



Cumberland County

Board of Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Final

142 Federal St
Portland, ME 04101

The Board meets on the second Monday of each month at 5:30pm in the Peter Feeney Room unless otherwise noted.

Monday, November 18, 2024

5:30 PM

**Feeney Conference Room, County
Courthouse, 205 Newbury St,
Portland ME 04101**

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Commissioners met for their regularly scheduled meeting at the Cumberland County Courthouse in the Peter Feeney Conference Room, the meeting was called to Order by Chair James Cloutier at 5:29 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Present: 5 - Commissioner Neil Jamieson, Commissioner Susan Witonis, Vice Chair Stephen Gorden, Commissioner Patricia Smith, and Chair James Cloutier

County Commissioner Elect:

Jean-Marie Katerina, District 1 Commissioner 2025
Tom Tyler, District 2 Commissioner 2025

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

[CD 24-024](#) Approval of the minutes, October 15, 2024, meeting of the Board of Commissioners

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, that this Minutes Report be APPROVED. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

INFORMATIONAL REPORT/PRESENTATIONS

[CD 24-025](#) Regional Communications 2024 Newsletter, 3rd and 4th Quarter

This Report was RECEIVED AND FILED.

[CD 24-026](#) Direct and thereby authorize action steps for Cumberland County staff to undertake based on recommendations of the Lakes Region Homeless Needs Study.

Jeff Levine was introduced by County Manager Gailey for his followup report regarding the next steps on the Lakes Region Homelessness Study. The recommendations are based on the recommendations of potential sites.

One of the challenges of studying an area like the Lakes region, it's not as easy

to determine who is either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless because many people are sleeping in places like barns and woods. So the consultants tried their best to outline the data that they have. He summarized the last presentations results, households in these areas would not be able to buy a home in these areas today, this doesn't mean they're not able to afford the home they're in, but if they moved into the area today the housing prices are much higher, at least 60% of the community would not be able to afford the median home in the community today. This is consistent with the State of Maine.

Mr. Levine presented a graph that showed households that are spending more than 30% of their income on rent. He stated that it's not necessarily a good sign and in some of these communities it's very concerning particularly in Standish and Naples where over half of the community renters. He noted that zoning ordinances are an opportunity but in these communities, it's difficult to build housing particularly at the scale that might be needed to drive housing costs down. The consultants also met with Towns looking at their comprehensive plans and met with the public to gather feedback, 26 participants in key interviews, 29 people attended three separate listening sessions and 17 people at the two focus groups. He reiterated that it was hard to get precise numbers because a lot of people are couch surfing or in garages, people may be moving in and out of the area, there was an estimate of at least 30 of people experiencing homelessness in this area but it's probably higher. Many of the population that is experiencing homelessness is reluctant to leave as a result of ties to family in the area.

Specific factors, lack of transportation in this area and the pricing of housing or lack of affordable housing are the two biggest factors of homelessness. There are a lot of resources and services that are available, without those services, homelessness would be a lot worse. One of the barriers is poor cellphone service, that is something that could be provided by a One-Stop-Service-Center. The recommendations are based on the need. The proposed Service Center should include shelter beds that would follow a service Hub model, with proximity to the Lake Regional Explorer bus route to try to resolve transportation issues and access to 302 near existing regional services. Mr. Levine also gave an overview of services that are already incorporated in the new Portland Service Center and are contained in the report. He recommended the creation of an advisory board to connect with other communities and establish formal political connections.

The Siting Analysis was coordinated with Northstar Planning who does a lot of spatial analysis and planning and led by the former Planning Director of Windham, Maine. There were 17 or 18 sites that were big enough and two or three smaller facility sites. Mr. Levine gave an overview of the different zoning for each of the three sites and the potential services that they could support. Mr. Levine proposed some costs based on some assumptions factors based on 30 beds and a single story building for an estimated \$6.5 and \$8 million, based on current construction costs. Operating costs are an estimated \$1 million with the possibility that some or a lot of operations may come from existing services that are consolidated at the Program Center.

The Board of Commissioners thanked Mr. Levine for his presentation. Commissioner Jamieson asked, if the reports had contemplated renovating an

existing building in the Lakes Region?

Mr. Levine responded that they looked at a couple, the community center in Bridgton that's already doing some services, and couple of the others are too small for the proposed center, without new construction but if a site were identified depending on how much work it needs, it could be an option. Commissioner Jamieson added that another possibility would be to partner with somebody else, whether it's a church or Town and build off an existing building. Mr. Levine agreed.

Commissioner Gorden asked about health issues, how would they come into this discussion where people would be located and the problem of transportation to get them to from Health advisors or Health Services? Mr. Levine responded that it's hard to come up with a perfect solution, one of the things the proximity to the hospital site is the proximity to Health Services. The Service Center could offer some very limited health services where somebody would come during the day and provide some basic services and be part of the overall operating costs.

County Manager Gailey added that staff is going to move forward with identifying potential partnerships and using ARPA funds already allocated to start implementing some of these recommendations. There is a possible participation with the Tedford House since they approached the County and were very interested in the report outcome. Discussions will be ongoing over the next months.

This Report was READ INTO THE RECORD.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no comments from the public.

The Board Chair will limit comments to three (3) minutes per speaker.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

[24-101](#) Disposition Fee for the Return of the Cumberland County's 1982 Armored Peacekeeper Vehicle under the 1033 Federal Excess Property Program to the US Military.

The Order was APPROVED.

[24-102](#) Appoint Geoffrey Crain to the County's Board of Assessment Review for a term of 2024-2027.

This Appointment was APPROVED.

[24-103](#) Authorization for the County Manager to Accept the FY2024 Federal Emergency Management Performance Grant Award in the Amount of \$320,218.66 for Cumberland County EMA Operations.

This Order was APPROVED.

[24-104](#) Approval of the Sale of Security Blankets to Other County Jails and Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC)

This Order was APPROVED.

[24-105](#) Amendment of the current Administrative Regulation Appendix F3 to Include Current and Future Grant Funding.

This Order was APPROVED.

[24-112](#) Approval for the County Manager to authorize purchase of a replacement air conditioning system for the Mobile Tactical Command Vehicle using funds from the Byrne Justice Administration Grant in an amount of \$12,328.00

This Order was APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS

[24-106](#) 2024 New Replacement vehicles for LE Patrol Operations

Sheriff Joyce presented the item and explained his Department would like to purchase six vehicles out of General Revenue, three of which are 2024's leftover, the other three are the 2025s, purchasing three on behalf of Standish, and one on behalf of Gray, and one for the SRO which Gray and New Gloucester High School will pay three quarters and the other quarter will be paid by the Town of Gray.

Commissioner Gorden asked why aren't all our vehicles bought out of a single pool but part of the contract cost? He asked Sheriff Joyce to elaborate why communities buy a vehicle for themselves and allot the vehicle just to them. Sheriff Joyce explained that once a municipality, such as Standish, is locked into a patrol contract, they request a certain rotation and pay for patrol vehicles. It's very similar for Gray and Harpswell, the type of vehicle purchased depends on the type of service. Commissioner Gorden summarized that the Town votes at the Town meeting to appropriate the amount of the total of the contract, Sheriff Joyce confirmed that's correct.

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, that the Order be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

- Yes:** 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier
- No:** 0

[24-107](#)

Purchase (1) 2024 Ford F-150 Police responder from MCGovern (MHQ) for \$49,436.60

Sheriff Joyce explained the original vehicle was fairly new and was totaled in a crash in July of 2024 in Brunswick. The Deputy was in Brunswick and responding to backup a Deputy in Harpswell, when he turned around and started to take off, an individual pulled in front of him and he T-boned the car. Luckily nobody was seriously hurt, but it totaled the new pickup truck. The County received \$42,000 for insurance costs, and needs another \$7,000 to replace the vehicle. The Captain had \$7,000 in the budget for the Sheriff's Office making up the difference. Commissioner Smith asked what year the vehicle was, the Sheriff explained that it was 23 or 24, Commissioner Smith asked why new vehicles aren't insured up to their full value? Sheriff Joyce stated that he does not deal with car insurance.

Chair Cloutier asked further questions of the Sheriff about the vehicle purchases.

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, that the Order be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

[24-108](#)

Authorize the County Manager to submit payment to Oak View Group for the 2023/2024 Management Fee Incentive.

The incentive fee is based on the \$700,000 profit for the arena, the highest in the last 25 years. He congratulated the Oak View Staff on behalf of the County and their hard work at the Arena.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Gorden, seconded by Commissioner Smith, that the Order be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

[24-111](#)

Remand the 2025/2026 Manager's Proposed Budget to the Finance Committee for further review and recommendation.

Fixed expenses have increased and staff has tried their best to offset some of those increases.

Increases include a 3% COLA and is inline with other municipalities and Social Security COLA which is 3.25%. Health insurance increased to 11%, the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust increased their rates up a median of 9%, loss ratio was not on the good side of that 9% and the County is experiencing an 11% increase. There are three new positions in this budget, there is no longer the need of funding the tax anticipation note, transition from calendar year to fiscal year has improved cash flow. Capital improvements he is proposing a \$3.9 million Bond for three projects. Non-debt capital is decreased and under \$300,000, using our tax stabilization reserve of \$200,000 established by

Commissioners four years ago, the proposed is a 7.74% tax rate.

Increases include workers comp is up over \$44,000, software providers and subscriptions are over \$140,000, Sheriff's Office body cams and tasers were grant funded for the first two years, and are now over \$66,000, the Risk pool is going up to 15% or just under \$50,000, the Probate office attorney rate increased from \$75 an hour to \$150.

Sheriff's Office vehicles are up over \$100,000, proposing to reinstate 11 jobs at the jail, bring 11 of them back, nine correction offices and two sergeants. The inmate population has been around 220, today it ranges from 360 - 380. Positions include an admin training assistant at the Sheriff's Office. It would be a half year hire starting in July to assist with onboarding and maintain training Patrol and Corrections Officers records. Elimination of Per Diem Patrol Staff which do not meet labor standards, the Civil Division is serving papers and position funding is offset by the fees collected.

A new Fire EMS coordinator's position is being created to spearhead training of firefighter 1 and and firefighter 2 candidates and could offer EMT training, collaborative purchasing agreements, look at Medical Director. Modeled by the Fire and EMS coordinator that the York County

Commissioner Witonis asked if the admin assistant would be a County or Sheriff Department hire, County Manager Gailey stated it would be a Sheriff Department hire. Commissioner Gorden supported the position of a Fire and EMS Coordinator to meet with the current OSHA standards. County Manager Gailey explained that the Fire EMS Coordinator would start in the Executive Office and transition to the Public Health Department.

In the first four months of 2025 about 40 to 45 employees will be moving out of Courthouse building and moving into 27 Northport building, selling parking spots at monthly or hourly rates is an anticipated \$100,000 increase. For the Civil Division a proposed \$140,000 in new revenue, Federal borders is budgeted over \$1.7 million budgeted we're proposing to bring that up to around \$2.3 Million. Communications contracts are up just under \$82,000, probate fees up \$75,000 and went over remaining revenues.

Three budgets that get Blended all together the the county expenses which is the general fund budget, the jail expenses are from the jail budget, the Cross Insurance Arena and the county general fund budget is up over \$2.2 million. The Jail is up over \$2.1 million and the Cross Insurance Arena is down \$54,000, but total expenditures equals \$4.3 million or 6.22% increase.

Jail operation of just over \$1.2 million or 8%. He commented that that 8% exceeds the State Statute of 4%. Commissioner Gorden commented that for the past two years jails have been flat funded and that means that the counties have had to absorb State mandated costs which should hopefully be changed with new legislation.

Together, three budgets are just over \$3 million and needs from taxes are

7.74%. County Manager Gailey highlighted other county expenses.

The Jail roof needs to be redone, every time it's under the general obligation Bond, the county has something more dire that comes up. Last summer when we did a general obligation Bond, it included the jail roof and the door locking system at the jail. The door locking system came in significantly higher than originally estimated under that General obligation Bond. So the county canceled the jail roof to fund the locking system as the Locking System was a little bit more important than the jail roof at the time. The jail roof is at \$2.5 million, it is the third or fourth time it's been in the budget over my eight years, but it's at its end of lifespan.

Garage Renovations, based on an assessment two years ago, the current garage project is entering it's second phase to preserve that garage. A project that would be started next summer or the following spring, the courthouse Windows which are inefficient.

We negotiated with the state about three years ago a new contract for this lease space, two demands for Capital Improvements. The first was a new HVAC system and controls which we are currently undergoing and the Commissioners have approved the contract for that to take place. The second is these windows, they're sharing the cost of the HVAC and the windows, but this General obligation bond has \$800,000 for this Court side of the building's windows the County will have to come back for the other side in the future.

In summary, the slide presented the County's historical tax rates going back to 2018 and that the proposed 7.74% tax rate is not the norm. He reminded the Board that the Finance Committee meets tomorrow night at 5pm. The goal is to complete the budget process in February to present to the municipalities

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, that the Order be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

Public Affairs Director Travis Kennedy shared the process and development of the Fire and EMS Regional Coordinator. The model was based off of York County and is anticipated to be very helpful for the region.

HR Director Amy Jennings shared that union contracts are currently being negotiated and renewed. Her department is also working to finalize the new Maine Paid Family Medical Leave act and plans to notify staff about when it will be implemented and how it will impact their paycheck.

Finance Director Theresa Grover shared that her office has been revamping their software so that data can be better analyzed and streamline their payroll process. The county is transitioning of county credit cards to Machias Savings Bank which has digitized receipts and does not have interest or late fees like the current county credit card does.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTY MANAGER

County Manager Gailey noted that he was convening a Board of Assessment Review (BAR) meeting as the county has recieved two Property Tax Appeals and the BAR will need to meet in 60 days from the date of submission to deliberate. Deputy Manager Kimball has finalized furniture selection for 27 Northport.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Jamieson congratulated Scarborough boys cross country for winning the state championship a couple weeks ago, he extended his congratulations to all of the competitors out there for having a successful season. He wished the public a Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Smith extended congratulations to the Commissioner elect and stated she was looking forward to working with them. She noted that they were both very qualified and excited to have them join the team.

Commissioner Gorden noted that it's Thanksgiving time and it's time to bring the family together and sit down and talk and find out what's going on for the year or you can help one another or just enjoy.

Chair Cloutier stated that he agreed with Commissioner Gordon's comments regarding the current jail funding situation and pointed to the County Manager's budget presentation which reflected a substantial portion was related to the jail operations. Despite Federal Funding from Federal inmate contracts, there are ongoing and increasing responsibilities for Jail administration and a gap of funding. Despite the hard work on the budget, there had been a longstanding overreliance by the Maine government on property tax and that's probably going to happen again.

Chair Cloutier recognized Commissioners Neil Jamieson and Susan Witonis for their service of 12 years to Cumberland County. He thanked Commissioner Jamieson for his involvement with the Civic Center and Commissioner Witonis for her advocacy of Lakes Region issues. Chair Cloutier welcomed the two new commissioners that begin their terms in January 1, 2025.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The 2025 elected Cumberland County Commissioners, District 1 Commissioner Jean-Marie and District 2 Commissioner Tyler, were present during both executive sessions.

[24-109](#)

Authorization for the County Commissioners to enter into Executive Session under 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(D) for the opportunity to discuss contract negotiations with the Cumberland County National Corrections Employees Union (NCEU) and Board of Commissioners.

Time Into Executive Session: 7:10 pm

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Vice Chair Gorden, that the Executive Session be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

- Yes:** 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier
- No:** 0

Time Out of Executive Session: 9:18 pm

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Commissioner Smith, that the Executive Session be CONCLUDED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

[24-110](#)

Authorization for the County Commissioners to enter into Executive Session under 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(D) for the discussion of Legal Rights and Duties.

Time Into Executive Session: 7:10 pm

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Commissioner Smith, that the Executive Session be APPROVED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

Time Out of Executive Session: 9:18 pm

A motion was made by Commissioner Jamieson, seconded by Commissioner Smith, that the Executive Session be CONCLUDED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Jamieson, Commissioner Witonis, Vice Chair Gorden, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Cloutier

No: 0

Next Meeting: Monday, December 9, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Susan Witonis, seconded by Patricia Smith, to ADJOURN the meeting at 9:19 pm. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.