

Monroe Commission Holds August Meeting

The Monroe County Commission met in regular session on September 8, 2010 at the Courthouse. This meeting date was changed from September 1st due to Commissioners having to conduct the canvass for the August 28, 2010 Special Primary Election on the regular scheduled meeting date of September 1st. Commission President Joyce Pritt called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and invocation.

Leslie McCarty and Audrey Simpson, representing the Greenbrier River Watershed Association, met with the County Commission and presented them with a poster they designed in an effort to educate the public about the karst topography in the Greenbrier Valley.

Dr. Craig Mohler, Project Coordinator for the Potts Valley Trail Project in Waiteville, appeared before Commissioners and provided them with an update of this project. The Potts Valley Trail is a non-motorized trail designed and constructed for walking and hiking. The trail was constructed on the old railroad bed and is about 4.5 miles long. Dr. Mohler stated that County Commissioner Bill Miller and his personal work crew volunteered their time and installed resting benches along the trail. Mohler said McKenzie Lumber Company of Rich Creek, VA, donated the concrete used to install the benches. He said the work on the lower trailhead was complete but there was a little more work to do on the upper trailhead. Mohler said a ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for October 23, 2010 at 10:30 am and the public is invited to attend. The County Commission thanked Dr. Mohler for all his work on the project. This project was funded by a grant from the State of West Virginia.

The County Commission adopted a proclamation proclaiming October 2010 to be Breast Cancer Awareness month in Monroe County and encouraged all Monroe County women to become aware that they are at risk for developing breast cancer and to discuss screening with their health care provider. The County Commission, along with Dorothy Larew and Shirley Hall hung a wreath at the entrance of the Courthouse in recognition of this designation.

Commissioners reviewed the monthly meeting minutes of the Red Sulphur and Gap Mills Public Service Districts and reviewed a letter from Judy Ellison advising of her resignation as a member of the Planning Commission.

The County Clerk reported that members of the Wayside Community Center have constructed a new entrance road to the Wayside Community Center and the only thing that remains to complete the project is the installation of a culvert. The County Commission owns this property and lets the community of Wayside use it as their community center. Visitors to the center previously used a road belonging to a neighboring property owner but the owner recently provided notice that she no longer wanted anyone to use her road to access the community center.

Bruce Power, 911 Director, met with Commissioners and advised them the new WEAPONS System has been installed in the 911 Center. This system will allow 911 dispatchers to perform license and wanted checks. The county previously had to rely on Greenbrier County to perform such checks. The County

Commission asked the Clerk to prepare a letter of appreciation to Greenbrier County for their assistance for providing these checks over the years. Commissioners thanked Power for all his work on getting this system installed.

Steve Weir, Executive Director of Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Authority and David Cole, Executive Director of Region 1 Planning and Development Council appeared before the County Commission. Mr. Weir and Mr. Cole updated Commissioners on a couple economic development projects they were working on here in the county.

The County Clerk provided Commissioners with a copy of an email he received from Randy Huffman, Director of the WV Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Huffman advised the DEP was concerned about drilling for gas in Monroe County's karst topography and they planned to address the issue. Huffman went on to say that it was his understanding that the company that was planning to drill in Monroe County was not planning to drill through karst topography. Mr. Huffman said the WV Office of Oil and Gas was not inclined at this time to issue any drilling permits that propose drilling through karst.

The County Commission authorized the solicitation of bids for the renovations to the employee's ladies restroom on the main floor of the Courthouse and reviewed expenditures for the Special Primary Election held on August 28th. The County Clerk said the county incurred approximately \$23,000.00 in expenses for conducting this election. The state will reimburse counties for these expenditures.

Commissioners reviewed a letter from Governor Joe Manchin advising the county had been approved for \$90,000.00 in grant funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Grant Program through the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These funds will be used to make energy efficiency improvements at the Courthouse, 911 Center and Prosecuting Attorney's Office. County Clerk Donald J. Evans prepared the seven different grant applications seeking funding for these improvements.

A second and final reading was conducted on a Floodplain Ordinance for the county. No one from the public attended this reading and the ordinance was unanimously adopted by the County Commission. The ordinance will be posted on the county's website at www.monroecountywv.net. The county must have a floodplain ordinance in place so that eligible residents who wish to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program can do so.

Several members of the Planning Commission met with the County Commission to discuss several issues. Chairman Rod Graves reported that he, Rocky Parsons and Ba Rea recently traveled to Upshur and Wetzel counties for the purpose of learning more about the gas drilling process. Mr. Graves gave a brief report on the trip and recommended that the County Commission schedule a public meeting so they could present their findings and a slide show of the drilling sites they visited.

The County Clerk advised Commissioners that the total cost to conduct the August 28, 2010 Special Election was approximately \$23,000.00. The State of West Virginia will reimburse counties for these costs since the Governor called the special election and the Legislature authorized it.

The County Commission approved a request from Sheriff Mike Gravely to purchase two tasers for two Sheriff's Deputies who presently don't have them. The tasers cost about \$1,000.00 each. The Sheriff stated that Deputy Mike Heller, the Prevention Resource Office at James Monroe High School, has begun his new assignment at James Monroe High School. The Sheriff applied for and was approved for a grant from the Division of Criminal Justice Services to assign an officer to the school.

Commissioners reviewed two letters from county residents expressing their opposition to gas drilling in the county, addressed four estate matters, and approved eleven final estate settlements and eighteen exonerations.

The County Commission will meet again in regular session on October 6th at the Courthouse.