

County Commission Holds March Meeting

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

Bruce Power, 911 Director, appeared before Commissioners and provided an update of the activities of the 911 Center. Mr. Power reported that Tammy Fox, a 911 dispatcher, has completed the "Introduction to the Incident Command System" course. Power said he planned to have all dispatchers take this course.

He said the 911 mapping and addressing program was going very well and he had one team working in the northern end of the county and a second team working in the southern portion of the county. Power said he recently viewed two demonstrations of a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System. He also said he was researching the requirements for a WEAPONS system. This system would allow 911 dispatchers to conduct license checks and to inquire if someone is wanted on an outstanding warrant or if they have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The county presently has an agreement with Greenbrier County to provide these services.

Power said that officials from Two Way Radio, Inc. have advised him that they are running behind schedule and the installation of the emergency radio communications repeater should be installed in Sweet Springs during the first two weeks of March. He also reported that the new Uninterrupted Power Supply has been installed in the 911 Center.

Commissioners authorized Power to prepare a supplement to the County's Employee Handbook for employees of the 911 Center. This supplement is necessary because the job duties and responsibilities of 911 employees differ from those of employees of the Courthouse. Commissioners asked Mr. Power to have a draft of the supplement ready for them to review at their April meeting.

Commissioners prepared letters of support for the Monroe Historical Society to assist them in obtaining the necessary funds to make renovations to the Old Baptist Church in Union.

A complaint about dogs running at large in the Town of Peterstown was discussed. County policy states that the only dogs that can be picked up by the Animal Control Officer are ones that are deemed to be vicious. Commissioners agreed to ask the officer to investigate this complaint and try to locate the owners of the dogs.

Commissioners prepared a list of projects that they plan to seek funding for from the Small Cities Block Grant Program. These projects are listed in priority order; Greenville / Wikel Water Project, Red Sulphur Water Project, Gap Mills / Moncove Lake Water Project, Installation of Broadband service throughout the entire county, Promotion of Tourism, Law Enforcement, Sinks Grove Water Project, Emergency Services and Animal Control.

The County Commission reviewed a letter from the Union Volunteer Fire Department. The fire department provided notice to the County Commission that they planned to increase the rent for the Magistrate's Office. The county presently rents the top floor of the fire department for \$600.00 per month with the

fire department paying all utilities. The fire department proposed the county continue paying the \$600.00 per month plus utilities or pay \$1,000.00 per month and the fire department would pay the utilities, within reason. Commissioners Pritt and Miller felt the time had come to talk about constructing an annex facility near the Courthouse to house the Magistrates.

They authorized the County Clerk to arrange a meeting with Bob Hazelwood, an engineer with Pentree, Inc. to discuss the county's options about constructing an annex. Commissioners Pritt and Miller made it clear that they supported the fire department and if the county had to continue to pay rent, they would rather pay it to the fire department. Commissioner Pritt and Miller said they had an obligation to consider all options before making a decision to continuing paying rent or constructing a new annex. Commissioner Ashley abstained from voting on this matter since he is a member of the Union Fire Department. The county has been renting office space from the fire department for the Magistrate's Office since 1990. The county also rents the lower floor of the fire department for Family Court. The amount of this rent is \$1,600.00 per month. The county is reimbursed the rent for Family Court from the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Commissioners made the following appointments; Commissioner Joyce Pritt was appointed to the Council on Aging, Lewis Buckland to the Solid Waste Authority, Mary Pearl Compton to the Historic Landmark Commission and Commissioners reappointed Pete Ballard and Debra Dalton to the Historic Landmark Commission.

Dr. Craig Mohler appeared before the County Commission and provided them with an update on the "Rails to Trails" project. Dr. Mohler, who is spearheading this project, reported the initial design of the trail has been completed and the project is moving along well. This project consists of constructing five miles of rail trail for pedestrian / bicycle use in the Potts Valley area of Waiteville. This project is primarily being funded from a grant from the State of West Virginia.

Bill Jesse, director for the Mercer Day Report Program and Scott Wickline, manager for the county's Day Report Center, appeared before Commissioners providing them with an update of the Day Report Center. Mr. Jesse and Mr. Wickline reported that there are presently nineteen individuals assigned to the Day Report Center. Of the nineteen, nine are sentenced to the Day Report Program, five have been sentenced to home confinement and three are on bond release. Those assigned to community service have worked with the Solid Waste Authority's Recycling Program, picked up trash along Route 12, helped install bleachers at the James Monroe baseball field and cleaned and painted at the Courthouse, Magistrate's Office and Prosecuting Attorney's Office.

Mr. Jesse reported that the Day Report Center has saved the county \$131,615.00 in regional jail fees. In addition, the county is authorized to retain a portion of the fee charged when someone is sentenced to home confinement.

Commissioner Ashley said he didn't think the savings to the county, as reported by Mr. Jesse, was accurate. Mr. Jesse said he calculated the savings by taking the information straight from the court dispositions, issued either by the

Magistrate or Circuit Court. He provided an example. If an individual was sentenced to a year in jail and the Magistrate or Circuit Judge suspended the sentence and assigned them to a year to the Day Report Center, Jesse said he took the daily per diem fee charged by the regional jail and multiplied it by 365 days and this amount was the savings to the county.

Commissioner Ashley stated that in Mr. Jesse's example, an individual wouldn't serve the full twelve month sentence if the Magistrate or Judge hadn't suspended it and therefore the savings wouldn't be as much as he calculated. Mr. Jesse said information provided on the court disposition is the only information available to calculate such savings. He said he was unable to say if a Judge or Magistrate would require an individual to serve his or her full sentence and he must use the information available and this information is the court disposition. The county is required to pay \$25,000.00 annually to assist with the operating expenses of the program.

Commissioners held a public hearing on this day. The purpose of the hearing was for the County Commission to hear any public comments on the county's Small Cities Block Grant application seeking funds to extend public water from Colture's Chapel, north of Lindside to Wikel on to Greenville. Commissioners unanimously agreed to submit this application. On another matter related to the Greenville / Wikel Water Project, Commissioners approved a drawdown request in the amount of \$12,694.00. This drawdown is for engineering and administrative cost and expenditures will be paid from a grant from the State of WV.

Commissioners denied a request for funding from the City of Princeton Fire Department. The fire department requested \$5,000.00 from the county to assist them in purchasing a truck that would pull a trailer containing hazmat equipment. The letter said If the county contributed towards the purchase of the truck, the Princeton City Fire Department would respond to Monroe County anytime the county should experience a hazard materials incident. Commissioners also denied a funding request from an organization called Citizens for Coal. This letter stated that the purpose of Citizens for Coal was to educate the public about the importance of coal to our state and our nation.

Representatives from Asssuant Group Health Insurance Company from Parkersburg met with Commissioners and provided them with information on the services offered by their company. The County Commission advised these representatives that they would like for them to prepare the county a quote for group health insurance coverage. The present group health insurance provider for the county, West Virginia Public Employees Insurance Agency, has notified the county that there will be a 12% increase premiums for county employees effective July 1st.

Commissioners reviewed the monthly minutes of the Gap Mills Public Service District and voted to join the National Association of Counties. NACo offers many benefits to counties. They lobby Congress on behalf of county governments and have contracts with several national office supply companies which allow counties to purchase equipment and supplies at a substantial discount. One of the biggest benefits of NACo is their prescription card program.

NACo provides discount prescription cards to county governments for them to distribute to residents of the county at no charge. Residents can present these cards when purchasing a prescription and discounts vary depending on the type of prescription. More information on the prescription card program will be announced in the near future.

The County Commission denied a request from the Solid Waste Authority to use office space in the newly renovated downstairs portion of the Courthouse. Commissioners recently authorized the Sheriff's Department to use one of the offices and the Planning Commission has previously asked for space. The county will need any additional space for the possible expansion of the Day Report Center. Commissioners agreed to reconsider this request if space should become available.

Commissioners discussed a complaint they have received about dogs running loose in the town limits of Peterstown. According to county policy, the Animal Control Officer can only pick up vicious dogs but Commissioners authorized the officer to go to Peterstown and talk to the complainant about the situation and see if the owners of the dogs can be located.

Donald J. Evans, County Clerk, provided Commissioners with a financial report for the county and reminded Commissioners that the annual budget must be submitted to the State Auditor's Office by March 28th.

Evans also reported that he has finalized procedures for the implementation of the Purchasing Card Program, which is administered by the State Auditor's Office. This program allows the county to pay its bills with a purchasing card instead of writing checks. Each quarter, the county receives a 1% cash rebate for all invoices paid with the purchasing card. Instead of writing hundreds of checks a month, the county writes one check to the bank.

Evans reported that in addition to receiving the rebate, the county will save money by not having to write checks. He said it costs approximately \$5.00 to write one check once you figure the cost of the checks, labor and software costs. Another benefit of the program is the fact that the county's vendors will get paid quicker. Evans said he and his staff have been working with the county's vendors and approximately 80% of them are accepting the purchasing card. The accounting feature that comes with the program is another benefit. If the purchasing card is used to pay an invoice at some time early in the day, the accounts receivable / payable clerk and the County Clerk will have a report of such purchase by the end of the day, via their computer. There is no cost or fees associated with the program.

Prosecuting Attorney Justin St. Clair and Assessor Donna Huffman presented their 2009-10 budget requests. They were unable to attend the budget meeting last week.

Commissioners reviewed a letter from Debra Dalton, a member of the Historic Landmark Commission, providing them with a summary of the Landmark's Commission which was held last week at the Courthouse. Other members of this Commission are Pete Ballard, Robert Conte and Anna Lusk and Mary Pearl Compton.

Three estate matters were brought before Commissioners and eight final estate settlements were approved as was four exonerations. The County Commission will meet again in regular session on April 1st.