

Monroe Commission Holds August Meeting

The Monroe County Commission held their regular meeting on August 4, 2010 at the Courthouse. Joyce Pritt, President of the County Commission, opened the meeting followed by the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rebekah Stone, Chief Financial Officer for the Monroe Health Center, met with Commissioners and provided them with a financial report of the Health Center as well as an update on capital improvements being made at the Health Center. Ms. Stone advised Commissioners that Dr. Kent Jameson was returning to practice medicine at the Health Center. Dr. Jameson was previously employed by the Health Center before leaving to practice in another county.

Steve Weir, Executive Director for the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation, appeared before Commissioners to provide them with an update of ongoing economic development projects in the county.

The County Commission adopted resolutions of support for the Monroe Animal League and the Medic One Program in their efforts in obtaining grant funding from the Governor's Community Participation Grant Program.

Rod Graves, Rocky Parsons and Garry Taylor, representing the county's Planning Commission, met with Commissioners to provide them with an update of the activities of the Planning Commission. Mr. Graves said, at the request of the County Commission, the Planning Commission was in the process of amending the Vicious Dog Ordinance. Graves and Parsons were planning a second fact-finding trip to learn more about the gas drilling process. They plan to visit Upshur and Wetzel counties on this trip and have meetings scheduled with both County Commissions and others. A summary of this trip will be provided in this paper at a later date. Graves again expressed the need for office space for the Planning Commission. He said he and Commissioner Ashley had visited the former Board of Education offices and this location may serve the needs of the Planning Commission.

Garry Taylor told Commissioners that the Planning Commission was also in the process of preparing an Improvement Location Permit and reviewing the Floodplain Ordinance recently prepared by the County Commission.

The County Commission approved an agreement entered into between the Town Of Union and the Gap Mills Public Service District. This agreement calls for these two entities to sell water to each other in the event one of the entity's water level should get low from a drought or any other emergency situation.

David Cole and Ginger Gibson, representing Region I Planning & Development Council, met with Commissioners and provided them with an update on the Greenville Water Project. Mr. Cole advised that the Public Service Commission has recently entered an order approving the extension of water from Coulture's Chapel to Greenville. Ms. Gibson said bid solicitations should go out the middle of September and construction should start in January 2011. The project is expected to take one year to complete. The total cost of the project is 4.2 million with all but \$400,000.00 coming from grant funds. This new water system will serve 71 customers in Greenville and 59 customers in the Wikel area.

Mark Betler of Union appeared before Commissioners concerning the legal fees the county incurred while defending a tax assessment appeal from Mountain

America. Mountain America is the company that developed the Walnut Springs development near Union. The county spent almost \$200,000.00 in attorney fees defending this appeal. Betler said he felt it wasn't fair for the taxpayers to pay for these legal fees and Mountain America should be required to pay the fees. Mountain America appealed the Assessor's tax assessment of their property to the Board of Equalization. The Board of Equalization upheld the Assessor's assessments. Mountain America then appealed the matter to the Circuit Court of Monroe County. The Circuit Court upheld the Assessor's assessments. Mountain America officials then appealed the matter to the WV Supreme Court of Appeals. The Court of Appeals also upheld the Assessor's assessments. Mountain American then asked the United States Supreme Court to hear their appeal. The US Supreme Court declined to hear the case. Former Speaker of the House of Delegates Robert "Bob" Kiss and Steve Carl from the firm of Bowles, Rice, McDavid & Love represented Mountain America in this appeal process. The County Commission has authorized their attorney to see if the county has a cause of action against Mountain America and if so, to proceed in an effort to recoup these fees.

The County Commission agreed to pay for the materials necessary to construct an entrance road into the Wayside Community Center. The County Commission owns this property and lets the Wayside community use it for a community center. Visitors to the center previously used a road belonging to Linda McDonald. Ms. McDonald recently provided notice to the County Commission that she no longer wanted such visitors to use her road. Members of the Wayside community will provide the labor and necessary equipment to construct the entrance road.

Commissioners reviewed the monthly meeting minutes of the Gap Mills and Red Sulphur Public Service Districts and reviewed a letter from Marion Shiflet thanking them for naming him the first ever "Distinguished Monroe Countian".

Amy Moloney, Executive Director of the County's Farmland Preservation Board, met with the County Commission for the purpose of providing them with an update on the activities of the board. Ms. Moloney said the Farmland Preservation Board has closed on eight easements resulting in 1,655 acres being protected from development. Of the 1,655 acres, 1,192 acres were donated. She said they presently have three easements pending for a total of 328 acres.

Senator John Shott of Bluefield, who was appointed by Governor Manchin to replace the late Senator Don Caruth, met with the County Commission inquiring about the concerns of county officials and see if there was any way he could help. Senator Shott's district includes Monroe County.

Commissioners conducted a first reading on a proposed Floodplain Ordinance for the county. A second reading will be held at the Commission's September 8th meeting. The County Commission agreed to send a letter to Jim Justice, owner of the Greenbrier Resort, thanking him for bringing the Greenbrier Classic, a Professional Golf Association tournament, to the Greenbrier Resort.

Representatives from the group SaveTheWaterTable appeared before the County Commission relaying their concerns they have with the drilling of gas in the county. SaveTheWaterTable, according to their website, is a group of concerned

individuals-endeavoring to preserve uncontaminated water supply and irreversible damage to the ecosystem.

A drawdown request for the Greenville Water Project, in the amount of \$19,400.72 was approved, as were fourteen exonerations and eight final estate settlements.

The County Commission will meet again in regular session on September 8th at the Courthouse.