

Monroe Commission Holds November Meeting

The Monroe County met in regular session on November 7, 2012 at the Courthouse. This meeting date was changed from November 7th due to election duties associated with the November 6th General Election.

Commission President Shane Ashley called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

Patti Hamilton, Executive Director of the WV Association of Counties and Don Dransfield and Helen Graves, representing WVU Extension Service, were on hand to present the county with the first ever "Live Well West Virginia County Award". The Charleston Gazette, WVACo and the WVU Extension Service sponsored a program called Summer Steps Walking Challenge. This program encouraged county employees and residents to walk. Monroe County won the statewide contest and logged over 1,000 walking miles in just three months. This is the distance from the Courthouse to Key Largo, FL. Many Courthouse employees participated in the program and contributed to this winning effort. Tisha Terry, an employee in the County Clerk's Office, headed up the county's team. The county was presented with a plaque and participants were presented with tee shirts and cups.

The County Commission ordered the Courthouse closed December 24th and 25th for Christmas and December 31st and January 1st for New Years. The annual Courthouse Open House is scheduled for December 7th from 10:00 am till 2:00 pm.

At the request of Sheriff Mike Gravel, the County Commission approved the submission of an invoice to the Board of Education in the amount of \$1,785.00. This invoice was for the salaries of county's Deputy Sheriffs attending athletic events at the schools.

Sheriff Mike Gravelly advised the County Commission that the Animal Control Officer's vehicle is about worn out. Commissioners agreed to check with State Surplus and see if they had anything available to meet the needs of the Animal Control Officer. The Sheriff also advised Commissioners that the Animal Control Officer was doing a great job with her duties and responsibilities.

Commissioner Ashley reported that the American Red Cross has notified him that if the region has a major disaster and the current Director of the Red Cross get reassigned outside of the immediate area, another individual will be assigned as a contact person for Monroe County and will provide any necessary assistance to the county.

Commissioner Gum suggested the county convert the area between the 911 Center and the Prosecuting Attorney's Office into parking spaces for Prosecuting Attorney's Office employees. Gum said parking in this area is limited and the existing space

isn't being used. Commissioners agreed to make this area a parking space but decided to wait until spring to do so.

Commissioner Miller reported that he has received a complaint about a building in Ballard that was previously used as a Barber Shop, causing a traffic hazard for those pulling out from the Stinking Lick road onto Route 12. Commissioners will forward this complaint to Division of Highway officials.

Tim Wilson, 911 Director, appeared before the County Commission and provided an update of the activities of the 911 Center. Wilson provided the monthly Wrecker Response Report. He said Galford's and Neel's both received four calls, Dunbar's and Offenberger's received two and Atwell's received one call. Commissioners approved a proposal from Wilson to enter into a contract with a company that will provide an interpreter in the event the 911 Center receives a call from someone speaking another language besides English. Wilson said the only cost of this service is for the actual time an interpreter is used. The cost is \$1.95 per minute. Wilson said Summers County uses this same company. Commissioners also approved a request from Ballard Fire Department for 20 cots. These cots will be used in the event the Ballard Fire Department is activated as an emergency shelter. Wilson advised Commissioners that he basically had to start over on securing a location for a radio repeater for the Moncove Lake area. He said he is working with the Green Bank Observatory, who must approve any location of a repeater to insure it doesn't interfere with their operations, and a landowner in the area. He reported that the new generator for the 911 Center is being installed today. Mr. Wilson reported that he recently attended a meeting in Beckley and the topic was how turnpike officials will reroute traffic in the event they must close the turnpike. Wilson reported that if the turnpike is closed between Ghent and Princeton, traffic officials will reroute traffic onto Interstate 64 to Lewisburg and then to Rt. 219 South to Peterstown then onto Rt. 460. Wilson said this could be a major problem for the county as there could be as many as 32,000 cars and trucks on Rt. 219. There is new signage along Rt. 219 designating this detour.

The County Clerk reminded Commissioners of the County Commissioner's Association Annual Roundtable Meeting scheduled for here at the Courthouse on December 13th from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. County Commissioners from five different counties will be attending this meeting.

Burman Clark, representing Muneris, appeared before the County Commission. Mr. Clark is the county's group health insurance agent. Mr. Clark explained how the Obama Health Care Plan, beginning in January 2014, will affect the county and the employees who participate in the group health insurance program.

Commissioners reviewed a letter from the Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority advising the County Commission's grant application to make improvements to the Circuit Courtroom, jury room and conference room has been denied. The CFIA stated they received more requests for funding than they could

fund. The amount the county requested was \$84,000.00. Last year, the CFIA granted the County Commission a grant in the amount of \$102,660.00 to go toward the cost of replacing the Courthouse roof.

The County Commission signed an Engagement Letter with the State Auditor's Office authorizing the Auditor's Office to conduct the county's annual audit.

Mike Will, Executive Director for Monroe Council on Aging, appeared before the County Commission. Mr. Will said there have been many improvements made at the Lindsie Senior Center to prepare the building to be used as an emergency shelter if necessary. He said a shower has been installed with another one to be installed soon, the freezer and refrigerator space has been enlarged and a generator has been installed to operate the center in the event of a power outage.

The organization "Stand Up For Monroe" appeared before the County Commission. This group is opposed to hydraulic fracturing in the county. Joe Chasnoff, one of the spokespersons for the group, told Commissioners that the group is preparing a "Rights Based Ordinance". Chasnoff said residents have certain rights granted to them by the Constitution. He said this ordinance was a work in progress and the group planned to solicit public input on the ordinance for the next 90 days. Chasnoff said this type of ordinance has been passed in 150 communities across the country and none of the ordinances have been challenged. Several other individuals representing this group also spoke about the negative effects of fracking in karst topography and how important it is for the County Commission to pass the ordinance once its completed to protect county residents against these effects. Dave Blakeslee, a proponent of hydraulic fracturing, asked why the organization didn't have the ordinance with them at this meeting. Blakeslee went on to say that this ordinance would contradict state law and the WV Department of Environmental Authority, not County Commissions, has regulatory control over gas drilling. Another individual asked the County Commission if they had given any thought as to how much it would cost the county in legal fees if they would adopt such an ordinance and a landowner has entered into a lease agreement with a gas company and the landowner sues the County Commission. Approximately 75 individuals attended this meeting.

The County Commission will meet again in regular session on December 5, 2012 at the Courthouse. If you need to be placed on the Commission's agenda, please call 772-3096.

