

County Commission Holds July Meeting

The Monroe County Commission met on July 1st for their regular monthly meeting. President Joyce Pritt opened the meeting followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer.

The County Commission renewed their agreement with the Mercer Day Report Center. The agreement calls for the county to pay the Mercer Day Report Center \$27,500.00 per year, an increase of \$2,500.00 from the previous year. This funding is used to pay Monroe County's Day Report Manager and operational cost of the program. Steve Collins, Regional Executive Director of the Southern Regional Community Criminal Justice Board, told Commissioners that the Board requested \$1.3 million in state funding but was only granted \$660,000.00 for the Day Report Center for this upcoming fiscal year and this is why there was an increase in the county's contribution from last year. Those individuals assigned to home confinement are assessed a daily fee. The county realized approximately \$9,000.00 in these fees during the last fiscal year.

The Day Report Center is a form of alternative sentencing for non-violent offenders created in an effort to eliminate the same individuals from being in the criminal justice system, time and time again. Inmates enrolled in the program are required to submit to random drug testing and perform community service. Some individuals are sentenced to home confinement. They are also given access to a variety of treatment, counseling and job training programs, including assistance in getting their G.E.D. Monroe County presently has nineteen participants in its Day Report Program. The program has proven to be successful thus far and has also helped reduce the county's regional jail bills.

Bruce Power, 911 Director, met with Commissioners and provided them with an update of the activities of the 911 Center. Mr. Power said approximately 75% of the structures in the county have been assigned addresses and the mapping and addressing teams are still on schedule to complete the mapping and addressing project by mid-summer. Power said he was continuing to locate a location in the Waiteville and Moncove Lake areas for the purpose of installing a radio communications repeater. These repeaters will improve radio communications for law enforcement and the emergency service responders in the county. A repeater was recently installed in Sweet Springs in an effort to improve communications in this area of the county. The Commission granted Power permission to travel to Fort Pickett, VA to inspect some travel trailers presently being offered to state and county agencies from the Federal Emergency Management Agency at a reduced price. Mr. Power and the 911 Advisory Board have been discussing the idea of developing a mobile 911 Center to be used in the event the present 911 Center cannot be used in the event of a county emergency or disaster. The County Commission authorized Power to purchase one of these trailers if the condition of the trailer is satisfactory to him. The 911 Center received a total of 4,223 calls for the month of June of which 627 were received on 911 lines.

At the request of the County's Farmland Protection Board, Commissioners adopted three separate resolutions authorizing the Farmland Protection Board to approve and accept three donated permanent conservation easements. They are as follows; R. Warren and Julliet K. Ellison for 509.185 acres in Springfield district, Richard Ettlston, consisting of 112 acres located

in the Sweet Springs district and Robert K. and Jill G. Modlin for 571.72 acres in the Union district.

Effective June 8, 2000, the West Virginia legislature enacted the Voluntary Farmland Protection Act. This act allows a landowner to sell or donate a conservation easement on all or a portion of their property. The easement is a legal agreement a landowner voluntarily places on their property to protect it from future development and to protect its natural resources. The landowner still owns the property, holds the title to the property, and has the right to sell, give or transfer the property. The conservation easement is perpetual. It is recorded with the deed so that all future owners must honor the conservation protections afforded to the property.

The County Commission made the following appointments; Doug Dransfield and Charles Larew to the Farmland Protection Board, Debbie Snead and George Field to the Health Center Board of Trustees, Catherine Abernathy to the Monroe Public Library Board of Trustees, Jill Young to the Mountain Resource and Conservation District Board of Directors and reappointed Robert M. Williams, Sr. to the Board of Directors of the Red Sulphur Public Service District.

Commissioners reviewed the monthly meeting minutes of the Red Sulphur Public Service District and the Monroe Board of Health and heard a presentation from a representative of AFLAC in reference to supplemental insurance coverage available to county employees. The County Commission voted to draft a letter on behalf of C.A.S.E. supporting their efforts in obtaining grant funding from the Homelessness Prevention and Re-paid Housing Program.

The County Clerk advised Commissioners that the balance of the county's unpaid regional jail bill is now \$248,000.00 after Commissioners previously approved a \$100,000.00 payment. The Clerk also reported that the county now owes approximately \$58,000.00 in unpaid legal fees associated with the Mountain America tax appeal after making a payment in the amount of \$60,000.00. The tax appeal matter is now going before the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals but a hearing date has not been scheduled.

The County Clerk advised Commissioners that the deed transferring ownership of Springfield Comprehensive Care Center in Lindside has been recorded. Deputy Joe Galuszek, a member of the Deputy Sheriff's Civil Service Commission, met with Commissioners and provided them with an annual report of the Civil Service Commission.

Commissioners agreed to draft a letter for C.A.S.E. for their efforts in obtaining grant funding for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program.

The County Commission discussed the Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) application recently submitted by the Sheriff. Funding for the JAG is provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Commissioner Ashley reported that the Sheriff Mike Gravely submitted a grant in the amount of approximately \$399,000.00 and recently received notice that the department wasn't awarded any grant funding whatsoever. Ashley said he and the Sheriff had spoken with representatives from the Division of Criminal Justice Services and they advised him that the JAG committee gave funding priority for multi-jurisdictional drug task forces and Prevention Resource Officers. Sheriff Gravely requested funding for three road deputies and new police cruisers. Commissioners stated that they wished JAG administrators had advised the Sheriff as to what their funding priorities were going to be and the grant could have been amended.

Chief Deputy Ken Hedrick met with Commissioners providing them with an update on the hiring of an additional deputy sheriff. The County Commission appropriated funding in the Sheriff's budget for this fiscal year for the purpose of hiring an additional deputy. Deputy Hedrick also expressed the need for an additional cruiser for the new deputy.

Commissioners approved four final estate settlements and seven exonerations. The County Commission will meet again in regular session on August 5th. County Commission press releases are now being posted on the county's website at www.monroecountywv.net.