

Barbour County Commission Meeting

March 6, 2023

5:00pm

JAMIE CARPENTER COMMISSION PRESIDENT, DAVID STRAIT COMMISSIONER, JEDD SCHOLA COMMISSIONER, LAURIE AUSTIN COUNTY CLERK (absent), SHANA FREY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Kim Lewis, Jennifer Burner, Michael Ambrose, Terry Gould, Timothy Wotring, Danielle Rush, Brett Carpenter, Jean Clark, Bob Richardson, Renee Howdershelt, Carrie Wallace, Dylan Harper, Kelsey Gross, Keith Skeen, Jennifer Baylor-Nine, Juva Stemple, H. David Talbott, Paul Baker, Cheryl Wolfe, Fran Baker, Robert Jones, Kris Jones, Kathy ?, Drew Phillips, Lynn Phillips, Kelley Flaherty, Pennie Roueche', Derek Hart, Jill Taylor-Phillips, Alex Harclerode, Crystal Harclerode

Jamie Carpenter called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Strait was delayed in traffic caused by an accident and joined by phone for part of the meeting. Some agenda items were delayed until his presence.

On a motion by Jedd Schola, seconded by Jamie Carpenter, the February 17, 2023 regular meeting minutes and February 23, 2023 special meeting minutes were approved. 3/0

Exonerations were presented.

On a motion by Jedd Schola and seconded by Jamie Carpenter, five (5) final settlements were approved. 3/0

JIMMY DON OSBIN, PHILIP J. BOOTH, DEAN REITER PENNINGTON, KATHLENE LEVAUN STEMPEL, JOHN SCOTT TAYLOR

County Clerk Austin was absent due to a family emergency but provided an update on two estates. A protest was received on the final settlement for the Harold Marteney estate within the 10-day period. Grace Stemple submitted additional information as requested and is being reviewed. An update will be provided at the March 17th meeting. A complaint was received on the William Smith estate over lack of progress. Michael Ambrose requested to be appointed to the estate. Contact has not yet been made to Mr. Kelley, who was appointed over the estate, to check progress. A certified letter will be the next step in attempting to make contact.

A recommendation from Barbour County WV Extension was received to appoint Dr. Cecil Holbert as a representative of the County Commission to the Camp Barbour board. Dr. Holbert confirmed interest and willingness to serve. On a motion by David Strait, seconded by Jedd Schola, the recommendation was approved. 3/0

A grant was awarded from the West Virginia Department of Agriculture for the West Virginia Spay and Neuter program in the amount of \$9,750.00. \$75.00 off vouchers will be offered beginning approximately March 15th. On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by David Strait, the grant agreement was accepted and signed. 3/0

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Danielle Rush was in attendance to represent the Belington Elementary 5K race fundraiser, the largest fundraiser for Belington Elementary School. The race will be held on June 3. All proceeds from this fundraiser are used to benefit the students at Belington Elementary School for student programs, trips, incentives and activities. On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by Jedd Schola their \$100.00 sponsorship was approved. 3/0

A representative for the VFW Flag project was not available and this item was tabled.

The \$20,000 contribution request from the Barbour County Solid Waste Authority will be discussed during the March 17th budget work session.

Jacob Summerfield submitted a monthly report and requested to attend Basic Animal Control training on March 27-30 with a cost of \$595.00. This was approved on a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by Jedd Schola. 3/0

Sheriff Carpenter presented a call for service report for February. A total of 527 calls were received including 2 Assaults, 4 Burglary, 1 Drug Offenses, 1 Larceny, 1 Obstructing an Officer, 1 Sex Crime, 5 Child Neglect, 2 DUI, 1 Driving Suspended, 2 Animal Neglect, 2 Destruction of Property, 7 Trespasses, 13 Motor Vehicle Crashes, and 131 Traffic Stops.

A list of public auction items was approved on a motion by Jedd Schola, seconded by David Strait. The auction will be held on April 1 at the Barbour County Fairgrounds. A list of auction items can be viewed at the courthouse and at www.barbourcountywv.org.

Paul Baker provided an update on Save the Tygart and reported that Beaver Creek is maintaining a pH between 5-7. Over 1,000 ton of limestone has been purchased since the project began. Kelley Flaherty talked about the Abandoned Mines division doing a rehabilitation project on the treatment systems to hopefully maintain pH levels year-round. They also discussed a project at Roaring Creek, which has water flowing into Barbour County. Mr. Baker requested for the County Commission to continue supporting their efforts by allocating \$3,000.00 to Save the Tygart. On a motion by Jedd Schola, seconded by Jamie Carpenter, this request was approved. 3/0

Carrie Wallace, Region VII Planning and Development Council, explained the regional Hazard Mitigation plan and a 25% match is required for the \$100,000 grant. Region VII is requesting each county in their region to fund \$1,500 and each larger Municipality \$1,000 toward the match. The plan is being drafted by JH Consulting and is required in order to receive FEMA funding. On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by Jedd Schola, this request was approved. 3/0

Residents on Murphy's Station Road requested assistance for water service in 2021 due to contaminated well water. Century Volga PSD is unable to serve this area due to the cost associated with boring under the railway that crosses the road. Hodgesville PSD is willing to add the eight customers to their system and intends to apply for critical need funding with IJDC. If a PSD crosses county lines, they must obtain consent from both county commissions. Upshur

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County has provided consent. On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by Jedd Schola, full support is given to the Hodgesville water extension project to Murphy Station Road. 3/0

A seconded quote was received for the preservation of the Dough Boy statue in the amount of \$19,760. Philippi American Legion is seeking a quote for a single plaque to honor Romulo Jimenez; however, the quote was not yet available for discussion.

Prodigi is preparing a grant application to the WV LEAD program. The preliminary design will serve 702 homes from southern Preston to eastern Barbour. Nearly all of these homes are currently unserved. The grant requires a match of \$500 per address point, totaling to \$351,000.00. The total cost of the project is between \$5-6 million dollars. This project can position Prodigi to expand in RDOF areas of the county, thus continuing efforts of getting fiber to the home.

A suggestion from the audience was to conduct a presurvey of residents to see if they intend on subscribing to the service. The argument was a lot of tax payer dollars would be spent if just a small amount signed up. Mr. Wotring feels confident about the project and Prodigi is committing a substantial investment as well. Historically, these types of projects have been successful for Prodigi and they offer competitive and affordable plans. The commission also pointed out that funds from the County Coal Reallocation Fund can be used for the match. If the project is funded, service doesn't stop at the 702 homes, Prodigi intends on providing additional investment and reach homes that fall outside of the 500 ft. buffer. The overall project is approximately 39 miles. Once awarded grant funds, Prodigi estimates completion in 12-15 months.

Cheryl Wolfe, Barbour Development Authority has worked diligently on broadband in Barbour County. She stated that every provider has been approached and discussions held; Prodigi is ready to help serve Barbour County's needs and set themselves up to expand in additional areas and feels this is an opportunity that can't be missed.

David Strait made a motion to partner with Prodigi and pledge a match of \$351,000.00 for the WV LEAD grant application from the County Coal Reallocation fund, Jamie Carpenter seconded and passed unanimously.

The Barbour County Health Department provided the commission with a draft of their merit system and a resolution to dissolve from the WV Division of Personnel. This will allow the Health Department to have more leverage for competitive wages and employee retention. This item was tabled until the merit system is reviewed.

On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by David Strait, Executive Session was entered at 6:12pm to discuss the Prosecuting Attorney appointment. 3/0

Regular Session was resumed at 6:29pm on a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by David Strait. 3/0

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The Commission has the privilege to appoint a Prosecuting Attorney to fill Thomas Hoxie's vacancy, following his appointment to Circuit Judge. Three individuals, Andrew Phillips, Alex Harclerode and Kelsey Gross, submitted a letter of intent, resume and support letters for the vacancy. All candidates were considered for the position. The Commission requested an attorney from Pullen, Fowler, Flanagan, Brown & Poe to provide input on interview questions and participate in the interview process. His unbiased, professional input was very valuable in the decision process. Interviews were scheduled in the order in which letters of intent were received. Numerous letters of recommendations were received and taken into consideration.

Commissioners all expressed their due diligence and sincerity of their decision. On a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by David Strait, Andrew Phillips was unanimously appointed as Barbour County Prosecuting Attorney effective March 16, 2023.

Dylan Harper reported tower site issues from damages during a provider's decommission process and is working to get the issues repaired.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding Barbour County Ambulance coverage. Representation from Barbour County EMS, Belington EMS, and fire departments were in attendance. The Commission is requesting the agencies to work together to find a solution for consistent and sufficient coverage throughout the county. Problems that Barbour County is facing is not unique to Barbour County, however Commissioner Strait requested team work between the agencies to fill coverage gaps. Staffing issues, financial woes, and other issues were all discussed. Solutions that were touched on included a levy, EMS ordinance, Ambulance Authority, and consolidation. Commissioner Strait stressed that we can't compare Barbour County to larger counties where one of these solutions may have been successful because we aren't the same. Calls will be monitored closely for adequate staffing, response times, calls requiring an agency to cross first due boundaries and calls requiring out of county agency response. A work session will be scheduled to discuss results in depth. The Comm Center has implemented a modified paging process not requiring multiple call attempts, before moving onto the next agency in an attempt to reduce response delays.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2023 at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:51pm on a motion by Jamie Carpenter, seconded by David Strait. 3/0

Jamie Carpenter, President

Barbour County
Laurie L. Austin, Clerk
Instrument 273509
03/17/2023 @ 10:25:20 AM
COUNTY COMMISSION MINUTES
Book 28 @ Page 423
Pages Recorded 4