

## Minutes

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Harvell, Commissioner Carlton, Commissioner Brann

The meeting was held via: Zoom

**Franklin County Commissioners Meeting**

**September 17, 2024**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Harvell at 3:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

**Audience (Present):** Jim Desjardins, Jake Nichols, Nathan Hiltz, Robert Lightbody, Susan Black, Fenwick Fowler, Sara Bickford, Amanda Simoneau, Heidi Jordan, Margot Joly, Donna Perry, Mt. Blue T.V., Amy Bernard, Tiffany Baker, Jamie Sullivan, and Brenda Bitle.

**Audience (Zoom):** Charlic Woodworth

**APPOINTMENTS: None**

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Clerk's Report - Motion to accept the Clerk's Report: Terry/Bob (3/0)**
- 2. Treasurer's Report – Motion to accept the Treasurer Report: Bob/Lance (2/1) Terry Opposed**
- 3. Open UT Road Bids –** We received a bid from Harris Kubricky, LLC with regard to the grading and shoulder restoration – Reeds Mill Road in the amount of \$208,000, and a bid from Harris Kubricky, LLC with regard to the shoulder grading and ditch restoration – West Freeman Road in the amount of 158,000. **Motion to table upon further review of bids: Lance/Bob (3/0)**
- 4. Parttime Probate Clerk –** Interviews were conducted for the parttime probate position, and the committee felt that Heidi Knight was the best candidate to fill the position pending approval from the Commissioners. The Commissioners questioned the Probate Register, Heidi Jordan, where she was with the training of the new hire hired approximately 5 weeks ago. Heidi stated that the new hire was doing great. She also indicated that it was too early for her to know everything in Probate. She is training her on a topic-by-topic basis and when she is comfortable with one topic, they move onto the next. There is no specific timeframe as to when her training will be complete nor is there is a formal plan for training moving forward as she stated it took her three (3) years to really understand how to do all of the functions of probate. Commissioner Carlton questioned the why the new hire has not been deputized. Heidi indicated that when the new hire was able to do all of the functions of probate, she would be deputized. Heidi indicated that it's a decision each office that has deputies has to make based on the Register's judgment. Commissioner Carlton argued that the new hire was approved and hired on as a Deputy, and in order for the Probate Department to run in the Register's absence, that a Deputy is needed. He also indicated that each employee is on probation for six (6) months, if after six (6) months they don't work out then, they don't work out. Commissioner Carlton is concerned with the fact that Probate cannot run "legally" when the Register is absent without a Deputy. Sue

Black, Register of Deeds, incited that you do not hire a Deputy, you appoint a Deputy. Treasurer, Pam Prodan, indicated that as an elected official she believes it should be left to the elected officers to make the appointment as they see fit as it is a part of their job. Amy Bernard, County Administrator, read Statute Title 30-A § 102 County Commissioners' Authority "The county commissioners have final authority over the operation of all county offices by elected or appointed county officials, except in circumstances for which a County Personnel Board has been established under subchapter VII, article 2 with the powers and duties set forth in that article and in [section 501](#). The county commissioners must act as a board and not on an individual basis in exercising this authority. [PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 104, Pt. A, §3 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 104, Pt. C, §§8, 10 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY PL 1987, c. 737, §§A2,C106 (NEW). PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 104, §§A3,C8,10 (AMD)." In question, the Commissioners were looking for a better understanding as to what it would look like in the Probate office training two people at the same time.

**Motion to table hiring parttime probate clerk for a couple months until the current staff member is up to speed: Bob/Terry (3/0)**

**5. Policy Review –**

a. **Limited Access Policy** – Amy Bernard, County Administrator and Tiffany Baker, HR Director/Deputy Administrator attended the MTCMA Conference in August where the First Amendment Audit was discussed. Members of the public, more specifically, YouTubers, enter public spaces, such as, Municipal Buildings, County Courthouses, Superintendent Office, etc... and test the staff's constitutional rights. If staff reacts to them in an unfavorable manner, they will continue to video the interaction and post it on their website. The County employees attended at training on how to handle interactions if approached by them. Tiffany discussed the need to establish areas that are public and private and have a policy in place that is transparent with the public. **Motion to approve Limited Access Policy: Bob/Lance (No Vote). Motion withdrawn, Motion to table the matter: Terry/Lance (3/0).**

b. **Policy on Artificial Intelligence** – The IT Department attended a conference this past Spring concerning AI use in the government and the risks. Jake Nichols indicated that AI is used to accomplish a number of tasks, however, a lot of the free AI programs are not safe. This policy would prevent the staff from using AI. The County can purchase an AI Program that will protect our information. A risk assessment form would need to be completed and reviewed by IT to make sure it was not malicious. **Motion to approve Policy on Artificial Intelligence: Bob/Terry (3/0).**

**6. Authorize EMA to Apply for a Grant** - Emergency Management Agency is requesting to apply for a grant through the Hazard Mitigation Program (HMGP) to fund the installation of river gauges. Director Amanda Simoneau and Deputy Director Sara Bickford indicated that the project would involve installing two river gauges. One would be located on the Sandy River at the Fairbank's Bridge in Farmington and the other on the South Branch of the Carrabassett River in Carrabassett Valley. The purpose of the gauges would be to monitor the river levels and flow to better prepare for floods. This data is sent to the National Weather Service accurate information to be able to relay resources to areas



that are at risk. The cost of the project is \$151,400. The HMGP would pay \$113,550 (75%) and the County would be responsible for \$37,850 (25%). Amy indicated that she believed that we could apply for TIF funding for up to 50% of the match as the unorganized territories represent 50% of the land in Franklin County. The grant is for three years, including two years of maintenance. **Motion to authorize EMA to apply for grant: Bob/Lance (2/1) Terry opposed.**

7. **Discuss authorizing an official for the USDA Award Documents** – USDA Award for the Emergency Operation Center is underway and should be processed on September 20, 2024. Lance needs to be authorized to sign documents in order to be in compliance with the USDA and are able to move forward with the project. **Motion to allow Lance to sign USDA Award documents: Bob/Terry (3/0).**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

1. **Spirit of America Award** – Bruce Flaherty would like the County to participate in the Spirit of America Award. Commission Carlton was in favor of participating. Commissioner Brann was also in favor of participating, however, his concern was that the recognition consumed a lot of time at the Commissioner’s meeting. Amy did not disagree that it did take up a lot of time, however, recognizing volunteers throughout the county is never going to be a bad thing to do. **Motion to Participate in the Spirit of America Award: Bob/Lance (3/0)**




**WARRANTS: AP, ARPA, UT, and Payroll – Motion to sign Warrants: Terry/Bob (3/0)**

**Executive Session 1 MRSA 405(6)(A) Personnel Matter: Discussion with Probate Register**

Heidi Jordan waived her right to an executive session. Due to it not only involving her but another employee as well, Amy recommended to the Commissioners that this matter not be discussed in public because the other employee had not been notified. **Motion to table matter pending a conversation with our legal representative: Lance/Bob (3/0)**

**ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 5:05 p.m.: Bob/Terry (3/0)**

**A recording is available for this meeting.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST:  , CLERK