

Monroe Commission Meets

The Monroe County Commission met in regular session on December 2, 2015 at 9:00 am at the Courthouse. President Clyde Gum, Jr., called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation.

The County Commission agreed to place an notice in the local newspaper advising that there will be a vacancy on the Red Sulphur PSD Board of Directors beginning in January. Anyone interested in being considered for this appointment should submit a Letter of Interest to the County Commission by January 6, 2016. Current board member Jerry Pitzer has advised the Commission he doesn't want to be considered for reappointment to the board when his current term expires on January 6, 2016.

At the request of the owner of the Little Bit Country Store in Ballard, the County Commission prepared a letter affirming there are no zoning restrictions or ordinances in the Ballard area. The owner is required to have this letter to submit with his Alcohol Beverage Control Commission application to the state.

The County Clerk reminded Commissioners that they will need to schedule their annual Board of Equalization and Review meetings beginning sometime after February 1st. This board must meet every year for the purpose of reviewing and equalizing tax assessments made by the Assessor. Public notice of these meetings will be provided in this newspaper.

Jill Fischer appeared before the County Commission inquiring if the Commission had any new information on the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline. Commissioners told Fischer they had filed to be an Intervenor in the matter and EQT has provided a copy of their application they recently submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The application, which consists of approximately 13 three ring binders full of documents, is available for public review in the Courthouse record room. County Clerk Donald J. Evans reported that an electronic version of the application will be posted on the county's website in the next couple days. The county's website address in www.monroecountywv.net. Ms. Fischer asked if the county has received any money from EQT. She said she had heard the county has. Commissioner Ashley asked Ms. Fischer where she got her information. Ms. Fischer responded that she didn't know but had just heard the county received money from EQT. The County Commission assured Ms. Fischer no one has received any money but that EQT did send the county a letter some time back to advise the county will receive approximately 1.7 million annually in tax revenue from the pipeline. The Commission has inquired with the State Tax Department just to check the accuracy of the projected revenue but officials with the State Tax Department haven't been able to confirm the projected amount.. If the projected revenue is correct and in accordance with state law, 1.2 million of the tax revenue will go to the Board of Education and the county would get approximately \$500,000 of the 1.2 million.

Tim Wilson, 911 Director, appeared before the Commission providing so update on the Center's activities. Wilson reported the 911 Center received a total of 367 calls for the month of

November. Of these 367 calls, 167 were for law enforcement, 161 EMS and 39 fire calls. Wilson reported that Galford's received six wrecker calls for the month and Clarkson's and Neel's received five calls each. A discussion was held on the high number of wrecks that have occurred at the first curve when entering Monroe County from Greenbrier County near Second Creek. Wilson said there have been 35 wrecks in this curve since the first of the year. The County Commission voted to send a letter to the District Engineer for the Division of Highways (DOH) and ask the DOH to conduct an investigation to see if they can determine if there is a problem causing people to wreck.

Jeff Jones, the county's Director of Emergency Management, appeared before the County Commission. Mr. Jones provided a report of the complaints that have been filed under the county's Unsafe and Unsanitary Structures and Refuse Ordinance. Jones advised that of the 11 complaints received, six have been resolved. He also advised that a meeting was recently held with Greenbrier County to make plans for a joint exercise scheduled for April 2016. Jones also advised he has tested all of the county's generators to make sure they were running and available prior to winter weather. He reported all are in working order and ready for use if needed. In conclusion, Jones reported he was preparing a grant application seeking funds to purchase portable lighting to be used for a night time emergency or power outage.

Commissioners agreed to obtain an estimate on how much it will cost to bring the McGuire Building into compliance with State Fire Marshall regulations. The County Commission purchased this building, which previously occupied the Broyles McGuire Funeral Home, to house the state mandated Drug Court, the Day Report Center and possibly the Magistrates' Offices. After the State Fire Marshall's inspection of the building, the county previously elected to sell it due to the amount of money it was going to take to bring the building into compliance with state regulations. Bids on the property didn't meet the minimum amount the County Commission decided to accept for the building therefore the Commission decided not to sell it.

Sheriff Mike Gravely advised Commissioners he confiscated a Honda Passport in a recent drug bust and in accordance with WV Code, was planning to sell it at public auction later in the week.

The county's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) appeared before the County Commission. Kelly Shreve, Threat Coordinator for the Monroe Board of Health, served as spokesperson for the group. Ms. Shreve advised the County Commission that the team recently was awarded a 2015 Governor's Service Award. This award is presented to individuals and organizations that exemplify outstanding dedication to volunteerism and community service in West Virginia. Ms. Shreve said the team presently has 74 members and they have been trained in CPR, traffic control and search and rescue. The team contributed over 3,000 hours of volunteer service this past year. The CERT also created the Monroe Safety Checks Program. This program has individuals that will check on individuals during a power outage who are dependent on electricity, such as those that are on oxygen and those whose medication whose medicine must be kept refrigerated. Those who could benefit from this program should call Ms. Shreve at 772-3064. President Gum thanked the CERT for all they do and their dedication to

helping their neighbors here in the county. CERT has become an important and integral part of community disaster response capability. Those who could benefit from this program should call Ms. Shreve at 772-3064.

Assessor Norb Netzel appeared before the County Commission. Mr. Netzel informed the Commission that the reappraisal of county property has been completed. The State Tax Department had sent a letter to the County Commission stating if the Assessor was not in compliance in raising real estate taxes here in the county by the end of this year to a level deemed acceptable by the Tax Department, then the Tax Department would step in and raise the values. The Assessor stated he has raised valuations to the lowest possible level in order to prevent the Tax Department from imposing a higher tax on taxpayers.

Commissioners discussed the inconsistency of the heat in the Courtroom. It was agreed to relocate a thermostat to the Courtroom in an effort to try and control this heat better.

The County Commission previously made a request to the Union Rescue Squad for their financial records. Commissioner Ashley advised Jonathan Rice, the squad's CPA, is in the process of getting these records to the County Commission. Union is having financial trouble due to the changes in Medicaid reimbursement and has asked the County Commission to consider implementing an ordinance that would require each household and business in the county to pay an annual fee to fund emergency medical services in the county. The County Commission has agreed to appoint a committee of individuals representing all areas of the county for the purpose of making a recommendation to the Commission on how emergency medical services should be provided in the next five and ten years. Commissioners plan to appoint this committee in the near future.

Commissioner Gum reported that he is unable to find a replacement vehicle for the Animal Control Officer with the amount of funding the Commission previously agreed to spend on one.

The County Clerk advised the chairlift in the Courthouse is not working and he has contacted the company that installed it to make the necessary repairs.

The Commission approved two exonerations and three final estate settlements. The County Commission meets on the first Wednesday of the month beginning at 9:00 am and on the third Wednesday beginning at 5:30 pm. To be placed on the Commission's agenda please call 772-3096.