

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Tuesday – August 8, 2023 – 2:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, August 8, 2023, 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 via ZOOM.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, HR Manager Amber Christie, Sheriff Patrick Polky, 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 and Airport Manager Jeremy Shaw.

Absent: Communications Director Robert Coombs, IT Director Zach Greene, Prosecutorial Assistant/Investigator Shane Riley, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, Register of Deeds Madelene Cole, and District Attorney Natasha Irving.

Regular Meeting – Agenda

Tuesday – August 8, 2023 – 2:00 P.M.

Town Hall Streams Link:

https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=50&id=54357

Hybrid ZOOM Meeting Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82215987564?pwd=cSthakJ1TnphRXdXU096bWM1QmhVQT09>

Due to the presence of COVID-19 and its variants in Knox County and the resulting concern for risk to the health and safety of County Commissioners and employees and of the public, the Chair of the Knox County Commissioners determines that until further notice, the Knox County Commission will hold its public meetings in a “hybrid” format, meeting in-person in the Commission Hearing Room on the ground floor of the Knox County Courthouse in Rockland, and also permitting Commissioners and members of the public to attend remotely via Zoom video conference, as allowed under the Knox County Commission Remote Participation Policy and 1 M.R.S. Section 403-B.

- I. 2:00 Meeting Called to Order**
- II. 2:01 Public Comment** - Public Comment during other portions of the meeting will only be granted by permission of the chair.
- III. 2:05 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 July 11, 2023.
 - iii. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of July 25, 2023
 - iv. Monthly Written Departmental Reports.
 - v. Warrants
 - vi. Reserve Withdrawals.
- IV. 2:10 Action Items**
 - 1. Act to Approve the APAC’s Recommendation to Designate a Consultant Engineering Firm as the County’s Consultant for Airport Planning and Engineering Services for an Easement Acquisition Project at the Knox County Regional Airport.
 - 2. Act to Approve and Authorize the Airport Manager to Sign an Underground Line Easement to Central Maine Power Company and to Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC.
 - 3. Act to Approve the Updated Knox County GIS Program GIS Policy.
 - 4. Act to Approve to Enter into and Authorize the County Administrator to Sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Knox County, the St. George Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Association (SGVFAA), the Knox County Mutual Aid Association, Inc. (KCMMA) and the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) for the Knox County Live Fire Training Facility located within the Town of St.

George.

5. Act to Increase the Health Insurance Opt-Out Stipend for Non-Enrollment to Section 6.2 in the Knox County Personnel Policy Handbook to be Effective January 1, 2024.
6. Act on Amendment to the Position Classification & Salary Administration Policy.
7. Act to Appoint Two (2) Members to the District 6 Corrections Committee.
8. Act to Approve a Date & Time for the 2024 Budget Review with the Commission.
9. Act to Approve the 2024 Budget Process Calendar.

V. 2:35 Discussion Items

1. Other Items.

VI. 2:45 Other Business

VII. Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commissioner Glaser called the regular meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 2:02 P.M.

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

None

III. 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 July 11, 2023.
- iii. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of July 25, 2023
- iv.. Monthly Written Departmental Reports.
- v. Warrants
- vi.. Reserve Withdrawals

- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I would like to comment on the Consent items. I think that in reading through our Department Reports; I would like to raise the point that I think we should feel I should take up at our Budget & Commission Meeting on August 10th, is the serious shortages that we are now facing in the Sheriff’s Department, Corrections and Dispatch Department in particular. We are putting the safety & security of our communities at risk if we can’t show essential positions and retain the staff that we have. I think this is a real serious concern for our entire county that needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. Obviously, not in this meeting but in the reports that are coming in this should be a priority in future discussions with the Budget Committee in particular.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – To follow up on this, do we have information.....this is going to be a short term problem that is being worked on right now. The longer-term problem falls back into our lap. Some of that is going to require us to start talking about wages. Because we are meeting with members of the Budget Committee, we could start the conversation with comparison or what our Dispatchers get paid versus other local Dispatchers around the State. The same is true for Corrections. If we are behind then we need to bump it up.
- **Administrator Hart** – The Joint Meeting is this Thursday at 5:00 P.M. I will add a couple quick things. In the last two (2) weeks a lot of things have been happening. There was an article written in the paper that was not 100% accurate. You get what you get so.....to be honest that whole article caught me off guard because I receive an email 5:30 Friday night, and I wasn’t available to comment so I was going to comment on Monday because I didn’t have all the information. Then the reporter decided to just go ahead and reach out to certain individuals and put the article out. I was totally blindsided by the article. I am not pleased about this, and will pass that on. I will say that we are trying to do things but it takes time. Different

departments have different issues. I'll speak to Dispatch first. Staffing is an issue. Wages are an issue. Also, the Union is an issue. The Union is a big issue and we are trying to deal with that. That is a multi-process that we actually have legal counsel involved with as well. Corrections again, is wages, and we are trying to look at that. All three (3) departments are wages and we are looking at that. We are in negotiations with FOP regarding wages. Again, the Union is not totally cooperative. We are trying to do something short-term. Unfortunately, I feel the County doesn't have the flexibility that the Municipalities have. I will be telling the Budget Committee to put an allotment of money away for each department to be able to access. If that means increasing taxes by a huge amount, so be it. We need to have the availability to deal with an emergency if we have one. At this point our hands are tied to some extent. It seems like other municipalities have the leisure to go to their Selectmen/Council and say we need to increase wages and take it out of this amount of money. We don't seem to have the flexibility they do. To say that we're not doing anything, we are, we are trying to do a lot of things. We're just trying to figure out the right thing to do. The one thing I learned from when we did the stipends is we need to go slow. If we do something irrational or too quick it just snowballs. It's important and we need to do the right thing, and take our time within reason to try to get things into place. I don't have an issue talking about it Thursday night, but I also don't want to spend four (4) hours with the Budget Committee going around and around with no resolution. That just creates more animosity with everyone. I have some rogue Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, EMS Chiefs that are getting mis-information out in the Public and to the Press. They are not helping us one bit. We do have an emergency Dispatch meeting tomorrow with the Executive Board for Communications at 3:00 P.M.

- **Commissioner Glaser** – I don't think a solution will come out of Thursday's meeting. The solutions are going to come from you. We will adopt what you give us for information. We have to do something, and need to let this Committee know that we have to do something.
- **Administrator Hart** – I think each department has to work collectively to figure this out. I do appreciate that.
- *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.*

IV. Action Items

1. **Act to Approve the APAC's Recommendation to Designate a Consultant Engineering Firm as the County's Consultant for Airport Planning, and Engineering Services for an Easement Acquisition Project at the Knox County Regional Airport.**

The Airport is planning another Obstruction Removal project funded through the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). To undertake this project, the County needs to negotiate and acquire easement rights with landowners that have trees growing into our airspace. During the last Consultant Selection in 2019, this project was not identified as a future project. To complete the project, the FAA has required the County to publish a request for proposals to seek a consultant to complete the Easement Acquisition Project. The APAC is scheduled to formalize a recommendation on August 7th, and will provide their recommendation to the Commissioners on August 8th.

- **Airport Manager Shaw** – We evaluated each proposal. There were six (6) APAC members present and they turned in scoring tabulation sheets. Stantec was the highest ranked proposal at 553 points. The second proposal was 511 points. The ensuing discussion was to not select the highest ranked proposal. There was a lot of discussion because this project is in an area around the Airport that is going to garner significant public interest. We went back to the proposals and Stantec was the highest. There was nothing we could do about that. They had ranked the proposals from lowest to highest, and Stantec was the highest. They exhausted the avenues to select someone else. There are a few options the Commissioners could consider. One is to vote to send the RFP out again for a little bit longer time to reevaluate proposals, or they can go with the APACs reluctant recommendation to use Stantec.

- **Commissioner Parent** – I would be concerned that you would not choose the company that came ranked the highest and chose the second best. I presume they're going to come up with the same result. Therefore, the complaint would be why didn't you take the company that came in #1?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – With Stantec being our consultant for so many years, they are almost guaranteed to win every solicitation because of the experience they have with Knox County. They know the Airport ins and outs. That is a disadvantage for anyone else that wants to try to do business with the County. I had an in-depth conversation with the consultant this morning. I explained that we are not able to be competitive as we've only dealt with one (1) company for so many years. How do you open that door? Right now, there is zero competition, we are just writing them checks. and so we don't know if we need to revamp the RFP and resend it out. Right now, we're not opening the door to be competitive. We've gone a lot with the CARES Act money. WE'VE gone a long way. With no competition the price can escalate to what they want. Because of the way we published the RFP we have to go with the company that came in #1. Other Airports are going out to bid "Per Project". We have to go with recommendation with how it was scored. This is just for one (1) project. The reason why we go out to bid is to get a competitive price. And here we haven't done that in twenty-two (22) years, and so we're paying millions of dollars per year in fees.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – What were they ranked upon? Was it a tool that you were given by somebody else to use, or is this something that you've developed?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – This is something we've developed over time. In the last phase of the RFP, it breaks down the overall experience, background, your key staff, your personality, your experience your local knowledge and your references. The scoring is 1-10 and multiplied by a percentage and it gives us an overall number. Each member of the APAC individually ranked each proposal.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – That's using criteria we've already developed on our own.
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – Correct.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Is there a mechanism that combines some kind of a history of public outreach that we feel we might be stepping into, and therefore we might want to revamp the tool we are using? So, we've built our own problem into this?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – Correct.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Is there a time crunch on if this approved now or if it's approved in six (6) months?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – For this project to stay with our funding timelines, there is a time crunch right now. That's why we held the meeting yesterday instead of in September.
- **Administrator Hart** – is this something we can put in place when we do the multi air renewal or approval for the engineering service for all projects? Can we ask for pricing, is that something we could include?
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Whatever tool you can come up with that gives everybody a fair chance in the process. That seems to make sense. There are at least three (3) good companies here. And because we have to keep taking the same one, I mean they may be the best but we also want more information and tailor this.
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – This would be a valuable change. We don't know what's out there. This is something to think about. We had to go this route this time, as this is the way this RFP was designed.
- **Commissioner Parent** – Are we too late to change the number of years for the contract?
- **Airport Manager Shaw** – I'll have to look into it. I think the FAA puts out a standard time period.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Pohlman to Act to Approve the APAC's Recommendation to Designate a Consultant Engineering Firm as the County's Consultant for Airport Planning, and Engineering Services for an Easement Acquisition Project at the Knox County Regional Airport. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

2. Act to Approve and Authorize the Airport Manager to Sign an Underground Line Easement to Central Maine Power, and to Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC.

Enclosed is an Underground Line Easement form from Central Maine Power Company and Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC to connect hangars associated with the new Hangar Taxilane, Central Maine Power needs an easement to connect Hedstrom Electric's newly installed power poles to CMP poles on Terminal Lane to complete their portion of the project. This Easement is a standard easement that Knox County has used for almost all of the CARES Act projects requiring power. This Act authorizes the Airport Manager to sign the easement on behalf of Knox County to provide power to the new Hangars in Hangar Taxilane Phase 1 and 2. The Commission has the legal authority to accept or convey interests in property. Therefore, the Commission need to authorize Jeremy Shaw, Airport Manager to sign the easement form.

- **Commissioner Glaser** – Where we're going to have another easement with CMP, what happens if the State decides to buy the power company? What happens to the easement?
 - **Airport Manager Shaw** – The good thing is we are going to own our solar. My assumption would be.....
 - **Commissioner Parent** – I would presume the State would own those rights.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve and Authorize the Airport Manager to Sign an Underground Line Easement to Central Maine Power, and to Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

3. Act to Approve the Updated Knox County GIS Program GIS Policy.

Enclosed is the marked-up version of the Knox County GIS Program GIS Policy. The only change is under the Liability/Warranty Section. Candice Richards, EMA Director will be present at the meeting to answer any questions that you have.

- **EMA Director Candice** – We were looking at language in the policy to make sure it was all appropriate. Andy talked to legal counsel to make sure we were covered. He decided to update the language a little bit.
 - **Commissioner Glaser** – Is this mostly about the liability?
 - **Administrator Hart** – Yes.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve the Updated Knox County GIS Program GIS Policy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

4. Act to Approve to Enter into and Authorize the County Administrator to Sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Knox County, the St. George Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Association (SGVFAA), the Knox County Mutual Aid Association, Inc (KCMAA) and the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) for the Knox County Live Fire Training Facility located within the Town of St. George.

Enclosed is the MOU that was drafted by the Ste. George Volunteer Firefighter's and Ambulance Associations (SGVFAA) legal counsel. It was then revised by James Katsiaficas, Knox County's legal counsel. This MOU finalizes the agreement between the SGVFAA, the Knox County Mutual Aid Association (KCMAA), the Maine Fire service Institute (MFSI) and Knox County. Knox County approved the total of \$9,000 (\$4,000 for insurance and \$5,000 for maintenance) for the total annual expense in the 2023 Knox County Budget. The \$9,000 will be made payable to the KCMAA.

SGVFAA, KCMAA, and MFSI have all signed and date the agreement. Knox County, if you authorize Administrator Hart to sign, will be the final signatory, and the MOU will be finalized.

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Enter into and Authorize the County Administrator to Sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between Knox County, the St. George Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Association (SGVFAA), the Knox County Mutual Aid Association, Inc. (KCMAA) and the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) for the Knox County Live Fire Training Facility located within the Town of St. George. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

5. Act to Increase the Health Insurance Opt-Out Stipend for Non-Enrollment to Section 6.2 in the Knox County Personnel Policy Handbook to be effective January 1, 2024.

Enclosed is a marked-up version of changes to Section 6.2 – Health Insurance Opt-Out for Non-Enrollment in the Knox County Personnel Policy Handbook. This changes the wording in the Employee Eligibility Column, Employee Election Column, and the Annual Amount Column. It increases the annual amounts, as this has not been increased since the initial inception. Kathy Robinson, Finance Director and Amber Christie, HR Manager did an analysis of costs, and have made the recommendation of approving these changes.

- **Commissioner Parent** – Will this be paid at the beginning of the year lump sum or when is this paid?
 - **Administrator Hart** – This is paid in December. They have to show coverage for eleven (11) months. Then we process the payment. This will be paid out at end of that year.
 - **Commissioner Glaser**- This change seems appropriate and long overdue. This part of the retention tools we need to have. What are the Budget implications? How many employees opt out?
 - **Finance Director Robinson**- A small number, like between 10-20. When we advertise that the amounts are going to change, we may have people that are currently on our plan that may choose to then come off the plan as of January 1st, and take advantage of the reimbursements. We are hoping this will save the County money, and give employees another option. When we announce that things will change people may take advantage of this. We went with 20% of value of what insurance is. Will email towards end of year.
 - **Commissioner Glaser** – You feel this will be a reasonable amount?
 - **Finance Director Robinson** – We went with 20% of the value of what the insurance is. So, we did feel that was an appropriate amount. We will send out an email toward the end of the year to gauge if there are some people that would take advantage of that. That way we can then budget accordingly for that.
 - **Commissioner Glaser** – This does have budget implications for next year’s budget potentially?
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Increase the Health Insurance Opt-Out Stipend for Non-Enrollment to Section 6.2 in the Knox County Personnel Policy Handbook to be Effective January 1, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

6. Act on Amendment to the Position Classification & Salary Administration Policy.

Enclosed is a marked-up version to the Pay Policy for Per-Diem Employees. We need to hire more Per Diem Employees to assist with the shortage of staffing that we are having in multiple departments. We want to change the way we calculate starting wages for Per Diem Employees, and have the flexibility to start them at a higher rate, as these employees will not receive benefits and we need to be able to attract Per Diem Employees with a higher starting wage.

- **Commissioner Glaser** – Does this run afoul of the Union? Having part time employees working along side the Union, does that create problem?
- **Administrator Hart** - I would say no.

- **Commissioner Glaser** – I just don't know what their rules are.
- **Sheriff** – They have worked in parallel in past. It just became cumbersome for Administration to follow them especially in the jobs that required a lot more stringent certification. Keeping up with that training was burdensome so past Administration decided to remove them from the rosters; as Unions have allowed this in the past. As far as getting close to the same wages, it is not exactly the same because it is still a per diem rate. What we did compare was overtime and benefits, and what that cost was. Union is also getting first refusal of those positions. We're trying to avoid taking from other agencies. This is a way to maybe work with our peers.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act on Amendment to the Position Classification & Salary Administration Policy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

7. Act to Appoint Two (2) Members to the District 6 Corrections Committee.

The MOU between TBRJ, Knox County, and Waldo Counties requires the Commissioners to appoint two (2) members in addition to the Sheriff and Jail Administrator for the District 6 Corrections Committee. The Sheriff and Capt. Wood are already members per Section 6. Chair Glaser and Administrator Hart have been attending all of the previous meetings. Administrator Hart and the Sheriff would request, that the Commission appoint Chair Glaser and Administrator Hart as the two (2) members to serve on the District 6 Committee.

- **Commissioner Glaser** – This is a very interesting endeavor. When the committee is fully formed there will be fifteen (15) people on the committee. Just by the way it works out, there will be an odd number, which works out perfectly. The next step for the committee is writing the by-laws so if there are any issues everybody gets a fair shot at voting for whatever issues there might be. I think it's a good committee, and I am quite happy to be able to serve on it. I am quite pleased with what the Sheriff...well not just our Sheriff, but all of the Sheriffs and all of the Jails have been working together.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act Appoint Two (2) Members to the District 6 Corrections Committee, Administrator Andrew L. Hart and Commissioner Edward B. Glaser. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

8. Act to Approve a Date & Time for the 2024 Budget Review with the Commission.

The Commission met with Department Managers to review the 2023 budget draft last year on Friday, October 14, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. Administrator Hart is proposing that the Commission meet to review the 2024 budget draft with the Department Managers on Friday, October 13, 2023. Kathy and Administrator Hart are hoping to meet with Department Managers for an initial review of the 2024 Budget the week of September 25-29, 2023. We have not finalized or confirmed these dates yet.

- **Administrator Hart** – Requesting to change the Department Managers meeting on the calendar from October 13th to Wednesday, October 11th at 9:00 A.M.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve a Date & Time for the 2024 Budget Review with the Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

9. Act to Approve the 2024 Budget Process Calendar.

The same timeframes as last year have been followed for the entire Budget process. We had moved the start date of the entire budget process to a later date last year, and more specifically the Joint Budget Meetings with the Budget Committee and Commission, so that we had better numbers for the Budget process with less changes and we had more concrete numbers such as negotiations with the Unions (now have 4 unions) that provided the time to put more realistic numbers to the Budget. The later start made much more sense considering that insurances (employee health benefits and workman's comp) almost always tend to be late arriving numbers of great significance. Having the Budget start later last year, worked well with less changes and better numbers to be able to provide to the Budget Committee and Commission. Included are the proposed 2024 Budget Review Sessions Schedule in your packet for this discussion.

- **Administrator Hart** – On here we will try to stick with the dates the best we can, but they probably will move some. Overall, we're behind in the budget process as to where we were a year ago. Our intent is to get the budget template done and get the email out. We will have budgets due back on September 8th, that date could change.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – Those first few from September all the way thru October 11th is all basically internal.
- **Administrator Hart** – The big thing is the Budget Committee and Commissioners is the Joint Meeting on here is showing to start on November 2nd. The plan is to get everything done in November, before Thanksgiving. That does not give us a lot of flexibility.
- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to Act to Approve the 2024 Budget Process Calendar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pohlman. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

V. Discussion Items

1. Other Items:

- **Administrator Hart** – We have a meeting tomorrow at EMA at 3:00 P.M. for Executive Board and User Group. This is to talk about the staffing issues at Dispatch. I assume that group will want to talk about wages and the status of the Union contract. The County did suggest a wage increase for that department, and was turned down by the Union. The County did suggest a request with the Labor Relations Board to begin mediation. I spoke with the Executive Director today; the County is paying a fee to start that process. We need a mediator. I have a call into Peter Marchesi to see who he would like for a mediator. At this point we have not finalized this. We are in the process. There is a concern that we're down six (6) Dispatchers and two (2) Supervisors. We are trying to work temporarily with Waldo County regarding dispatching calls. There's a good chance this won't happen until the 21st because we need both IT Directors to get a plan put in place on how we will be able to dispatch calls. The other two departments are down by eleven (11) in Corrections and down by five (5) in Patrol. We realize it's an issue with all three. We know we need to do something; it's just figuring out the right steps. Everybody is trying. With a component of the Sheriff's Office, the islands are a big issue as well. The Sheriff and Chief Deputy have taken the initiative to reach out to the islands and try to have a meeting with the islands; the Commissioner representative for the islands, myself, the two Town Managers and the Selectmen to see if we can do something different or at least discuss options to correct the situation we are dealing with.
- **Sheriff** – It's a dynamic situation right now. One of the biggest challenges from our perspective is our fiscal year is different than our competitors (surrounding Towns) which presents a challenge. Especially when they are able to increase pay and benefits that we are not able to for another 6-9 months. We will be coming to you folks to ask for ways that we can try to get ahead of that. We need to be competitive. Maybe not the top pay in the State but competitive so we don't lose seasoned people to surrounding agencies.
- **Chief Deputy Andrick** - We have lost seasoned Deputies who have numerous years of experience, they have in some positions taken a step down to get the much larger wage. Were trying to figure out how to improve that. Wages are a big concern, as well as benefits and vacation time.

- **Sheriff**- How do we reimagine the solution in a way that's more in line with today's culture and what people expect.
- **Administrator Hart** – It's not strictly pay, it's time off and benefits as well. We're looking at what would help alleviate in the short term and long term.
- **Commissioner Parent** – In observation, it seems like in our area seems to have a pool of people that are willing to be a police officer. The different communities and counties are all vying for those people in that particular job. Until we get more people interested in becoming a police officer it's not going to end. How do we make the job more attractive?
- **Commissioner Glaser** – It's finding ways to compete against other police departments, its finding ways to compete against job opportunities that are out there. If you can take a job that pays more, gives you more time off, gives you better health care, just all of those things, and doesn't in the meantime put you on the front line of protecting people then they are going to take that job. When you say it's not just about wages, it's also about time off and those still have budget implications. In the long run, it all comes down to how do we fund it.
- **Administrator Hart** – Especially, with a new employee coming in from another area it is the cost of living. The cost of buying a house and the cost of rent to some are unreachable.
- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I want to thank everyone who's working to help this. It is multifaceted, it will not happen overnight. This is the start of a conversation that will include the Budget Committee as well, to come together to provide some solutions that address the short term and longer term.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – We will revisit this tomorrow afternoon and then probably Thursday. To keep staff up, retention wise, getting people we are talking about three (3) different departments. Does this have a ripple effect throughout all the departments? Will this have a ripple effect? We don't know the answer, but I expect there will be other ramifications because of this.
- **Administrator Hart** – It will to some effect.
- **Chief Deputy Andrick** – The issue to is, the three (3) departments the employees get affected but also the public can be affected as well as far as the essential services that are provided by all three (3) departments. Public safety is currently the top priority. No one ever wants to see public safety suffer. With the current staffing, we will have to make some adjustments on how we respond to things.
- **Commissioner Parent** - Will it eventually force the State to become more active in this County and other Counties?
- **Sheriff** – Unfortunately, there has been the same problems in the State. The State Police in particular, they are dissolving a lot of their agreements with Counties to provide unified response. There are still emergency backup clauses within the statutes but a lot of those agreements are dissolving because we just don't have the staff to support them anymore. This is a common problem throughout all the agencies in the State if not all the agencies throughout the nation.
- **Commissioner Pohlman** – I am going to second that. I am part of the MCCA where all the Counties participate. That is one of our top issues in discussion is how to get more Jail funding, how get more coverage for rural patrol. The State in face is looking at cutting back in many of those areas and putting more pressure on the Counties and the County Sheriff departments to provide services when they are already shorthanded. It's a huge problem statewide. Public Safety is paramount. The sooner we can get solutions going, and meet with the islands the better.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – When the citizens passed the marijuana issue there was a fair amount of money that was being taxed. The State took most of the money instead of reimbursing the Towns. The reimbursement was going to be for policing. Has anyone heard about how that money and how that is being distributed?
- **Sheriff** – How that is working I am not sure 100%. There was some push by MCCA and County Commissioners as well as Maine Municipal Association to work with the State on opportunities to reimburse local government for some of those things. My understanding is that did not make any progress in the legislative sessions. How that is moving forward from there I do not know.
- **Commissioner Glaser** – So is that just accruing in a big pot of money in the State someplace?
- **Sheriff** – Yes and no. I think there are some programs that do get funded though it. I know the Maine Sheriff's Association in particular there is a compliance version that we have a contract with the State on, but that is only a fraction of those funds. Where the other funds go, I would not be able to say.

- **Commissioner Parent** – Doesn't the State keep a cap on how much you can spend at the Jail? How do we pay them more?
- **Sheriff** – Yes, that is a question that we have asked also. Yes, we are capped. It caps the entire budget. We're trying to mitigate as best as we can. It will be an interesting end of the year.
- **Commissioner Parent** – What happens if you spend more than the State allows? Then what will do you do?
- **Sheriff** – We hope to not spend more than is allowed. It's still early in the year, but we should be ok.

VI. Other Business

- Siemens will be here for Thursday night's meeting. I want them talk to the Budget Committee and Commissioners because we need to potentially do a replacement of the HVAC system in the Public Safety Building. We do have an additional phase to complete at the Correctional facility. The boiler replacement can be held off until 2029. The underground tank had to be removed at that point. The State changed the law, so now as long as you pass all of the testing you can keep the tank in the ground for the life of the tank unless it fails any of those inspections. The discussion with Siemens is the boiler we currently have is a three-section boiler. If the front or back section were to ever go, they are not replaceable. So, we just need to have a discussion of do we want to fund everything in a lease purchase and be done with it? If we did a lease purchase, we wouldn't budget that until 2025. We retired a debt on the lease purchase for the Courthouse in 2025 (about \$67,000), and we retire the debt for the Public Safety Building in 2027 (\$165,0000). It is important to have this discussion. The boiler we currently have is a three-section boiler. If the front or back section goes, they are not replaceable. Do we want to fund everything thru a lease purchase?

VII. 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 regular meeting adjourned at 3:19 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

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