

Monroe Commission Holds February Meeting

The Monroe County Commission met in regular session on February 4th at the Courthouse. Commissioners opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer.

A drawdown request in the amount of \$46,702.00 for engineering costs for the Greenville / Wikel Water Project was approved by Commissioners. Payment of this drawdown will be made from grant funding from the Small Cities Block Grant Program.

Scott Wickline, Manager for the County's Day Report Center, provided Commissioners with an update on the Day Report Program. He said he presently has sixteen individuals who have been sentenced to the program. Wickline said he was in the process of making arrangements for some of these individuals to start picking up trash along the county's highways. Some participants have performed cleaning and painting around the Courthouse as part of their community service requirement. Others have been working with the County's Solid Waste Authority's Recycling Program.

Commissioners voted to appoint Commissioner Shane Ashley to represent the County Commission on the Region One Planning and Development Council and the Workforce Investment Board. Ashley will replace former Commissioner Oliver Porterfield on these two boards. Deputy Joe Galuszek was appointed to the County's Deputy Sheriff's Civil Service Commission.

Jill Fischer, President of the Monroe County Historical Society, met with Commissioners asking them to consider including a \$3,500.00 appropriation for the Historical Society in the county's upcoming 2009-10 budget. Commissioners advised Ms. Fischer that there probably wouldn't be any funds available to appropriate to the Historical Society from the general county fund but if funds should become available, they would certainly consider their request along with all the other funding requests they have on file.

The County Commission voted to reduce the mileage reimbursement rate for county employees who use their personal vehicle for county business. In accordance with a recommendation from the Internal Revenue Service, the rate will be reduced from 58.5 cents per mile to 55 cents per mile.

Donald J. Evans, County Clerk, provided Commissioners with a financial report for the county for the month of January. Evans also reported that the county's legal fees associated with the Mountain America tax appeal have cost county taxpayers close to \$150,000.00. Mountain America, the company that developed the "Walnut Springs" subdivision near Union, appealed the Assessor's tax assessments for property located in this subdivision to the Board of Equalization.

The Board of Equalization upheld the Assessor's tax assessments. Mountain America then appealed the assessment to the Monroe County Circuit Court. The Circuit Court upheld the Assessor and now Mountain America is appealing the Circuit Court's ruling to the WV Supreme Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court has yet to schedule a hearing date. Commissioners agreed to meet with the West Virginia Association of Counties Board of Directors for the purpose of asking for financial assistance to help pay some of these attorney fees since the Supreme Court's ruling could have an adverse effect on every county in the state.

Bruce Power, 911 Director, appeared before Commissioners providing them with an update of activities of the 911 Center. Mr. Power said he has been attending meetings of the West Virginia Search and Rescue Council. Power said he recently attended a meeting held by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and he was advised that the county is now eligible for grant funding from the Division of Homeland Security funding. The County's Office of Emergency Services and the Sheriff's Department will be eligible for to receive these grant funds.

Mr. Power advised Commissioners that Two Way Radio, Inc. officials have told him that they will begin installing the emergency radio communication repeater in Sweet Springs within the next couple of weeks. They confirmed all the necessary equipment has arrived and all paperwork associated with the installation is complete. This repeater will improve emergency radio communications in the Sweet Springs area.

Commissioners authorized Power to purchase an Uninterrupted Power Supply unit for the 911 Center. This unit is utilized when the power goes off and prevents an interruption of power until the emergency generators automatically starts.

Mr. Power said he was also researching information on a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. He said he should have more information on this system next month.

Magistrates Nancy Crews and Kevin Miller appeared before Commissioners requesting permission to prepare a grant application to the WV Court Security Fund. The magistrates said they planned to seek grants funds to purchase metal detectors, security cameras, monitors and an alarm system for the Magistrate's Office. Commissioners authorized the magistrates to proceed with their grant application.

Richard Miller and Steve Sowers, representing the Lindsie Volunteer Fire Department, appeared before Commissioners. Mr. Miller, who is chief of the Lindsie Fire Department, asked Commissioners if they would consider letting the emergency response agencies in the county use the county's John Deere Gator utility vehicle. Miller said this vehicle could be used when responding to calls in mountainous terrain or in inclement weather. He said his department was willing to raise the necessary funds to equip the vehicle with the necessary medical equipment and supplies. In addition, Miller said his department had room to house the vehicle and it would be available to all county agencies as needed.

Commissioners were receptive to this proposal but told Miller and Sowers that they weren't sure if this utility vehicle would do what they needed it to do since it has four wheels, not six. They agreed to let these members take the vehicle to see if it indeed would serve the emergency responder's needs and was powerful enough for mountainous terrain use. The county purchased three of these utility vehicles a few years ago with grant funds from the Division of Homeland Security. One was purchased for the county and the other two were purchased for the Town of Peterstown and Town of Alderson.

The County Commission reviewed the monthly minutes of the Red Sulphur and Gap Mills Public Service Districts and the County's Planning Commission. They also adopted resolutions of support for the Wayside and Red Sulphur Community Centers.. These two organizations are seeking grant funding from the Governor Joe Manchin's Community Participation Program. Commissioners adopted an additional resolution supporting the "West Virginia Campaign for a Healthy Future" and health care reform resolution in the upcoming year.

The County Clerk advised Commissioners that Time Warner Cable has sold their cable service in Monroe County to Windjammer Cable. The Clerk said customers served by this cable system have told him that they received notice that Windjammer Cable was purchasing the system from Time Warner. A couple weeks later, customers received a notice from Windjammer advising customers they planned to suspend this cable system effective February 17th, leaving these customers without cable service.

The Clerk said he was able to speak to a representative of Windjammer Cable, whose corporate office is in Florida, and she confirmed that Windjammer has recently purchased numerous cable systems from Time Warner throughout the country and they were eliminating many of the smaller cable services. The Commission approved a request from the Clerk that the County Commission send a letter to Suddenlink Communications asking if they would consider expanding their service to serve the customers who were losing their cable service.

The County Commission received three bids to install air conditioning on the main floor of the Courthouse and to replace the roof top air conditioning unit on the record room. They were as follows; Childers Enterprises in the amount of \$60,000.00, Dougherty Company in the amount of \$115,000.00 and Total Tech, Inc. in the amount of \$47,225. Commissioners unanimously agreed to award the bid to Total Tech, Inc. from Renick, WV. The Courthouse presently has no air conditioning except some offices have individual window units. The rooftop unit on the record room is almost thirty years old and is presently inoperable.

Total Tech's proposal calls for each office on the main floor of the Courthouse to have individual units (not window units) as well as individual controls. The units being installed will also provide heat. In an effort to preserve the historic nature of the Courthouse, any and all exterior units will be placed on the roof of the record room and all interior duct work will be hidden. The grant was written by Donald J. Evans, County Clerk, with the assistance from Region One Planning and Development Council. The project is being funded from a grant from the West Virginia Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority with a twenty percent match from the county.

After hearing a proposal from 911 officials a couple months ago to change the name of the "Second Creek" road for 911 mapping and addressing purposes, Commissioners agreed to name the road, beginning at the intersection of Rt. 219 and what is now known as the "Second Creek" road to the intersection of what is now known as the "Rayburn Draft" road and the "Hillsdale" road as "Second Creek" road.

A budget workshop meeting was scheduled for March 3rd at 9:00 am. Commissioners also reviewed a letter from the WV Division of Criminal Justice Services. The division was providing notice that there are grant funds presently available for the Sheriff's Department and the Prosecuting Attorney's Office. The Clerk said he has provided copies of the letter to the Sheriff and Prosecuting Attorney.

Two estate matters were addressed and several budget revisions were approved. Nine estate final settlements were presented and approved.

Commissioners adjourned at 5:05 pm and will meet again in regular session on March 4th at 9:00 am at the Courthouse.