

**Penobscot County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes August 24, 2021** 2348  
**9:00 AM** Commissioners Peter Baldacci & Laura Sanborn 72°  
Commissioner Andre Cushing arrived 9:05 a.m.

**Roll Call -**

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

**Approval of Minutes –**

Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the revised August 10, 2021 meeting minutes to include the addition of a motion made to approve employees in the DA's, Administration, Finance, HR, IT, Probate, Deeds, EMA, UT and those employees who had the ability to and/or worked remotely during this time will be receiving a premium/hazard pay of \$500.

Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 2-0.

Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the August 17, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Baldacci seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 2-0.

**Public Comment –**

Larry Dansinger – Citizen of Bangor

Participant spoke on the Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) provided in the jail and has concerns that after inmates leave the jail there is no support. These individuals could very likely overdose. Participant recommends an anonymous exit interview to find out what the circumstances will be for when they are released.

Participant then spoke on the jail overcrowding issue in which efforts are being made. The ultimate solution would be to reduce to population in the jail, not rearrange space. With some of the American Rescue funds, the Commissioners would be better served to fund health services.

Participant ends stating that he is hopeful that the Commissioners can support and help to facilitate any long-range plans for reducing the number of people in jail.

**Sheriff's Update –**

Sheriff Troy Morton reported the following from the law enforcement side of the house:

- Continued response to suicide attempts and actual suicide

Sheriff's Update – Continued:

- Continued responses to overdose situations and using the overdose outreach response
- Responding to an unusual large amount of traffic complaints
- Two Patrol positions have closed and we have received some really good candidates for the southern position; there is some concern for the northern position
- There are several towns conducting "Old Home Days" along with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Sheriff's Department has been asked to cover those events.
- There is growing frustrations with the Ford cruisers. Last year's delays in taking orders have resulted in not receiving the new vehicles. Because of those delays, we are repairing cars that should have been taken off the road for auction
- There was a flooding situation in the Civil Department that originated from the jail Service Master came in and cleaned the entire side of that building and did a great job
- The electric car has been placed in the Civil Division because of the cost effectiveness
- We are continuing practice with the full-time civil deputies doing the majority of service of papers

Sheriff Morton reported on the corrections side of the house:

- In-house jail population is 184, 66 boarded out to other facilities, no federal inmates, no county swaps and **195** inmates in Pre-trial Services.
- Sheriff along with DA Lynch, Drug Court and Family Court members had an extensive meeting with Maine Pre-Trial Services.
- Department of Corrections conducted their bi-annual inspection reporting again that we are overcrowded
- Sheriff is frustrated after spending 40 minutes interviewed by the Bangor Daily News, that the reporter failed to include information that was pertinent to our overcrowding – judicial system, regional booking, mental health services and DOC are all what impacts the overcrowding at Penobscot County Jail
- A Restoration Center funded by DHHS will be opening up in Augusta sometime in October or November with 12 beds. Sheriff is hopeful that one can be brought to Penobscot County
- Impacting the jail overcrowding is the broken mental health system. We must find beds for those with mental health issues to go to instead of the jail.
- Staffing shortages are statewide, hence why it is difficult to board out additional inmates.
- Another Board of Visitor representative resigned.
- The MAT program has expanded to include the use of methadone. In order to have the methadone treatment, the inmate must be referred by a provider on the outside.

**Sheriff's Update – Continued:**

- Narcan will continue to be provided to those currently on the MAT program upon their release.
- The Justice and mental health grant are in the works with the budgetary part done. The first stakeholders meeting will be this Thursday to decide what direction we go with the justice and mental health \$750K funds over three years. The goal is to provide additional services in the jail and follow up on the outside.

**DA's Update –**

District Attorney Marianne Lynch provided the following information on the overcrowding in the jail:

- DA's office is continuing to meet with Maine Pre-trial. It is the hope to utilize their resources with communication; we want to release people, but we also want to make sure we're getting quality supervision when they're out.
- DA's office has written the court listing all the cases that are ready for pleas, including many felonies.
- Remote regional courts are doing very well. Dispositional conferences on arraignments are caught up.
- Other court issues are the lack of court officers. There are open courtrooms and judges, but are lacking the judicial marshals.
- Sheriff and I had another meeting with mental health personnel reiterating the need for more beds. The jail is not a mental health facility and unfortunately, this is where those violent and mentally ill people land.
- People with complicated medical conditions which are expensive are also being jailed.
- Administrator Honey and DA Lynch will be meeting the Bangor Area Recovery Network and introduce the diversion program to Piscataquis County.

**UT Update –**

Director Shaw Weeks reported the following –

- Before and after images were provided to the Commissioners on the junkyard issue in Greenfield Township in response to last week's request from neighbor Donna Gagne.
  - Director Weeks called DMV Investigator Ron McGowan requesting a follow up at the property.

**UT Update – Continued:**

- Director Weeks is in communication with our attorney Ed Bearor to better understand the process of taking action against these junkyards.
- Commissioner Baldacci recommended that Director Weeks check with the DA's office in who handled the other case to see how to proceed.
- Director Weeks provided FY23 draft budget for discussion.
  - This budget shows FY21 expenses, FY22 approval and FY23 requests
  - This year's surplus was discussed with the Commissioners recommending that Director Weeks get advice from Finance Director Alexander and Administrator Honey
- Deputy Director George Buswell reported the following:
  - The Grand Falls 2.5-mile paving project is finished and came out great
  - Currently putting gravel in some of the roads so that the driveways and roads bring them up to the new pavement level
  - A bid invitation has been sent out for the major gravel project up in Scraggly Lake
  - A letter has been sent out to all the contractors that are plowing for us this year to make sure everybody is starting to get ready to get the sand and salt delivered and put up.
  - We're over halfway through the roadside mowing project for the year. We mowed our landfill part of our perpetual care for our landfill.
  - Deputy Buswell brought up a gate issue on the Lord Brook Road. Our mowing contractor was unable to mow because a resident had an illegal gate on the road. Commissioners are requesting that a letter be sent to the owner to remove the gate in ten days that blocks the last 400 yards on the Lord Brook Road.

**IT Update –**

Director Cliff Warren presented the following:

- The IT department has produced about 20% more tickets this year than last year. Approximately 200 tickets a month.
- Received information from the vendor on the UPS server. We met the need; however, they will only stay up around 30 minutes.

**IT Update – Continued:**

- Research is being done on what we can do in the event of another generator failure. There will be an electrician coming in on Thursday for a site visit to see what UPS power can be provided to provide power for a longer period of time should the generator fail.
- Verizon, T-Mobile and AT&T cellular services have been tested. Commissioners are requesting to come back if any decisions are made in which carrier would be best for the County.

**EMA Update –**

Director Bradley Nuding presented the following:

- Deputy Lynn Dwelley has been working on the public assistance grant to recoup money spent on COVID-19 since January 21. Currently up to about \$46K in reimbursement expenses and about halfway through the application process.
- Deputy Dwelley helped assist organizing the vaccine clinic that was recently held here
- A surplus of our back boards from our mass casualty trailer were distributed to 14 fire departments
- Feedback from a city councilor if the “Penobscot County Mass Casualty” trailer could be renamed
- Continuing on our Emergency Action Plan implementation:
  - Met with Probate and walked their space and talked with the department head on some of the concerns they have and going over their annexes. Judge Faircloth also communicated with us regarding the EAP.
  - Will be meeting with the DA’s Office and Deeds next.
- RCM completed a radio project for our equipment in our office. We were having issues with our infrastructure on the roof of our building with horrible reception. In discussion PRCC allowed us to move our equipment to the fourth floor and using the tower here on this building to increase our range of service that went very well.

**Administration Update –**

Administrator Honey reported on the following:

- Communication:
  - Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s regarding Millinocket Mill developments with new access points were authorized to proceed with installation of visiting points in that area

**Administration Update – Continued:**

- Occupancy licenses addendum for our jail from Maine DOC
- Employment within the County:
  - Assistant Finance Director interviews were completed last Wednesday and a conditional offer of employment was accepted with a tentative start date of next Monday.
- Last week's meetings:
  - VOYA representative was on site last Wednesday
  - Vaccination clinic was held last week with 15 participants
  - Our monthly department head meeting was held last Thursday
  - Continued discussion with the Sheriff's Office to develop immediate and long-term plans regarding the population in the jail and facility needs
  - There was flooding in the Sheriff's administrative offices over the weekend
  - After an impromptu walkthrough in the jail, one area that can be refurbished right now is the break room. A refrigerator has been approved; would like to provide quotes for paint, lockers and counter tops for your approval.
- This week's meetings:
  - Director Alexander just reported FY21-22 jail funding monies have come in at \$2.75M. Last year our distribution formula was 14%, this FY is 15.1%
  - Administrator Honey will be participating in the monthly health and safety meeting this week
  - A PCJ Justice and Mental Health stakeholders meeting will be held this Thursday. We're looking at a larger discussion to be facilitated at the end of September, beginning of October.
- Next week's meetings:
  - Site visits to different locations because we may have to rehouse some of our departments if we're talking about any long-term renovations to the jail.
  - There will be an ARPA roundtable discussion with County Administrators in the State.
  - Administrator Honey will be participating with the Maine PERS plan administrator to discuss the impact and options for our county regarding LD1103.
- Miscellaneous News:
  - Outside light poles have been received and will be installed shortly
  - Discussion on guidance for COVID procedures for the county

**Administration Update – Continued:**

- Currently we are requiring masks right now that masks be worn of all employees and public when entering the building and when in public spaces. The Commissioners are in agreement to keep this policy as is.
  - We are requesting that our employees consider the benefits of vaccinations and we will allow two hours of paid time to get the vaccine.
  - If an employee has travelled then we will offer the ability to work remotely upon return if it is available. Per Maine CDC guidance, at this time there is no requirement for quarantine for domestic travel, however traveling internationally will depend on CDC travel recommendations and will be case by case.
  - Some departments are wondering if the Commissioners would be in support of instituting remote work again. The Commissioners agreed for the request to go to Administrator Honey for review and bring to forth to the Commissioners
- Payroll Change Notices signed for: Linda Alley – Assistant Finance Director; Kevin Varnum and Brandon Dean – Hired Full Time Corrections; Lisa Dwinal, Larry Estes, Tyler Cochran and Mark Domenech – Payroll status changes.
  - Payroll Warrant to be approved for 08.20.2021: \$669,804.49
  - A/P Warrant to be approved for 08.24.2021: \$74,247.40
  - Unorganized Territory Warrant to be approved for: NONE
  - Unorganized Territory TIF Warrant to be approved: NONE
  - Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve the warrants as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.

Executive Session---Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:35 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) Contract Matter. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approved passed 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Administrator Erika Honey and Director Judy Alexander. Session ended at 10:55 a.m.

**Action Item** – None taken

**Meeting Adjourned-**

Commissioner Sanborn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:56 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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Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman

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Laura J. Sanborn, Commissioner

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Andre E. Cushing, III, Commissioner

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Administrator, Erika Honey