

**Penobscot County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes May 18, 2021**

**2335**

**9:00 AM Commissioners Peter Baldacci and Laura Sanborn  
Commissioner Andre Cushing - Absent**

**55°**

**Roll Call -**

Commissioner Baldacci opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. from the Commissioners Chambers with Commissioner Sanborn present.

**Public Comment -**

***Susan D'Alessandro –concerned citizen from Millinocket***

Participant has been attending legislative hearings, work sessions and webinars every day; with the feeling that's really how change happens. There is testimony from people going out of their comfort zone to speak on their own personal situations; along of professionals that work in these fields, and those in law enforcement, whose primary focus is the victims.

Participant went on to say that there are some who need to be incarcerated. However, we need to continue to work on those already in the system, we really need to focus on the kids and their families. We must start supporting families and communities before incarceration becomes the result. I am asking you to please make prevention your top priority, especially rural areas. We have to stop talking and start doing, we have to stop depending on overburdened schools and police. We don't need bigger jails or more jails. We need crisis intervention infrastructure in rural communities.

In our area, there's an amazing group "Katahdin Response Network Coalition". The people involved in community activities actively come from a cross section of social workers, law enforcement, and town councilors. There are many interesting things on the horizon. There are a group of kids in the high school are in the process of arranging for a meeting with Senator Angus King.

Participants states she reports weekly to be a voice for this and request help.

***Janet Drew – resident of York***

Participant echoes everything Susan D'Alessandro said and she, too, is involved with the zooms, meeting, learning, testifying, all of it, because this is so important.

Last week I was questioned why I participate in public comment to your county meetings. The reason is we're not just counties, not just state, we're a world that needs things fixed. We can only do our little part. In every county in Maine, Sheriff Morton represents all the counties.

**Public Comment – Continued:**

Which is another reason for me to attend, so I hear what all the county sheriffs are having to say. There're many justifications of why it's important for so many people to be here now.

Participant revisited a letter sent to the Sheriff and Commissioners. Participant indicated that intent was not to attack staff at Penobscot County Jail. When participant speaks of training, it refers to the differences of emergency training from basic training that social workers, nurses, other mental health professionals get.

After last week's meeting, Sheriff Morton testified about the shortages in correctional officer positions; with jail staff working up to 18-hour shifts. These are mandatory shifts. Sheriff testified that there are 14 people that were currently housed were identified as needing mental health intervention, not jail.

The Covid Relief Act monies are in. There was discussion last week's meeting about using money for cameras. Participant feels that the communities would be better served if monies went for training people who are looking for people needing help. Thank you for your time.

**Bob Evans – WLBZ News**

Participant questioned if Treasurer Hiatt's issue would be addressed today and how that was going to be handled?

Commissioner Baldacci responded that there will be an executive session to discuss it. "Certainly, the allegations we take seriously. But at this point, Treasurer Hiatt is contesting those. So, at this point, we're going to let the process work. And if there's any decisions to be made, we'll make them at the appropriate time."

**Solid Waste Bid Opening:**

One bid was received by the appropriate time and date:

- The only bid received was from our current contractor, Danny Ireland.
- This bid is for solid waste collection, operation and maintenance for Northern UT. (Kingman, Prentiss, and Mattamiscontis)
- This is a three-year bid with two optional years.
- Our current contract expires on June 30.

**Solid Waste Bid Opening - Continued:**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Bid Price</b>
FY22	\$42,900
FY23	\$42,900
FY24	\$42,900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$128,700</b>
FY25	\$44,900
FY26	\$44,900

- Commissioner Sanborn moved to take the bids under advisement. Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 2-0.

**UT Update –**

Director Shaw Weeks reported that he will submit a letter for the nomination of Peter Pray to LUPC (Land Use Planning Commission). Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to approve nomination of Peter Pray. Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed. 2-0.

**PRCC Update -**

Director Chris Lavoie reported the following:

- All staffing is back working after the COVID outbreak earlier in the month.
- During the outbreak, PRCC had stopped taking the old equipment/radio consoles out. RCM is back working upstairs today and cleaning up all the wiring on the fourth floor and inside the actual desks in the dispatch center.
- Over the past couple of weeks, there have been some radio issues that we've had in Patten, Millinocket, Hampden and Orono. We worked with RCM to at least get those sites up and running and somewhat fixed. We're still working with them on the Hampden site, since that's private owned, the town of Hampden owns their own equipment. RCM has been connected to Hampden, so that they can work on getting something worked out to get their problems fixed.
- When RCM went to Patten, Millinocket and Lincoln with Josh, they were quite concerned when they got the Patten. A tower was found severely twisted, and not in the best of shape. We sent pictures to a Canadian Pacific, that called the engineers. Someone should be getting up there sometime within the next couple of days to assess

**PRCC Update – Continued:**

the site. This tower is a year-to-year lease with Canadian Pacific.

- The past three Saturdays, we've had Bangor Fire here training. They've toured the building, to the fourth floor and up on the roof. Since some of the newer employees have never toured this building, it's good to get them inside to familiarize themselves with the building.
- Next Tuesday, Josh and I will be traveling to Somerset County for the MECCA (Maine Emergency County Communications Association) meeting. The topic of discussions will be legislative updates and some things that are happening around the state.
- The EFD (Emergency Fire Dispatch) bill was voted on not to pass. We have a need for emergency fire dispatch protocols; those are going to stay. The one bill that we had talked about where they were going to require 9-1-1 centers to hire social workers inside the dispatch center, that one has been taken down.
- Director Lavoie was voted in to take a seat on the regional board of director with NENA.
- Members of the State NENA group have decided to cancel the 2021 conference and focus on the Fall 2022 conference.
- There's a certification through NENA called EMP (Emergency Number Professional). It's a very highly sought certification, but difficult to obtain. There's only six right now in the state of Maine. Two of them work at 9-1-1 PSCAPS with the rest of them vendors. It's a very big professional development piece in 9-1-1, especially as you progress throughout your career. I'm proud to say that we have five people that have dedicated the next year to doing the study groups and testing to get that certification.
- We held promotional interviews for the pending open supervisor position for Liz Ryan when she retires in July. I want to thank publicly Assistant Chief Cody Sullivan and Chief Scott Bragdon, who assisted us in the interviews.

**DA's Update**

District Attorney Marianne Lynch reported the following:

- DA Lynch introduced ADA Mark Rucci who will be in charge while on vacation for a couple week.
- Presented for signature were the following criminal forfeitures:
  - State vs Corey Pelkey in the forfeiture amount of 15% of \$7,490 to the DA's Office.
  - State vs Amanda DiPietro in the forfeiture amount of 15% of \$4,300 to the DA's Office.
  - State vs Eliza Berberian in the forfeiture amount of 15% of \$1,220 to the DA's Office.

DA's Update – Continued:

- State vs Eric Reed in the forfeiture amount of 15% of \$4,300 to the DA's Office.
- Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to approve the forfeitures as presented. Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 2-0. Signed.
- Jury trials are resuming the last week of May into the first week of June; July will be in Piscataquis County, then back in Bangor for August.
- We have a student intern starting in our office that some of you are familiar with. Lori Renzullo is a former police officer for Old Town, has worked for MDEA, she went on to law school and externed with us. We are very excited to have her with our department.
- All staff are back working in the office. We have a paperless computer system being transferred. So hopefully in a few years, our paper budget will go down. Everybody has been issued laptops, which is how their cases are going to be handled. Instead of writing up paper complaints, district attorneys will be signed, and they'll be transferred electronically.
- We have a district attorney who's coming to prosecute domestic violence cases. It's part of the VOLCA grant that the attorney general's office is administering for us to pay for the salary. Joanne Lewis will be starting with us on Monday.
- We were very sad at the departure of Steve Burlock. Steve's been with our office for over a decade and really brought a great deal of experience to this office. Steve's been looked on as a mentor to other attorneys.
- DA Lynch commended Sheriff Morton in his diversion program that other counties are looking at. Aroostook County is interested in beginning a diversion program similar to what we do here; particularly the alternative sentencing program. This program is gaining more and more traction throughout the state. We're getting more inquiries about it. And it's really a great credit to the Sheriff in terms of opportunities diversions that he's looking to do to keep people out of out of the jail.
- The mental health docket is going to be beginning in June. This is an experiment that Dr. Bader and Justice Murray have decided to do; it's not going to be a mental health court similar to what other people do. We're really seeing this proliferation of people who have sometimes minor charges with significant mental health issues that are really taking a lot of resources from our local emergency room department. We had an emergency meeting with the local emergency room departments last week. There's no consensus about where people should go and what is the available services inventory. The mental health docket will help sort of move those cases along.
- Commissioner Baldacci feels that one of the things needed is a partnership with Northern Light or St. Joe's that deals with substance abuse, mental health, to be in place. The first step is a location and then staffing by medical people. That is going to be something we'll look at with this rescue funds.

**DA Update – Continued:**

- DA Lynch reported that our partners at Northern Health report a lot of a lot of assaults on health care workers there. Nurses and medical providers are being hurt at our facilities. Like Sheriff Morton says over and over, the jail is not a mental health hospital. Unfortunately, a lot of the hospitals were saying they simply don't have the inventory or people don't need it.

We have been meeting with Dr. Vader, Northern Light, Acadia, Dorothea Dix, and people from the ED. I think to advocate for other resources. Bangor draws a lot of people because we do have access to a lot of other services, but we are ill equipped and just a few people can really take up quite a bit of resources from Bangor Police Department and the sheriff's department, the jail, the hospital. These are very challenging cases.

**EMA Update –**

Director Bradley Nuding presented the following:

- FEMA Mobile Vaccination Unit will be in the City of Old Town from May 22-25 to administer the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Both Director Nuding and Deputy Director Lynn Dwelling will be there for the duration to coordinate logistics as needed.
- Change in policy for FEMA public assistance reimbursement eligibility for non-profits, schools, and government entities. They have removed the emergency protective measures caveat and for the County specifically, we can recoup expenses at 100% reimbursement from January 21<sup>st</sup> this year. Deputy Dwelling is working with Administrator Honey and Director Alexander on expense documentation for each department.
- Both Director and Deputy are taking part in the Bangor Airport exercise this Thursday.
- Deputy Dwelling has been working on sending certified mail to the municipalities that have yet to confirm their intent to participate and send us updated mitigation projects. The next meeting will be held May 27<sup>th</sup> at 0900.

Sheriff's Update –

Sheriff Morton presented the following:

- In-house jail population is 185; 23 boarded out to other counties, no federal inmates, county swaps, four (4) inmates for the Department of Corrections and there **198** inmates in Pre-trial Services. Although the number of inmates is high, the charges brought against them are substantial. We're struggling a little bit trying to find facilities that will board out. Some of this comes with the challenge of continuing to use quarantine blocks.
- We had another officer very seriously assaulted this past week that was choked out by an inmate. This shows of the struggle that we're having in a facility that is not adequate for the inmate population, and we are busting at the seams. Not only is the inmate population high, but mental health patients are being forced into the criminal justice system because the state and private mental health systems have failed.
- People have been arrested and brought to jail. And it is incredibly frustrating that we're trying to operate a correctional facility, when we're really treated as a mental health. We have 13 people identified by our mental health providers that absolutely should not be in our facility, because of their mental health. These are those that are in crisis in extreme situations, it's a danger to the other inmates, it's a danger to our staff, and it's a dangerous to those individuals.
- When I asked the state of Maine on the average daily population of each of their state facilities, I was denied access. I was told that I had to file a Freedom of Information, just to get the average daily population of ours to state facilities. There's a lack of transparency and lack of collaboration. Myself, along with other sheriffs who have testified in support of every bill, the whole entire way through with when it comes to increasing mental health services. Yet, when it comes to a simple request on how many people are in those facilities, and what are the budgets for those facilities? I'm asked that question every day about what our facility does, what's our populations? What's the cost? What are you doing to divert? I was told to file a Freedom of Information if I wanted that information; thus far I've only had the response back that we will be in touch with you at some point.
- On the law enforcement side of the house, calls for service are continuing to increase. The severity of a few of those that we had this week were pretty significant.
- I am working with the Town of Stetson on a supplemental law enforcement contract, which is a new one. This is not for a full-time deputy, it's from May to October type of thing and allows us to put concentrated efforts in those communities. The more coverage that we have out there, the less burden that puts on that that zone deputy that has to cover multiple towns.

**Sheriff's Update – Continued:**

- Another PACE program was held this past weekend with 14-15 in attendance. Some of the feedback we hear is that this program was not what we expected. Participants were unaware that they were going to receive important information on housing, jobs, transportation and stress management. It's amazing how small things have such an impact on a person's ability to set and learn and listen. These classes are treated like educational programs where they come in and attend classes during the day, they leave during the evening. We've been able to reduce the cost of those attending.
- Lastly, a huge thank you to Facilities Director Brian MacDonald. He came to the County in a very difficult situation in the maintenance department, and is doing a great job. The building is being salvaged, but there have been some very significant repairs and it's been difficult when the building is full.

**Administration Update –**

Administrator Honey reported on the following:

- Employment within the County:
  - HR Clerical Assistant position went out and will close May 26th
  - DA and Probate Clerical Specialist I positions both have been filled and will start Monday. Both departments are now fully staffed.
  - IT Systems Administrator position has been filled and he too, starts Monday.
- Last week's meeting included:
  - Administrator Honey participated in the PRCC Supervisors promotional interviews.
- Coming up meetings this week include:
  - MCCAM met yesterday; with the topic of conducting a salary study in collaboration with other counties.
  - Testimony for LD 1654 was also discussed. "Act to stabilize state funding for county corrections" was requested from our group and so I'll be putting something together to provide to that group their request.
  - Request for ARP funds was completed last week by Director Alexander. So we're monitoring daily the bank account to see when that will hit as well as the Treasury sites. As of this morning it had not been received in our accounts is still pending on the site, but we will be closely monitoring that.
  - The mask mandates caused some confusion last week. Once we receive further guidance, we are going to be sending out an update. Again, because we have different facilities, we want to make sure that we're clear not only here in the

**Administration Update – Continued:**

public building, but we also have, obviously the jails. So just want to make sure that we're clear when we send out message as to what that means for our employees and our visitors.

- I have the lease agreements to be signed, for NWDB for July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. We're a little behind on that, but we will have that lease signed and then we will execute a new agreement in July.
- We received a request for the commissioners to support LD 227 to conduct a feasibility study for extending passenger rail services from Brunswick to Bangor, and requesting either oral or written testimony is in support of that bill. Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve supporting LD 227. Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 2-0.
- Facilities Director Brian MacDonald has prepared an RFP for the old Y building feasibility study and should be sent out this week.
- Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the warrants as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.
- Payroll Change Notices signed for: Jaime Tibbetts and Laurel Kolenda – hired Full-time; Rebecca Peters – Hired Part-time
- Payroll Warrant to be approved for 05.14.26.2021: \$260,081.30
- A/P Warrant to be approved for 05.14.2021: \$61,075.82
- A/P Warrant to be approved for 05.18.2021: \$96,379.70
- PRCC Bond Warrant for 05.18.2021: \$50,000.00
- UT Warrant to be approved for: NONE
- UT TIF Warrant to be approved for: NONE

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:02 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Director Lavoie and Administrator Honey. Session ended at 10:20 a.m.

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:21 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Treasurer Hiatt and Administrator Honey. Session ended at 10:40 a.m.

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:41 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners and Administrator Honey. Session ended at 11:04 a.m.

**Meeting Adjourned-**

Commissioner Sanborn moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m. with no further business on the agenda. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.

**Certified By:**

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Administrator, Erika Honey

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Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman

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Laura J. Sanborn, Commissioner

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ABSENT  
Andre E. Cushing, III, Commissioner