

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Monday – August 21, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.

The Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Monday, August 21, 2023, at 10:00 A.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 Sharon L. Pohlman, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, HR Manager Amber Christie and EMA Director Candice Richards. Sheriff Patrick Polky, IT Director Zach Greene.

Absent: Finance Director Kathy Robinson, EMA Director Candice Richards, Security & Operations Coordinator Shawn Wallace, Chief Deputy Curt Andrick, Patrol Administrator Paul Pinkham, Jail Administrator Robert Wood, Airport Manager Jeremy Shaw, Communications Director Robert Coombs, Prosecutorial Assistant/Investigator Shane Riley, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Madelene Cole, and District Attorney Natasha Irving.

Others: Steve Betts, Reporter for Village Soup/Courier Gazette, Rockland Police Chief Tim Carroll, Thomaston Police Chief Tim Hoppe, Cushing Selectboard Chair Dan Staples, Cushing Selectboard Craig Currie, Cushing Fire Chief Clarence Flanders and Washington Selectboard Katherine Grinnell.

Special Meeting – Agenda

Monday – August 21, 2023 – 10:00 A.M.

Town Hall Streams link:

https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=50&id=54609

- I. 10:00 Meeting Called to Order**
- II. 10:01 Public Comment**
- III. 10:10 Action Item**
 - 1. Act to Approve the Agreement with Waldo County to Handle 911 Calls.
- IV. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commissioner Glaser called the Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 10:01 A.M.

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

- **Dan Staples** - Is it true, that in recent days you have you hired Dispatchers in the last few days?
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Yes, I think we are in the process of hiring. Our HR Manager, Amber Christie, will speak on this.
- **HR Manager Amber Christie** – We have one offer that been accepted that will be starting shortly, and we have other candidates.
- **Dan Staples** – They have already had their training so they can start immediately? Where does that put us as far as dispatching? Sooner than later, it’s my understanding that you will be making a vote to have it switched to Waldo.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – I’ll make the observation we haven’t been operating the right way with the number of staff we’ve had. People haven’t been having time off, working extra hours, employee dissatisfaction partly due to wages and working hours. So just hiring people to replace people we’ve lost, isn’t enough to get us back to where we should be. One of the reasons we are switching over to Waldo County PSAP to answer 911 to give us a bit of a breather while we rebuild everybody’s morale and get some new employees on board. I think we all agree, the sooner we can get back to being a 911

PSAP the better. Just hiring a few people is not going to be enough. Some of the people we are hiring don't have the certifications and they will need the certifications. We're working with the State and it is my understanding that it will take a while to get everybody trained. We are looking at the six (6) month period as the contract is as being the maximum. We all want to bring this back in house. Again, we don't want to bring this back in house only to see it fail. We can discuss some other parts of that too but in our discussion. To answer you, yes have some people who are lined up to be hired. Hopefully, that makes a big difference. That may only make a big difference because we're going to be answering as a Dispatch center and that will still require more people than we have.

- **Dan Staples** - Is there going to be any change in management or how it's going to be run? To get down to just four (4) Dispatchers something must have been drastically wrong.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We are working on that. We will have part of that discussion as part of this contract talk.

III. Action Item

1. Act to Approve the Agreement with Waldo County to Handle 911 Calls.

- **Commissioner Glaser** - If you have seen the contract, it basically lays out for the next six (6) months how Knox and Waldo are going to handle.....based on a proposal that Waldo County sent to us, and it's been modified by our Attorney so it's more in a contract format. This spells out everybody's obligations and the fine print (inaudible). It gives us some lee-way to figure out where we take Knox County as both a Dispatch center and PSAP in the future. We all know we cannot operate the way we've been operating cause it's a failure. What I would like to do for the next couple of months is to meet with as many different people both first responders and Town Officials to figure out where we need to take Knox County Regional Communications in the future. I've been in touch with Amber, Sheriff and Andy about hiring a consultant I one form or another whether it's through the Maine Police Chiefs or from a private agency to look at the department in a way that it been operating and do an audit. This way we could get some suggestions for things that might work differently, a different model. I think this is more than personalities, it's more of a structural problem. Which is why I am in favor of it.
- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I support everything. I want to thank Waldo County and their Commissioners, their IT staff & their 911 PSAP services for partnering with us. I would like to thank Sheriff Polky, our HR Director Amber, Zach our IT Director who has been working many hours day and night and partnering with Waldo County to make sure we have uninterrupted services. We will have uninterrupted services as public safety is our number one concern. We are working very hard collaboratively with the Executive Board, all of our Town management and we are happy to meet at any time with anybody to work together. This will be a team effort. This is all of us working together. For the moment this contract is first step.
- **Commissioner Parent** – I ask the question of how long would take to get the new hires trained to the point of where they will be able to take over. I was told there is a minimum of one month, but probably more like six (6) weeks. This gives us opportunity to get these people hired and trained. I feel it's a win-win situation. We continually need to be able to reach out to our neighboring counties for not only assistance, but to let us help them.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – In talking to the Sheriff, my understanding is the switch over this week will be testing the system though out this week to make sure that everything works. Hopefully this will include an automated switch over when someone calls 911, and they answer the phone in Waldo it will populate the database on our dispatch computers. This will be so they have the information immediately, and there will be a concurrent phone call that will come after that while we test through the system to make sure it works. Over the course of this week, you will not see any change. Though I agree with Rick that we want to get people on board, and trained as soon as possible, honestly until we change the government governance of KRCC, I can see people are not going to want to work for us. It's not just raising wages and changing hours we have to make some serious changes.

- **Commissioner Parent** – Appleton is requesting that the Towns at some point, become partners in terms of sharing a resource. Most every Town that I can think of is looking for help and the Towns are no exception. If we can somehow share in the resources, we have we will be better off.
 - **Commissioner Glaser** – You are right. This shows us that we can work more closely with the Towns as we work through this to get to the next step. I have a packet of info from Candice about the formation of KRCC.
 - **Commissioner Pohlman** – I look forward to working more closely with the Towns and Municipalities with their wealth of information, support and tools we can all use. I had the honor of presenting retiring Fire Chief Ross from Owls Head last night with a plaque from the County, reading his information and seeing his dedication as it's inspiring. Whatever we can do to inspire more young people to get involved in our essential services would be great.
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- *A motion was made by Commissioner Pohlman to Act to Approve the Agreement with Waldo County to Handle 911 Calls. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

III. Adjourn

The special meeting adjourned at 10:25 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on September 12th, 2023.