

MAY 12, 2015 MINUTES
Formally approved June 9, 2015 meeting

FULL BOARD PRESENT; Also present: Susan Kauwell, Prothonotary; Linda Weaver, Register & Recorder; Walt Peters, EMA Director; Mike Kuziak, Dan Hartman, Ken Holdren Frank Dombroski, Eric McDonnell, Lloyd Bunch, Larry Brown Sr., Jennifer Wakeman, Barb Kriner, Oren Helbok, Fred Gaffney, Eric Gill, Chad Thomas, Kerry Parkes, Bob Stoudt, Bob Garrett, Shannon Berkey, Dan Knorr, Darla Gill; Karen Blackledge, The Danville News; Chris Krepich, PressEnterprise

Mr. Finn asked those so inclined to rise for a prayer led by Solicitor Robert L. Marks. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison. The meeting was then opened.

Mr. Ward moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Gerst seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Gerst moved to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

General Account Disbursements	\$432,931.28
General Account Receipts	\$2,056,459.25
General Account Checking .15%	\$3,534,747.69
Capital Reserve Fund .10%	\$29,620.18
Operating Reserve .10%	\$77,815.48
General MMA	\$0.00
Total Checking, MMAs	\$3,642,183.35
Act 13 Highway-Bridge .10%	\$87,348.07
Act 44 .12%	\$10,671.52
Act 78 Checking .15%	\$6,145.26
Children and Youth Checking .15%	\$408,158.02
Flood Mitigation .15%	\$1,839.45
Hazardous Material Account Checking .15%	\$18,317.75
Human & Community Services Checking .15%	\$56,290.23
Improvement Fund Checking .15%	\$10,111.96
Liquid Fuels Checking .15%	\$264,454.85
Medical Assistance Transportation .15%	\$39,062.29
Offender Supervision Account Checking .15%	\$34,084.56
Storm Water Ordinance Escrow	\$31,298.55
Transit Fund Account Checking .15%	\$60,262.22
Wireless 911 .15%	\$212,385.45

Mr. Finn called for public comment. There was none.

Mr. Finn introduced Mr. Stoudt, who provided an update on efforts by County Commissioners and MARC to keep the PPL Montour Preserve open. Mr. Stoudt said despite months of negotiations with PPL, the company has given official word that unless MARC is able to commit to managing the facilities and grounds by June 1, the preserve will be closed to all but “passive” recreation such as hiking, biking, fishing and canoeing. The Education Center would remain open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., but picnic pavilions and restroom facilities would be removed, recreational facilities within the preserve such as the fossil pit closed and the boat launch area gated and closed to vehicles. Plant Manager John Weeks, in a letter, stated the priority is to keep the Montour plant competitive, so operating costs must be reduced. Mr. Stoudt said he estimated the price tag to keep the facility fully open for a year would be \$100,000.00, so he is attempting to work with major employers, school districts and community foundations to raise the money by the June 1 deadline.

Mr. Finn said should fund-raising efforts be successful, it would basically be a one-year patch. He noted that PPL had the opportunity to keep the preserve fully open and keep goodwill in Montour County, but chose not to do that. He said PPL is still operating here yet all its money and charity are going to the Lehigh Valley.

Mr. Gerst chided the corporation for its “scorched earth” policy, saying PPL “polluted us and is now leaving us.” The facility is a jewel, and not just for Montour County residents, but many people in many counties, he said.

Mr. Ward said 150,000 visitors come to the preserve each year, and that outreach to the Commonwealth, universities and other counties will be made to “make that gem stay a gem.” Mr. Ward said he would “love to see the preserve remain open, but jobs are more important. Maintaining employment is a big key in this.”

Mr. Holdren said he would personally pledge \$10,000.00 to get the fund-raising off the ground.

Mr. Helbok requested \$5,000.00 in funding for the Destination Blues 2016 festival, stating this is the festival’s last monetary request as organizers will solicit outside sponsors in the future. Mr. Ward said a decision would be made by the next board meeting.

The Board entertained questions from first responders concerning the proposed merger of Montour and Columbia Counties’ 911 Centers. Mahoning Township Police Chief Chad Thomas had several questions, among them whether calls for Riverside Borough and Rush Township would remain with Montour, as they currently are. Mr. Finn said that won’t change with the merger, unless Northumberland County doesn’t want to continue the practice.

Danville Borough Police Chief Eric Gill commented Montour’s 911 Center is a valuable asset, and trusts the County’s elected leaders to make sure everything is done right so the merged center will be capable of handling a wide-spread problem.

Mr. Ward said economics dictated the move. The Board’s first responsibility is to taxpayers, and continuing to stand alone would be an unbelievable burden on taxpayers.

Mr. Finn said locally, counties spent \$2.5 million last year to operate 911 centers. That amount is over and above the phone fees counties receive, which is capped at \$1.50 per phone and has been for many years. With fewer and fewer land lines, those fees are at a trickle. Legislation to raise fees to \$2.00 would have likely been sufficient to keep centers running, but legislators lowered the proposed increase to \$1.65, and are now talking about not even doing that.

Mr. Finn also said he wanted to reiterate that the merger is not a takeover by Columbia of Montour operations; it will be a true merger with equal representation by both counties on the governing bodies.

Mrs. Gill asked how the County would ensure the composition of the board would not change in the future. Mr. Finn said whatever form the governance takes would be set by an ordinance as an authority, commission or joinder board.

Mr. Finn also pointed out that the emergency management side of operations would remain separate and stay in the County, so Montour will continue to have its own EMA coordinator and an emergency operations center.

The Board assured those in attendance that as talks between the two counties progress, more meetings will be held to keep staff, first responders and the public updated.

There was no old business.

Under new business, right-of-way agreement requests by PPL and Verizon regarding work along Woodbine Lane died for lack of a motion.

Mr. Gerst moved to promote Amanda Schultz to Caseworker III. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Gerst moved to approve the hiring of Coty Bordner as a part-time Correctional Officer at an hourly rate of \$11.62 per hour effective April 5. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Gest moved to approve a request by Linda Hendricks, Transit Driver, for Family Medical Leave Act, effective April 30. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Gerst moved to approve the resignation of Bradford Bason as Mahoning I Judge of Elections. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Ward moved to approve a proclamation designation March 17 to 23 as Emergency Medical Services Week in Montour County. Mr. Gerst seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Ward moved to approve an agreement with South Jersey Energy to lock in gas prices for a two-year period. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Finn addressed a letter to the editor in the PressEnterprise purporting the County raised taxes 21% in 2010. Nothing could be further from the truth, he said. The County

was forced to raise taxes 7%, and that was only after employee layoffs and wage freezes. The hike was necessitated by a lag in Commonwealth funding, he said. Furthermore, the actually decreased its general fund budget in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. He also pointed out the County has virtually no debt and a fully funded pension.

Mr. Gerst moved to pay the following bills: General Account, \$199,797.66; Children & Youth, \$19,948.34; Transit, \$16,048.31; Liquid Fuels, \$388.75; Act 78, \$43,841.12; Human and Community Service, \$1,047.25. Mr. Ward seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Holly A. Brandon, Chief Clerk