

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Tuesday – March 12, 2024 – 2:00 P.M.

The Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 2:00 P.M., at the County Courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Edward B. Glaser, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2 and Sharyn L. Pohlman, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: Sheriff Patrick Polky, Interim County Administrator Gordon Page, IT Director Zach Greene, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, EMA Director Candice Richards, Maintenance Jim Hagan, Airport Manager Jeremy Shaw, Chief Deputy Curt Anrick.

Others: Camden Resident Peter Lindquist and McFarland Johnson Senior Airport Planner Steve Bourque.

Regular Meeting – Agenda

Tuesday – March 12, 2024 – 2:00 P.M.

Town Hall Streams:

https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=50&id=59078

- I. 2:00 Meeting Called to Order
- II. 2:01 Presentation – Jessica Berry, Director of the MidCoast Community Collaborative & Assistant Superintendent/Special Education Director at St. George MSU.
- III. 2:01 Public Comment - Public Comment during other portions of the meeting will only be granted by permission of the Chair.
- IV. 2:02 Consent Items
 1. Approve Consent Items as Presented:
 - i. Agenda - Non-Agenda Items Only Permitted if Emergency in Nature.
 - ii. Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of February 13, 2024.
 - iii. Department Reports.
 - iv. Warrants.
 - v. Reserve Withdrawals.
- V. 2:10 Action Items
 1. Act to Approve and Authorize the Chair to Sign and Execute the Operating Agreement Between Knox County and Penobscot Island Air at the Knox County Regional Airport.
 2. Act to Approve and Authorize the Chair to Sign a Lease Agreement for the Kevin P. Waters Memorial Flight Center Between Knox County and Penobscot Island Air.
 3. Act to Select and Retain a Multi-Year Engineer and Planner for the Knox County Regional Airport for a Term of Four (4) Years.
 4. Act to Approve and Sign the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between the County of Knox and the National Correctional Employees Union for January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.
 5. Act to Award the Bid for the 2024 Tax Anticipation Note (TAN).
- VI. 2:20 Discussion Items
 1. Discussion of County Property Identified for Potential Sale.
 2. Staffing Discussion.
 3. Per-Diem Policy
- VII. 2:25 Other Business
- III. Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commissioner Glaser called the Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 2:0 P.M.

II. Presentation - Jessica Berry, Director of the MidCoast Community Collaborative & Assistant Superintendent/Special Education Director at St. George MSU.

- Jessica Berry could not attend. We will need to reschedule.

III. Public Comment - Public Comment during other portions of the meeting will only be granted by permission of the Chair.

- McFarland Johnson Senior Airport Planner Steve Bourque – We recently submitted a Statement of Qualifications in response to the RFQ the Airport put out. We are very interested in learning more about the Airport.

IV. Consent Items**1. Approve Consent Items as Presented:**

- i. Agenda - Non-Agenda Items Only Permitted if Emergency in Nature.
- ii. Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of February 13, 2024.
- iii. Monthly Department Reports
- iv. Warrants
- v. Reserve Withdrawals

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to approve the consent items 1-5 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

V. Action Items**1. Act to Approve and Authorize the Chair to Sign and Execute the Operating Agreement Between Knox County and Penobscot Island Air at the Knox County Regional Airport.**

In 2019, the operating agreement between Penobscot Island Air (PIA) and Knox County expired. Penobscot Island Air was allowed to continue operating under the terms of the expired agreement until a new agreement could be formed. Due to the CARES Act, it was agreed upon that due to the potential construction of a new terminal hangar that it would be counterproductive to draft multiple agreements in a short period. With the ongoing delays in the construction of the hangar, it has now been four years since we had an active operating agreement with PIA. With the completion of the Terminal Hangar nearing, the County legal minds have drafted two agreements, an operating agreement for the privilege of operating a FAA Part 135 operation (unscheduled air service) out of the Knox County Regional Airport, and a lease of the Kevin P Waters Memorial Flight Center. The terms of this agreement are the same as the original agreement but have the required updated legal protections for the County. The terms of the agreement are a percentage of gross revenue, which can be reduced by 3/4 of a percent if it provides emergency flights for Knox County Law Enforcement Officers at no cost, which it has always done. It is separate from the hangar Lease due to the fact that PIA also owns 5 additional hangars that they can operate from in the event that the Kevin P Waters Memorial Flight Center becomes financially unsustainable for the company in the event of a downturn in the island market.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a Multi-year Consultant for the Knox County Regional Airport. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

2. **Act to Approve and Authorize the Chair to Sign a Lease Agreement for the Kevin P. Waters Memorial Flight Center Between Knox County and Penobscot Island Air.**

The Flagship project of the CARES Act investments was the construction of the Kevin P. Waters Memorial Flight Center. The project suffered several delays due to the labor shortage, and several long-lead time components. The project is now scheduled to be completed in the next couple of weeks which will pave the way for building occupancy. This lease divides the responsibilities of the building between the landlord and the tenant, with the County responsible for handling inspections for the safety of life components such as the fire suppression system, alarm monitoring, and the maintenance of the emergency generator. The tenant is responsible for everything else, including utilities. The facility lease sets a fixed lease amount for the first five years of the contract to allow the company to focus on growth, and revenue growth will be reflected in the new Operating Agreement percentage.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Table the Act to Approve and Authorize the Chair to Sign a Lease Agreement for the Kevin P. Waters Memorial Flight Center Between Knox County and Penobscot Island Air. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Glaser. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

3. **Act to Select and Retain a Multi-Year Engineer and Planner for the Knox County Regional Airport for a Term of Four (4) Years.**

The County accepts Federal Funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), so we are required to have an Aviation Consultant to assist us in both planning and the engineering of each project we undertake. There were concerns that the standard Request for Qualifications (RFQ) lacked the appropriate ranking criteria to properly evaluate potential firms, so an additional rating metric was added to the RFQ. Performance, one of the most important criteria for rating a company, will now be used to evaluate if a firm has the appropriate capabilities to perform work at the Knox County Regional Airport. The APAC Selection Committee has met and evaluated the Request for Qualifications that were received, and they have recommended that __ (To be determined at the March 11th APAC Meeting) ____ be selected as the Engineering Consultant, and ____ (To be determined at the March 11th APAC Meeting) __ as the Planning Consultant for a period of four (4) years.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Select and Retain a Multi-Year Engineer and Planner for the Knox County Regional Airport for a Term of Four (4) Years. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

4. **Act to Approve and Sign the collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between the County of Knox and the National Correctional Employees Union for January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024.**

Attached is a clean version of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that was agreed upon between the representatives of the National Correctional Employees Union (NCEU) and the Management team that consisted of the Sheriff, County Administrator Hart, Captain Wood, Finance Director Robinson, Commissioner Parent, HR Rep. Christie, Peter Marchesi, and Lt. Wallace. This was a one-year extension to the current contract to address wages, matching vacation accruals, matching years of experience for starting wage (step), and mileage reimbursement. We also included any legal updates (EPL, etc.). Created are two (2) clean originals, which need the Commission and Sheriff to sign once the Commission votes to approve. I will then provide NCEU to sign the two (2) clean originals and they keep one (1) signed for their files and Knox County can keep the other signed original for its files. The Sheriff and I can answer any questions at the meeting. If the Commission has any specific questions in regards to this, please don't hesitate to call me to discuss.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve and Sign the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Between the County of Knox and the National Correctional Employees Union for*

January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.

5. Act to Award the Bid for the 2024 Tax Anticipation Note (TAN).

The County sent out an RFP for the 2024 TAN to six (6) banks. Bids were due on Friday, March 1st at 2:00 P.M., at which time they were opened. A copy of the bid results is in your packet.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Award the Bid for the 2024 Tax Anticipation Note (TAN) to Machias Savings Bank at an Interest Rate of 4.99% The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

VI. Discussion Items

1. Discussion of County Property Identified for Potential Sale:

- **Commissioner Glaser** – All of these properties that were identified were on Airport property. We have the one that is right off of RT. 73, that we have approached by the Coastal Children’s Museum about purchasing that piece. There are a few problems with this piece of property. I met with Jeremy and we talked about the Deed. There are restrictions on the Deed that basically say it can only be used for a residential property. I don’t know if it dies right there or if we’ll lease it to someone or if someone should get an attorney to look at that to see if there is a way around that. I met with the Coastal Children’s Museum and said if they want to pursue it then they can. In the meantime, we should do some type of evaluation and see how much it’s worth. If we are going to put it out to bid, which would be the next step, so we can find out how much we are looking at for value. This is not a typical FAA piece of property. We don’t have to get a certain amount. We also want to preserve any wetlands. Potentially we could break out a piece of property that they are interested in and that they could build on, and sell them that. Then we could just keep the rest of the property.
- **Commissioner Parent** – We would have to put restrictions on what they could do outside of their own property. In other words, we wouldn’t allow trails to cross wetlands because I’m sure the DEP would not allow that.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – If there was a way to have trails that fit within the guideline. One of the points for the Children’s Museum is to have things for kids to look at. To be able to look at a vernal pool, would be a nice thing, and we might want to encourage that.
- **Commissioner Parent** – I do know that the restriction on leaving vernal pools alone and staying away from them is quite a restriction.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We could always put restrictions on the Deed too. I don’t know they are ready to build something unless they know they will have this piece of property and it’s buildable. We could certainly enter into some type of Purchase and Sales Agreement where we know what they are going to build and they know they have access to that property if they raise enough money. We could also go through the whole Bid process, and somebody else may come forward and say oh we really like that piece of property too. I think the first step would be getting the value on that piece of property. Do have any input on how we would go about getting permission to get that piece of property value? Should we do that as an Act or is there a mechanism within the County to just do it?
- **Interim County Administrator Page** – There are resources that could give us an estimate on how much it might cost us to get that information without having to spend that money. Ultimately, it would be up to the Commission to vote to expend that money based on what the Budget would allow. Is there money in the Budget for that purpose?
- **Finance Director Robinson** – I guess I’m giving that as any other Airport expense that we would hire the same Appraiser that is doing other properties at the Airport. It’s not project related, it’s a Departmental expense so other than giving the go-ahead I don’t think there is anything that needs to be official.
- **Interim County Administrator Page** – How many acres are we talking about?

- **Airport Manager Shaw** – Fifty-six (56) is the parcel currently.
- **Interim County Administrator** – They don't want fifty-six (56) acres.
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – No, they want forty-five (45), if that.
- **Interim County Administrator** – So I guess the question is, do you want to get a measurement and value on the total parcel, or just a piece of the parcel?
- **Commissioner Glaser** – I would think the total parcel. So, we have that in hand. Most of it will be wetlands and vernal pools. The value in it will be only 4-5 acres.
- **Commissioner Parent** – I want to ask Jeremy, are there any restrictions on selling the whole lot?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – No. The Deed restriction also can be overcome by the heir releasing the restrictions. We have located and identified an heir. Anything is possible.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Were the Deed restrictions put on by the heirs, or by MBNA when they gave it to the County?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – It was put on by the land owners prior to the sale to MBNA.
- **Interim County Administrator** – Have they approached the Owls Head Planning Board yet? Any preliminary kind of discussion?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – I don't believe so. We have a consultant and that is what they do. They have done the vernal pool survey, boundary survey and wetland delineation, so yes, I can authorize the consultant to have one of the two (2) appraisers to come and appraise the property.

2. Staffing Discussion:

- **Sheriff** - On the Law Enforcement side of things, we are fully staffed. We have some unique positions like Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, and I have had a request from Vinalhaven to try to staff a second Deputy. With the exception of those we are fully staffed.
- **Sheriff** – With Corrections we are currently sitting on three (3) vacancies, also with a host of Per-Diem staff that are fully certified and working other places. They are helping to augment overtime and mandates which has given significant improvements in morale, and it's been a different feel in the past month or so. The fact they are getting their days off has greatly improved things. We have a few applicants in the process for those final few positions. As we discussed before we will only have a few positions ebbing and flowing. In Dispatch we are improved as well. I will let Bob talk about that.
- **Director Coombs** – Currently, we are down three (3) line Dispatchers and one (1) Supervisor. As far as the Dispatchers, that's the lowest we have been in a long time. With that being said, it puts us in line for the return of 911 to the County. If everything stays in line, we have it set up for its return. We started having communications with the Unions. As soon as we can get some things finalized with them, it will also help with the hiring process, and we will have more things in line to offer.
- **Sheriff** – One thing that has recently come up for discussion is we did create a plan with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) back in October. They accepted our plan. Part of that plan was five milestones around staffing, education, leadership development, things like that. We have met every single one of those milestones either on time, or ahead of time. This is an example of that. The expectation to regain the PSAP was June, and we are ahead of that. It is important to highlight that.
- **Communications Director Coombs** – We have got our bullet points from the ESCV PCU to get it back, and all the bullet point they are requesting us to have in place has either been accomplished or will be accomplished. Everything is falling in line as it should to bring it back to Knox County.
- **Interim County Administrator Page** – I am pleased that the Sheriff has “shot the elephant in the room”, because we know what the recent press has been and past information. The most recent article about the City of Rockland absorbing the program, maybe for not. The County has not truly (inaudible). I received today, a letter from the City of Rockland, expressing in writing their interest in absorbing KRCC. This has to be a conversation within the body of the Knox County Commission. The Commission Chair has been actively trying to calm the waters. My observation in talking with the different players, and with the report the Sheriff just made, great progress has been made. It's not there yet. If any organization gets to a point where they say we're perfect and

don't need to improve any further. Then that's a situation you don't want to be in. I don't see why we wouldn't continue in the positive direction we've been going in.

- **Sheriff** – I've had some conversations with the Interim Administrator, and I feel that he's uniquely poised in his community history to be able to take this on and tackle it as the Interim Administrator. I know there was some discussion to him prior to coming on that do we let that person take things on, or do we just hold the position until we figure out about hiring someone else? I personally feel that to have this continue to be successful, having him be that point person even though he's Interim, is probably the best choice.
- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I agree with that sentiment. I know Ed has been involved with all of these discussions, so I would like to hear from him. I know Gordon has stepped in to some of the discussions with Executive committees. I think there is a lot of opportunity to move forward with the plan. The plan is quite detailed. The plan set up by the PUC to retain and bring back our PDAP status, I would like to commend all of those involved, and for the Sheriff taking the lead. As I read through, we are ahead of some, and it sounds like we are well on track to regain and bring back the inhouse PSAP center. At this point, given a lot of things going on, seems to make the most sense I understand and I have read all of the articles. The City of Rockland is going to absorb the Knox County Dispatch, and Tom Luttrell, the City Manager of Rockland's letter, I respect their interests in furthering these discussions. I think it's a very good idea. I would also like to suggest that we work together, follow through, in a fashion so that we are just getting stability back in our department and confidence with our Dispatchers and all of the work that has gone into this. I'd like to see if there is a way to move forward on completing our plan with the PUC, bring the PSAP back in house, quell some of this and start talking Rockland if that is who wants to have this discussion. We are not saying best way is to have it all in house. We are saying let's get it back in house. Let's move forward together in these discussions and come to some solution that will work for everybody moving forward. It is upsetting to see all these different things coming out in the press because it really creates a lot of nervousness in our staff, and people are asking what are we doing. I also support, if Gordon is willing to step into that, Sheriff you have carried this for such a long time so well and you have other jobs. If my fellow Commissioners and Gordon is agreeable, I would like to see him transition to be the point person to bring this along to bring it back in, and continue these discussions jointly with Commissioners along with the Towns. That's what I would like to see happen. I would like to hear from Ed & Rick on their thoughts.
- **Commissioner Parent** – I certainly think that we have done a whole lot of work here in the last few months. I think that right now, we are probably much more equipped to take it back in full service than any other entity could possibly do. Within the next year, I would think that it would behoove anyone to challenge us.....
- **Commissioner Glaser** – What I would like to do is to start off...we need to sit down with our Attorney and figure out what the legal ramifications are. We might want to schedule a meeting next week if we could with the Attorney. This might be in Executive Session because we are talking about contracts. Every Town in Knox County has a contract with the County. We are not a separate entity and can say oh all of our contracts are null and void and we're giving it to Rockland. We can't do that. There is a long process to get to the point where, if Towns want to sign on with Rockland we can turn to Rockland and say "here". They can't do anything with all of these Towns answering their phone unless we negotiate with the Towns to get them new contracts. There will be a long legal problem to get to that point. I think we need to sit down with our Attorney, and see if there is a path forward if that's really what we want to do. This has been a long process to get us where we are, we have all of these employees and it is thanks to everybody who has been working on it..... Bob, Sheriff, now Gordon, Amber, Zach, Candice and the number goes on. Everybody has been working on this as a project. The question is, do we want to keep spending that much man power keeping it going forward if Rockland can do it? I don't know the answer. It is for all of us to decide. We need to sit down with our Attorney and see what the legal things are. Also, in talking to the PUC they want to see us, they don't want to see any change in the operation until after we get the PSAP back. Nothing is going to happen before that. We have two (2) tracks we are working on. One is we want to make sure that what we are doing is getting better, and it has been. We want to

keep working on it, and we want to get the PSAP back on our end. There is also the possibility that even if that is in place, that the Management of the department by the City of Rockland makes more sense than the Management by the County. Those are things we have to discuss. I don't know the answer to that. The letter that we got from the City Manager basically says that if we would like to keep the discussion going. I think we want to keep the discussion going. One of the problems is perception. We talk about the press, but it's not just the press. They are getting their information from some place, and there are people on the outside that perceive that it's a failure. I don't know if we can ever turn their perceptions around no matter what we do. It may be that we need to make a clean break of it just so they can sit down, and say there we're going to start all over with something new. I don't know the answer to that.

- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I think that the confusion is coming from our end as well. There is uncertainty, and conflicting information maybe because we can't all meet together except in a single meeting. I think it's external looking in, commenting. There is also confusion that contributes to that from our apparent lack of communication or decisive movement. I agree with you that we do want to encourage discussions going forward. We're not saying this is the best way to have Knox County have it. What I am saying and what I think is at this point, we're on track to get our PSAP back. There has been much, much hard work to bring it back in. Let's reassure our Dispatchers who some are new and some came back who want to work for the County. It's one step at a time. Let's get it back. If we can all get on the same page moving forward, I think it will be much more productive, and end in a much better result for everyone.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We are all on the same page in terms of we want to keep moving ahead. As the Sheriff knows better than anybody else, this has been going on in every Dispatch center in the State. This is nothing abnormal. The fact that we are able to move where we are and how we have been able is a testament to their hard work. This will be used as a model for other Towns.
- **Sheriff** – You lead into exactly what I was going to say. The State and 911 Council, which has several different representatives throughout the State, one of the things the PUC was tasked with was creating a report of what's going on within our PSAPS. Why are we having these near failures? Why are these centers talking about collapsing or shutting down? Maria Jaques is the Director of the PUC. These are very robust reports that talk about all the exact same challenges that we have had as a Dispatch center. It is literally throughout every center across the State. Even the State of Maine with the centers that they have are unable to keep us with some of these things. That is kind of the point. We need as many collaborative partners at the table as possible. That is only way we will get through this is if we all work collaboratively.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – I will say that I have met with the PUC a number of times now. I am very impressed with them. They know their stuff. People that were on that board were not like oh we're just regulators. They are regulators who care about what they are doing and making sure this works.
- **Interim County Administrator Page** – When you speak about individuals that want to do a good job, the Dispatchers are in it for the right reason. None of those individuals that don't want to do a good job for the Citizens. The unfortunate situation is that this letter is indicative of it. There are some individuals that are not employees of the County, that have appeared to make a unilateral decision that this is what's going to happen. When in fact it may happen, but there's a lot of steps in between. It hasn't served the Community well. It almost looks like there is a group out there freelancing this is how we are going to make this happen. We don't want it to be a hostile takeover. If it's going to happen it will go smoothly, efficiently & for the right reason. All this has done is created hate and discontent internally. People are upset because they are learning about things through the press. That negative drip, drip, drip of information does not serve us well. The County need to do a better job to communicate the positives, and to keep these individuals informed. In some instances, some people from the City of Rockland staff have actually reached out to individuals that are Knox County Employees just arbitrarily making phone calls and telling them how it's going to go. Well, we don't know that. They seem to know it, and they are sharing it with our employees and it's creating displeasure and confusion. It's no wonder our staff, our employees are up in arms.

- **Commissioner Pohlman** – Would it be appropriate for me to take a moment and read the letter that you wrote? You sent this letter to the press and you also sent it to all of our staff. This letter brings it all together, shows the importance of communication and positivity. (Letter was read aloud). Thank you for writing this and letting me read it today. I hope this can be the start of more positive communications between all of us.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – It was so well written, thank you. Candice, were we looking at another person for your department?
- **EMA Director Richards** – My fourth (4th) position that used to be grant funded no longer is. It got approved in the Budget as a 20-hour position. This has meant that I need to adjust the job description because there will not be as many hours. I am in the process of changing that job description. I envision this person doing more of the exercises with Towns, helping them with their emergency plans and things like that. We just have to get the ad out for that.
- **HR Manager Christie** – We held interviews about two (2) weeks ago, Oral Boards this week and we found somebody we are going to move forward with for the Airport Administrative Assistant. She will start within five (5) business days of the offer.
- **Interim County Administrator Page** – As for the Airport Manager we have been in touch with somebody that is willing to step in as the Interim until a suitable candidate has been chosen. This individual has great experience and great relations with the Community.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We do have some applications for a Manager that look promising?
- **HR Manager Christie** – Yes, we do. We are actively interviewing.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – One other position that need to be filled is the County Administrator. My understanding is you all met and decided we need to broaden the search. There for we are hiring a company to assist us.
- **HR Manager Christie** – Yes. I engaged with them this morning. So, the first step would be a hiring committee. At that high level position, we felt it would be best to expand that search.
- **Interim County Administrator** – One question I have regarding an Interim Airport Manager, the Charter hires advice and consent from the Commission to hire a department head. Is this that so for an Interim Department Head? I would like to ask you blessing to move forward with this.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – I don't think the Charter covers that and there is no legal president we can look at. I think just letting us know is probably enough. I think one problem we will have with hiring either is housing. If we're broadening the search for an Administrator, it means we are searching out of state.

3. Per-Diem Policy:

- **HR Manager Christie** – Back in August we brought forward what we felt was a pretty outdated Per-Diem Policy. If you are a Per-Diem employee, you start at Step 1 and stay there. This did not help attract getting the help that we needed. Going through the emergency staffing crisis's we had last year with Corrections and Communications, we really needed those Per-Diem employees. Before we put the ad out, we went to the Commission and approved they would follow the County's Position Classification & Administration Policy, and count years of experience. During the emergency hiring time, the received a specific emergency rate to help us in our dire need. There were some restrictions specifically with Corrections, where they had to be certified and maintain that certification etc. Given that the Per-Diem employees are really supporting our Public Safety Department, we feel that it should probably mirror when we are hiring for Public Safety employees. So matching year for year experience, as opposed to taking the years and cutting it in half. This will help will allowing employees to have their days off, covering vacations and keeping things running smoothly. We are removing the emergency Per-Diem rate as of April 1st. Everybody will be provided their new rate, but before we did that, we wanted to have a discussion with the Commission.
- **Sheriff** – From my prospective, individuals who come with that experience & certifications are getting paid well from their current employment situation. To be asked to come here and serve at a rate that is for an entry level employee, is a slap in the face. It leaves the question of why take less

pay for my knowledge and experience? If we can provide comparable pay to those individuals, they may be more willing to come to Knox County. They require less training and less liability risk.

- **Interim County Administrator Page** – Question. Is this intended to create parody of their full-time employment wage to the County or close to it?
- **Sheriff** – The intent is something close to it. We are not trying to poach from other agencies. The intent is to bring in individuals that are well trained and well qualified to supplement them. This gives us an alternative versus having to mandate staff to work.
- **Communications Director Coombs** – This benefits our department tremendously, having Per-Diem people on board.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – My question is, with the change in the policy in terms of who much we calculate how they get paid. The net affect is an increase or a decrease over the emergency rate? How much?
- **HR Manager Christie** – It will be a decrease. It would depend on the individual with their year of experience. This would be a decrease regardless. It would be for those three (3) Public Safety Departments.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We are also talking about looking at pay scales in general, how the Steps work and who gets what, how its organized based on years of services versus changing jobs and starting from scratch. This is almost a temporary fill in when we get to that stage to.
- **HR Manager Christie** – In a way yes. I think the Per-Diem employees will fall within whatever kind of policy we recreate. Before they were such a special exception, and in my opinion only took care of them base on their skill sets, and what they were actually helping us accomplish. I think that last change is really necessary. Even if we made this small change now, it would still follow with what the Union was doing.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – From an employee’s standpoint, If I’m working Per-Diem and I’ve been getting a certain amount, and now the County is changing that because it’s no longer an emergency am I still going to keep working for the County knowing that I’m going to be getting paid less?
- **Sheriff** – That is part of why we are asking for this. Because that “less” is significantly less, it’s our entry level pay. Some of these individuals have got 10-15 years of experience in the field. You can’t make up for that difference. With the ability to get them closer to what their pay was, to me, is a benefit.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Does this require any action from us, or is this just something we can give you the nod, say yes and just change the policy?
- **Sheriff** – Ultimately, you have got to make the decision. It is your policy. This is more of a discussion of are we on the right track? Do you want us to bring it to you?
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Whatever you think is best.
- **Finance Director Robinson** – I think it needs to be a vote because we are actually changing a policy, and we are acting on that policy based on today’s meeting.
- **Interim County Administrator** – Do you have something drafted for them to...
- **HR Manager Christie** – I do, but it’s not ready for them to see yet. We should have it by the April meeting.

VII. Other Business

- **Commissioner Pohlman** – This is Jeremy’s last meeting. I know you will be leaving us soon. I have worked with you for a number of years, and I know you are very dedicated to the Airport projects, Commission and the future. Especially when it comes to the Electric Aircraft, vehicle charging, Solar and the Hangars. All that hard work you’ve done in making the Airport all that much better and looking forward to the future. I wish you all the best in the future. Update on the National Association of Counties conference in Washington D.C. that was attended. Maine has two (2) representatives, Commissioner Sharyn Pohlman and Peter Baldacci from Penobscot County that go the National convention.

- **Sheriff** – Maine Sheriff’s will host a conference at the Samoset on March 20th & 21st. The main topic is “Extreme Ownership” which is a leadership invitation. The three (3) of you are welcome to pop in. There will be over 180 attendees from all over. This is the first one we have had since Covid.

IX. Adjourn

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with both in favor.*

The special meeting adjourned at 3:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on April 10, 2024.