
William R. Bunt - Solicitor  
Shannon Hines – Chief Clerk

#### Present from the Press: Paul Wyatt

**Present from the Public in Person or via WebEx:** Frank Campbell, Brandi Clendenin, Tyler Dombroski, Jason Finnerty, Rich Fultz, Kristie Gantt, Sarah Geesaman, George Gochenaur, Gabriel Guthrie, David Hammar, Douglas Hockenberry, Randy Kessler, Art Lindsay, Bill Lyons, Darla McNaughton, Gene Porterfield, Megan Radel, Marty Smith, Wes Smith, Sally Tengeres, Rob Troxell, Randy Waggoner, JoAnn Wilson, John Wilson

Commissioner Allen opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. on July 17, 2023 with the Pledge to the Flag and a moment of silence. The meeting was conducted in person and via WebEx telephone/video conference in the Commissioners' Conference Room. The meeting was recorded by the County and Paul Wyatt.

**Announcements/Updates:** Commissioner Reisinger commented that the Ickesburg Carnival was going on and encouraged attendance at the event.

**Public Comments:** Randy Waggoner, Chief Assessor, welcomed Solicitor Bunt back from vacation.

John Wilson stated that he was in attendance in regards to his mother-in-law, Arlis Krammes. He said he had completed several right to know requests and wondered why or if Arlis is entitled to a County retirement. Mr. Wilson provided details of Ms. Krammes's employment with the County and said former Commissioner Eby had worked to try and find information on his mother-in-law. He commented that if he needs to get legal assistance he would move to do so. Mr. Wilson said based on the information he had received from his right to know requests it seems like Ms. Krammes should be eligible for a pension. He said retirement records should be maintained for a lifetime.

JoAnn Wilson said her main concern is her mother and the care she now needs. She said if she was entitled to a pension her mother had never pursued it. She said she wants to know why she is not eligible for a pension or if she declined the pension.

Frank Campbell said the Newport National Night Out event would be taking place on August 1<sup>st</sup> at the Newport Veterans Memorial Park from 5 pm – 8 pm. He said there will be numerous organizations in attendance.

Randy Kessler asked how many millions of dollars the County collects in property taxes. He asked what the present annual budget for the County is. He said there are approximately 46,000 residents in Perry County and questioned how many are tax paying property owners. He asked how much tax payer money is being used for Vision to complete the reassessment. Mr. Kessler further questioned how much the reassessment costs. He said the cost of \$1.7 million to complete the reassessment is ridiculous. He asked if the Commissioners would go on the record and say that the County will remain tax revenue neutral by adjusting the mils after the reassessment.

Solicitor Bunt noted that the reassessment would not go into effect until January 1, 2026 and the current Board of Commissioners would not be in office.

Mr. Kessler said that \$1.7 million dollars of ARPA funds was used to do a reassessment and it should have been used for infrastructure projects. He questioned where will property owners need to go to arbitrate the inaccuracies and discrepancies of the reassessment.

Gene Porterfield, from Vision, said that arbitration will take place in the New Bloomfield area.

Art Lindsay said that there are County tax assessors. He also asked who will be handling the discrepancies, Vision, or County staff.

Randy Waggoner, Chief Assessor, said there are roughly 24,000 taxable parcels and provided Mr. Kessler with a summary listing of taxable parcels by township and the assessed value of the properties.

Randy Kessler asked if the County was considering or discussing a new building. He further questioned if there would be a cost saving to the tax payer for the new building. He requested that he receive a copy of the building feasibility study. He asked what will happen to the current County building leases.

Solicitor Bunt explained the lease agreements.

Randy Kessler asked how much of the County's ARPA funds have been used. He requested a breakdown of how the funds were utilized. He said that he was aware \$1 million of ARPA funds was sent to Wheatfield Township. Mr. Kessler asked if the County Commissioners were discussing a possible sports complex in the Newport area near the Giant and McDonald's. He questioned if County funds would be used for the possible sports complex. He said that Vision staff are entering properties that are posted and gated.

Mr. Porterfield said Vision staff are not entering gated or posted properties.

Mr. Kessler said he had proof that Vision staff are entering gated and posted properties and asked how the Commissioners would like to address the issue.

Randy Waggoner stated that the data collectors may not see posted signs until they are already in the driveway, but they will only leave a door hanger but will not take photos or measure. He said if the property is gated, they will not enter the property. He further commented that there is a 800 number on the door hanger or said to call the Assessment Office and report the incident so it can be addressed.

Randy Kessler said that using \$1.7 million dollars of ARPA funds for a reassessment is absurd. He stated that tax payers are burdened enough with inflation and called out the effect on the elderly and those on fixed incomes. Mr. Kessler said the funds should be put towards County infrastructure such as roads and broadband. He said building permits for new building and additions raise taxes and he said the expensive method of a reassessment is not in the best interest of tax payers. He also asked what funds the County is holding in a budget surplus.

Art Lindsay asked for a broadband update. He said he was under the impression that Governor Wolf had tagged funding for broadband in Perry County. He asked if there was anyway for townships to receive some of the broadband funding. Mr. Lindsay questioned if the funding was through grants and questioned how the townships will know when applications are available. He asked that the Commissioners let the townships know when the application for broadband funding was available.

**Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Reisinger made a motion approve the minutes from the July 10, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

**Approval of the Warrant List(s):** Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the warrant lists totaling \$468,827.36. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

**Meeting Business:** Commissioner Allen recognized the following employees for their years of service to the County:

- Shannyn Trostle – 5 years
- Deb Willi – 20 years

Jason Finnerty, from TriCounty Regional Planning Commission, said the MCM was the only vendor to submit a proposal for the hazard mitigation planning. He said this agreement is for the next hazard mitigation plan for the County and all the municipalities.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the professional services agreement with MCM Consulting Group Inc. for hazard mitigation planning consultation in the amount of \$68,054.68. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Tyler Dombroski, from SEDA-COG, said that Perry County had received four applications for FY 2023 CDBG funding. He outlined the submitted applications and said the County had \$217,172 to allot to projects.

Commissioner Reisinger made a motion to select the following projects for FY 2023 CDBG funding. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

- Newport Borough – Curbs and Sidewalks project - \$108,586
- New Buffalo Borough – Sewer Plant Upgrade project - \$108,586

Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the cooperation agreement with Friends of Clark’s Ferry Tavern regarding the Appalachian Regional Commission grant. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

**Employee Status:** Commissioner Reisinger made a motion to approve the appointment of Dawn Montgomery to the position of Full Time Clerk in the Magisterial District Courts Department effective July 18, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$14.03. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the appointment of Rebecca Radel to the position of Part Time No Till Drill Program Assistant in the Conservation District effective July 18, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$15.08. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Reisinger made a motion to approve the appointment of Sarah Grubb to the position of Caseworker 2 in the Children & Youth Services Department effective July 18, 2023 at an hourly rate of \$22.48. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to accept the resignation of Steven Stilo Jr. Part Time Dispatcher in the 911 Center, effective March 14, 2023. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

**Solicitor’s Report:** None

**Public Comments:** Rob Troxell, from Upward Broadband, said that \$200 million was released from the Treasury to the State. He said none of it was being distributed directly to counties or entities and would be going to the State Broadband Authority for distribution through a competitive application process August 9. Mr. Troxell stated that Upward Broadband is very interested in partnering with Perry County and hopeful for a

response from the County on a partnership. He said that private industry and municipalities may apply, but collaboration with a vendor makes an application much more competitive.

Gene Porterfield stated that data collectors are out in the Liverpool area and Watts Township.

Art Lindsay stated that the Commissioners are not familiar with the northeastern part of Perry County and never go to that area.

George Gochenaur asked what rule, act, or statute allows Vision the authority to come onto private property.

Gene Porterfield stated that County Code allows assessors to view and visit a property to assess new or existing structures.

George Gochenaur said he wanted a copy of the County Code. He quoted the Commonwealth Constitution and said he feels like the reassessment is a violation of his rights. He said he told the assessment staff that came onto his property to leave. Mr. Gochenaur said he does not see how they have the authority to be on his private property.

John Wilson thanked the Commissioners and the Chief Clerk for their service to the County.

**Comments from the Press:** None

Commissioner Watson made a motion to adjourn at 10:53 a.m. Commissioner Reisinger seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

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Shannon Hines, Chief Clerk

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Larry F. Reisinger, Secretary