

Monroe Commission Holds August Meeting

The Monroe County Commission met in regular session on August 6, 2014 at the Courthouse. Commission President Shane Ashley called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

Brian Wickline, WVU Extension Agent introduced the County Commission to Allison Echols Tomlinson, the county's newly hired Tourism Director. Ms. Tomlinson, who works out of the WVU Extension Office, will replace Helen Graves who retired after 25 years of faithful and dedicated service. Ms. Tomlinson shared some of her goals and ideas as Tourism Director with the County Commission.

Commissioners reviewed a letter from the Division of Justice and Community Services advising the county's grant application seeking funding to continue the Prevention Resource Officer (PRO) at James Monroe High School has been approved. The Board of Education must provide a match for this grant.

The County Commission reviewed a petition containing signatures of residents that live along Sims Hill road. The petition stated the Division of Highways has recently provided notice that they will no longer provide a tar and gravel surface on this road but will make the surface just gravel. These individuals opposed this proposal and asked for the County Commission's assistance. The County Commission agreed to forward a letter to the Division of Highways asking them to reconsider this proposal.

At the request of Sheriff Mike Gravely, the County Commission authorized the hiring of an additional Deputy Sheriff. Sheriff Gravely stated that he plans to start a night shift once the new deputy is hired. The Sheriff said having a deputy on night shift will eliminate deputies getting called out in the middle of the night and the county having to pay them overtime. The Sheriff also advised an additional state trooper has been added to the Union detachment. With this addition, there are five troopers now assigned to the county.

Tim Wilson, 911 Director, appeared before the County Commission to provide an update on 911 Center activities. Wilson reported the center received 164 law enforcement related calls for the month of July, 221 calls for emergency medical services and 39 fire calls. Wilson then provided the monthly Wrecker Response Report. He said Galford's received five calls, Clarkson's two and Offenberger's and Neel's received one call each.

Jeff Jones, the county's Director for the Office of Emergency Management, appeared before the County Commission advising he has completed the required OEM Director classes through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Jones said he continues to work with other agencies to prepare for a major countywide disaster or other emergency.

Robin Frazier and Jeannie Ratliff, representing Union Rescue, appeared before the County Commission inquiring if the Commission was interested in purchasing the vehicle previously used for the Medic One Program. Ms. Frazier said this vehicle has been taken out of service and replaced with a new one. She said the vehicle is a 2007 Ford Expedition and they have tried to sell the vehicle to other Emergency Medical Service Agencies but haven't had any luck.

Commissioners advised Ms. Frazier and Ms. Ratliff that the county didn't have any use for the vehicle but would certainly help them try to sell it.

At the request of the Board of Education, the County Commission agreed to place the board's Excess Levy renewal on the November 4, 2014 General Election ballot.

The County Commission reviewed a letter from the Monroe Health Department advising they were proposing to amend the county's Clean Indoor Regulation. Health center officials stated the amendment to the current policy removes all exemptions that allowed smoking in all enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places and also adds language that includes electronic cigarettes.

At the request of Assessor Norbert Netzel, the County Commission approved parcel consolidations for F. Sue Upton, Lynnside Farms, James and Martha Williams and the James M. Sprouse Family Trust.

The County Commission accepted the resignation of Wayne Dent as a member of the county's Building Commission and appointed Duane Miller to replace Mr. Dent. Commissioners agreed to send a letter to Mr. Dent thanking him for his years of service to the Building Commission.

Donald J. Evans, County Clerk advised Commissioners that the County Clerk's Office can now accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover credit cards. Evans said more people than ever are now using credit and debit cards to pay for purchases. Evans said that several individuals have already used these cards to pay for recording fees and copies of certificates. Evans said the office gets many requests for birth, marriage and death certificates from those living out of state. When they call for a certificate, they usually need it yesterday. Prior to being able to accept the credit cards, those making a request would have to submit their fee to the Clerk's Office by check or money order and the Clerk's Office could not issue the certificate until the fee was received. This could take a week or two. Now someone can call for a certificate the Clerk's Office can get the credit card info on the phone and mail the certificate the same day. Evans said the credit card companies charge the Clerk's Office a small fee to be able to accept credit cards. The fee is actually a percentage of the total purchase amount. This fee has to be past along to the customer because the county, as a government entity, cannot absorb these fees. Evans said he has wanted to accept credit cards for some time but WV Code prohibited it. The Legislature just recently passed a law along Clerk's offices to accept the cards. Evans said he has instructed his staff to disclose the amount of the fee that will be charged to the customer each time some uses their debit/credit card.

Division of Highway officials notified Commissioners that Triton Construction from Nitro, WV has been awarded the bid to replace the bridge in Peterstown on the Monroe/Giles County line. Work should commence on the project the week of August 25th. Triton officials have confirmed the existing bridge will remain in place and open for traffic until the new bridge is constructed.

The County Commission discussed how to proceed on the installation of a sprinkler system. Commissioners recently solicited bids for this project and only one bid was submitted. It was from Brewer and Company of WV with a base bid

of \$227,600 and an add on of \$46,200 for a total bid price of \$273,800. With the architect's fee and the cost for the environmental study, the cost will be around \$291,000. The Commission was awarded a \$100,000 for this project with the county providing a 25% match. Commissioners asked the architect to work with the contractor to see if the project can be done in two phases. If so, the county plans to apply for an additional grant with the Courthouse Facilities Authority and half the project could be completed now and the other half completed next year when additional grant funding becomes available.

At the request of Justin St. Clair, Prosecuting Attorney, Commissioners approved allocating funds to the Prosecuting Attorney's budget to purchase a new copier.

The County Commission met with Rebekah Stone, Chief Financial Officer for the Monroe Health Center. Ms. Stone said the Health Center Board of Trustees was still in the process of interviewing applicants for a new CEO for the Health Center. She said the board was taking their time and performing a thorough search for a CEO. The County Commission had been in discussions with the former CEO about developing a lease agreement between the Health Center and the county. The county actually owns the Health Center property. After some discussion, both parties agreed to the terms and conditions of a lease agreement. Commissioners asked Ms. Stone if the WVU Extension Office could start having their meetings again in the conference room at the Health Center. Ms. Stone said she would personally work on this. Meetings were previously held at the Health Center but were relocated to the basement of the Union Senior Center.

The County Commission agreed to hire a company called WVyourWay. WVyourWay, who has a patent pending search feature, will develop a comprehensive directory of the county. Included in this directory will be businesses, government entities, churches and non-profit corporations just to name a few.

If someone is planning a trip to Monroe County they can simply log onto www.WVyourWay.com. The site will contain information on lodging in the county as well as places to eat, recreational activities, things to do, where to get your vehicle worked on, where to buy groceries and so on. The benefit of creating this directory is the fact that you can find all the information you might need about the county on one single website.

WVyourWay will provide an Enhanced Listing of each business, organization and destination in Monroe County. Each listing will include three keywords (at a value of \$299 annually). **The Enhanced Listing fees for each business, organization or destination have been paid by the Monroe County Commission.** However, you have the opportunity to purchase more than three keywords if you wish at a rate of \$50 annually for each keyword above the initial three. The purchase of more keywords is solely up to the individual who will only be responsible for keywords above the initial three. You are not obligated in any way to purchase additional keywords. To ascertain which three keywords would be most effective, WVyourWay could ask some questions to determine the best keywords to include with your Enhanced Listing.

The County Commission kindly asks for your cooperation if you receive a visit or a phone call from a representative of WVyourWay. Information they may need when they contact you could include the following; name of business, organization or destination, photo/logo of business, physical and mailing address, phone number, email address, website, directors, contact person.

If you have any questions about this project, please don't hesitate to speak to any member of the Monroe County Commission. These members include Shane Ashley, Bill Miller and Clyde Gum, Jr. Questions can also be directed to Donald J. Evans, County Clerk at 772-3096.

The County Commission approved seven final estate settlements and numerous improper charges as presented by the Assessor's Office. The County Commission will meet again in regular session on September 3, 2014. If you need to get on the Commission's agenda please call 772-3096.