

MINUTES

AROOSTOOK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 2024 – 1:00 PM  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE BUILDING SECOND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM - HOULTON

**Present:**

Paul J. Underwood, Chair, County Commissioner  
Norman L. Fournier, County Commissioner  
William Dobbins, County Commissioner  
Ryan D. Pelletier, County Administrator  
Tammy Pelletier, Operations Assistant  
Erica Pelletier, Chief Deputy  
Steve Pelletier, ARPA Administrator – Zoom  
Leigh Smith, Treasurer  
Dana Cassidy, Tax Abatement Appellant  
Richard Rhoda, Houlton resident  
Penny Thompson, City Manager, Caribou – Zoom  
Meagan Westfall, LUPC – Zoom  
Megan Lamb, LUPC – Zoom  
Kathleen Tomaselli, Bangor Daily News

ART. 1. Commissioner Paul Underwood called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

ART. 2. Pledge of Allegiance.

ART. 3. Commissioner Underwood opened the floor for a public comment period.

Mr. Dana Cassidy addressed the Commissioners to request an extension on his tax abatement appeal. He has been able to secure a certified commercial appraiser to come and assess his property in Caribou. The appraiser will come next Friday and Mr. Cassidy would like to wait until this report is in before any decisions are made. He wishes to put this matter to rest.

Commissioner Underwood advised that they would take his request under advisement and it will be discussed further under Article 8.

ART. 4. **MOTION:**  
Motion by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to approve the agenda with amendments to Article 6 (C): Eagle Lake Sporting Camps Liquor License Renewal – T16R6 and Article 10 (A): To consider the hiring recommendation of Cassandra Arledge as full-time Dispatcher.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

ART. 5. Commissioner Underwood entertained a motion for approval of the June 18, 2024 Commissioners' Meeting minutes.

**MOTION:**

Motion by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to approve the meeting minutes of June 18, 2024.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

ART. 6. The County Commissioners approved and signed the following:

- A) Attendance record.
- B) Bills and warrants.
- C) Liquor license renewal – Eagle Lake Sporting Camps – T16R6.

**MOTION:**

Motion by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to approve the liquor license renewal for Eagle Lake Sporting Camps – T16R6.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

ART. 7. Mr. Richard Rhoda addressed the Commissioners to request that an inscription “The Law is My Freedom” be engraved on the granite risers of the Houlton Superior Court building. Originally, he wanted “The Law is Your Freedom” but thought that might be seen as “preaching to the community”d, so he is updating the quote request to change from “your” to “my” to make it more personal to the community. The quote would be visible from the sidewalk and cars driving by. The quote is meaningful to many in the legal community and he represents a number of Houlton based attorneys and judges who support this request. The group is willing to make a donation to cover the costs, which they have received a quote of \$600 for.

Mr. Ryan Pelletier advised that the front steps on the courthouse were scheduled to be redone and that this could be part of that overall project.

Mr. Rhoda requested a dedication to unveil the inscription on May 1 which is Law Day. Mr. Pelletier indicated that it would be unlikely that the step project would be completed by that day, but that we could still hold a dedication that day with an unveiling of a rendering of the inscription.

Commissioner Fournier inquired where the quote was from. Mr. Rhoda explained it was from an English Philosopher, John Locke and that it was also used by Thomas Jefferson in the Constitution.

Commissioner Underwood indicated that he would like to stay with the original quote “The Law is Your Freedom” to stay with our founding fathers.

**MOTION:**

Motion by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to approve the request for the inscription “The Law is My Freedom” on the granite risers at the Houlton Superior Court building and to accept a donation from Mr. Rhoda to pay for the work needed.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

ART. 8. Mr. Ryan Pelletier presented for consideration the decision in the tax abatement appeal matter of Cassidy Holdings LLC vs. City of Caribou.

Commissioner Fournier advised that the Commissioners have 30 days to make a decision after a hearing. The hearing was held July 8 and closed. The Commissioners cannot accept material after a hearing is closed.

Commissioner Underwood indicated that this request has been ongoing for 3 years and there has been ample time to supply documentation to support his case. There are deadlines that the Commissioners must follow as required to be law.

Mr. Pelletier advised that Mr. Cassidy could use the new appraisal as the basis to appeal to the City for subsequent year tax abatement, but that it cannot be used in this current tax abatement appeal. Mr. Cassidy can come back to the Commissioners if the City denies his abatement requests for years after 2021.

Mr. Cassidy explained that he wants an extension so he can put this to rest once and for all. He believes that with the new assessment from a certified appraiser that it will prove his case. He's paying \$4,000 for the appraisal and wants to stop bleeding money on this process.

Mr. Pelletier advised that he has already been given the opportunity to provide this information and that the hearing is closed. The Commissioners would have to open a new hearing and it would be outside the time requirements necessary. If he does not agree with the decision by the Commissioners, he can appeal to Superior Court.

Mr. Cassidy indicated that the certified appraisal could not be contested and he wants time to get that to the Commissioners. He followed his attorney's advice by appealing to the Commissioners instead of the State Board.

Commissioner Fournier noted that they were provided with over 200 pages of documentation from both Mr. Cassidy's attorney and Mrs. Penny Thompson, City Manager, and that we held a 2-hour hearing. Commissioner Fournier did not see anything that the assessment on Mr. Cassidy's property was wrong and that all info provided shows that the assessment was the same as other similar properties in Caribou and fair. Mr. Cassidy can go to Superior Court if he disagrees. The Commissioners can only rule on 2021 and the City followed the same criteria for his property as it did for others.

Commissioner Underwood agreed and noted that the documentation provided by the City of Caribou was thorough, and comparables provided showed consistency in their assessments.

**MOTION:**

Motion by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to deny the tax abatement appeal request in the matter of Cassidy Holdings, LLC vs. City of Caribou.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

- ART. 9. Mr. Ryan Pelletier presented for consideration guidelines governing Adult Use Cannabis Business Licenses in the Unorganized Territories.

**MOTION:**

Motion by Norman Fournier, seconded by William Dobbins to approve the guidelines governing Adult Use Cannabis Business Licenses.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

- ART. 10. Mrs. Erica Pelletier presented to consideration the sale of a 2008 Chevrolet Impala. The highest bid was from Kenneth Spittle for \$275.

**MOTION:**

Motion by Norman Fournier, seconded by William Dobbins to approve the sale of a 2008 Chevrolet Impala to Kenneth Spittle for \$275.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

- (A) Mrs. Erica Pelletier presented for consideration the hiring recommendation of Cassandra Arledge as full-time dispatcher.

**MOTION:**

Motion by Norman Fournier, seconded by William Dobbins to approve the hiring of Cassandra Arledge as full-time dispatcher.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

- ART. 11. County Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Fournier reported that the Risk Pool is currently undergoing an audit. They are sampling 40 claims to be sure they were paid accordingly. So far everything is good and a report is expected in late fall. Reinsurance renewal will require us to update the value of our buildings and vehicle listings. Renewal quotes will not be available until December and rates are expected to increase. There were 10 claims opened and 20 closed. Total claims January-May was 72 which is 9 more than the same period last year. All files have been sent for the FOAA request by the ACLU.

There are currently 5 states that provide Medicaid for inmates who will be released within 90 days. Maine is working on this waiver as well. Maine Paid Family Leave includes a clause that beginning in 2028 and every subsequent year that increases will be determined by the Department of Labor. The rate is 1% split between employer and employee but we don't know what increases might look like and what kind of cost this will become.

Commissioner Fournier noted the importance of inviting our legislators to our events and meetings as much as we can. Involve new legislators after the election.

Commissioner Fournier would like to work with the MCCA to create legislation for Tax Abatement Appeal hearings for commercial property valued at over \$1 million to always go to the State Board of Property Tax and not to the County Commissioners. Need to find a sponsor and seek guidance from Maine Revenue.

ART. 12. Other Business

Commissioner Dobbins requested that the August 21<sup>st</sup> meeting be moved to a different day due a scheduling conflict. The Commissioners agreed by consensus to move the August meeting to August 20 at 10am to be held in Caribou and have September's meeting be held in Fort Kent.

ART. 13. Adjournment.

**MOTION:**

A motion was made by William Dobbins, seconded by Norman Fournier to adjourn the meeting at 1:59 pm.

**VOTE:**

Motion voted on and passed.

ATTEST: A True Copy  
of Commissioners' Meeting

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Ryan D. Pelletier  
County Administrator

AROOSTOOK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DATE: August 20, 2024