

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Tuesday – January 7, 2017 - 1:00 p.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, January 7, 2014, at 1:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Carol L. Maines, Commissioner District #1 (*arrived at 1:10 p.m.*), Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2 (*arrived at 1:36 p.m.*), and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart; Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, and EMA Director Ray Sisk.

Municipal representation present: Ken McKinley, Rockport Selectman; Bill Chapman, Rockport Selectman; Jay Feyler, Union Town Manager; Donald Burke, Appleton Selectman (*left at 2:43 p.m.*); Tammy Willey, St. George Selectman; Marguerite Cutroi, St. George Selectman; Richard Carver, Owls Head Selectman; Richard C. Bates, Rockport Town Manager (*left at 2:41 p.m.*); Richard Bates, St. George Selectman; Bill Reinhardt, St. George Selectman; Russell Montgomery, St. George Selectman; John Spear, South Thomaston Administrative Assistant; and Jon Duke, Hope Town Administrator (*arrived at 1:20 p.m.*).

Others present: Chris Wolf of the *Pen Bay Pilot*; Juliette Laaka of the *Courier Gazette*; Steve Betts of the *Bangor Daily News*; and Christine Parrish of the Free Press.

Meeting with Knox County Municipalities

Agenda

Tuesday – January 7, 2014 – 1:00 p.m.

- I. Meeting Called to Order**
- II. Efforts that are in place within Knox County and surrounding municipalities/counties**
- III. Possible Areas for common sourcing/group purchasing/combined management**
- IV. Action List**
- V. Next Meeting Date and Place**

I. Called to Order:

Commissioner Roger Moody welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 1:08 p.m. He asked the meeting attendees to each introduce themselves.

Commissioner Moody explained that everyone was under an increasing financial squeeze. One of the things that the Commission might be able to do as a County is create a forum where there can be a discussion about what needs the municipalities have and what strategies the municipalities have already developed that might be useful to other municipalities or counties. Commissioner Moody gave everyone a handout with a list of eight possible county/municipal services authorized by state statute. He said that if there was a way in which the County can assist municipal leaders in acting as a forum for subgroups of towns to work together or services that the County can provide by law, the Commission would like to discuss that. He said that the handout was just to assist in everyone's thought process:

Possible County/Municipal Services, As Authorized by State Statute

1. County Law Enforcement (MRSA Title 30-A, Section 456). Examples are
 - a. Detective, investigation, or laboratory services
 - b. Supervision of municipal police officers by a County Sheriff's Office Supervisor (currently being done by Penobscot County for the Town of Hermon).

2. Sheriff's Patrol (MRSA Title 30-A, Section 452). The county commissioners, with the sheriff's agreement, may enter into a contract with a municipality under section 107 to provide specific patrol services by the sheriff's department in return for payment for these services. Knox County currently contracts with Vinalhaven and North Haven for specific patrol services.
3. Provide EMS/Ambulance (Title 30-A, Section 457) to an entire County (omitting only those municipalities who request not to be included), or provided through municipal-county contracts.
4. Economic Development (MRSA Title 30-A, Section 125). Broad statutory authority to build industrial facilities, redevelop existing structures, fund economic development staff and agencies, and issue bonds, if the purpose is to create or preserve new or existing employment.
5. Contracting with municipalities to provide any service (MRSA Title 30-A, Section 107). For example, Cumberland County provides assessing services under a contract to Yarmouth, and offers the same option to all other Cumberland County municipalities.
6. County Services in Unorganized Territories and Plantations (MRSA Title 30-A, Section 7501). Knox County's UT's are Criehaven and the Mussel Ridge Islands. By an adopted Policy, Knox County currently provides 911 addressing services for them.
7. County Boards of Assessment Review. Now offered by Knox County to any County municipality which doesn't have its own Board of Assessment Review.
8. Title 30-A, Section 107 authorizes Counties to contract with municipalities to provide any municipal service. Contracts must be entered-into by the municipality's legislative body (town meeting or City Council)

II. Efforts that are in place within Knox County and surrounding municipalities/counties:

Mutual aid for public works (9 towns have public works departments)

Knox County EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that there was a town that had lost some equipment during a storm and didn't have a way to get new equipment so the County helped put the agreement (MOU) together between Public Works departments so towns could buy supplies together and do consolidated buys. It helps save real money. The County EMA office did that for the Fire, EMS, and Police radios used by the municipal and county agencies. Purchasing together saves hundreds of thousands of dollars. The County acted as buyer agent for the radios and then distributed the equipment to the towns. He suggested that the towns consider buying asphalt together to save money.

Sheriff's Department

The County provides law enforcement for all towns with no police department of their own and serve as backup and assist those who do.

Bids done on behalf of the towns:

- #2 Heating fuel (this is also done for school districts and other non-profit agencies)
- Road Sand
- Road Salt

III. Possible Areas for common sourcing/group purchasing/combined management:

ANIMAL CONTROL

Some points/opinions/concerns raised about animal control for the municipalities in Knox County:

- It can be hard to find someone willing to do the ACO training and become a part-time ACO.

- It would be nice to have an ACO that would be connected to the SO in case he needed backup from a professional agency.
- Rockport may need a new ACO soon because the current one may not be doing it much longer.
- Camden has their own that is one of their own police department.
- Union may have a hard time finding an ACO if the current one leaves.
- It might be worth doing another survey of the towns to see what each town is budgeting for their ACO and what is actually spent.
- Enforcement is an issue and there are legal fees when cases go to court, which means the towns end up spending a lot of money. Maybe it wouldn't have gone to court if the ACO had a law enforcement officer with certain authority already.
- A lot of animal control issues are really a law enforcement issue.
- There's two different types of ACO's where someone thinks of it as their career, and then someone that is working part time as an ACO and part time as a law enforcement officer and as soon as an opening happens in a police department, they quit being an ACO. If we could combine things and make it more of a profession, you could have it be more professional and avoid having things going to court.
- One issue is response time if you have a county-wide ACO.
- Some responses are time critical while some are not.
- Some towns have dog control ordinances. That's going to be an issue if you have a county-wide ACO because each town has different ordinances the ACO would have to know and work with.
- The DA has said he doesn't want to prosecute a civil case so it gets expensive when you have to hire an attorney to do it.
- A part of the money spent is the contract with the animal shelters.
- Is there a possibility of a mediation service that would be in between the town and going to court instead of having to use an attorney and go to court?

Administrator Hart explained that when this subject was researched in 2009, it was discovered that it was cost prohibitive to do it as a County. A subcommittee had been formed to look into it. The towns might get better service, but that doesn't always mean it's going to be cheaper. However, it's been 5 years since then so the County could definitely look at it again. It might be good to involve law enforcement and talk to the sheriff.

COUNTY ATTORNEY AVAILABLE TO MUNICIPALITIES

It was noted that towns already have free access to MMA attorneys.

FIRE DISTRICTS

Commissioner Moody commented that he's had a couple fire chiefs ask if the County could create fire districts to be able to combine and use equipment. The County could mediate and help work that out.

BIDDING OUT PROPANE AS A GROUP

Jon Duke brought up the idea of going out to bid as a group for propane because he said it was a growing heat source. Commissioner Moody asked if there was any interest in doing that. Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- They will charge a minimum quantity fee or an off-day fee for propane
- There has to be a minimum number of gallons delivered.
- No one else mentioned if they thought there was any interest to go out to bid for propane.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER FOR HIGHWAY DESIGN AND ROAD WORK

This topic had came up in the past to see if it would be worth having the County have an engineer on retainer for road projects. Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- A well designed road lasts longer than one that is just paved over.

- It might be worth having someone at least inspect the roads, drainage, culverts, specs on materials, etc. because most towns don't have an engineer on staff to look at the plans and tell you if it's a good idea or not.
- Unless there's enough work for the person, there may just not be enough work to have someone on retainer full-time.
- Any local engineer probably wrote the designs that were used to begin with so they'd just be reviewing their own designs.
- Towns are already spending the money on these bid specs. If we have someone looking at them to see if they're written correctly and helping the road commissioners and public works directors and seeing the specs are being met, we're getting what we're spending our money for.
- The Town of Warren had hired a retired DOT engineer to actually be there when the town was doing its paving and it worked out really well.

ASSESSING - REVALUATIONS

Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- Revaluations are done every 10 years or so and it can get really expensive. If the towns went out to bid for a contract for the services for all towns would there be some savings?
- There might be conflicts because each town has to do it on a year that they need to and if you did it county wide, what if you had 4 towns that need to do it that one year? We would rather value the services ourselves.
- Some towns do use the County's Board of Assessment Review instead of having their own. In towns where the Selectmen are the assessors, it's better to have a board of professionals at the County level for the appeals to go to.
- Assessors agents can be hard to find – there's not that many of them around.
- There are often assessors' agents who do the service for multiple towns. There aren't a lot of people going into assessing, so that can be a concern.
- It was suggested that a list be put together of when towns are planning to do a reval for which years because then maybe the towns would be able to bid that out all together if the revals were spread out enough.
- It was suggested that it might work better if it was only a few towns, but they might still be able to save some money.

Commissioner Moody commented that the County could do a survey to find out when towns last did their reval.

AMBULANCE/EMS SERVICES

Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- In the long run we are going to have to have this regional, but departments tend to be territorial and it may take some time. It will work and be cost effective but towns still have the mindset of wanting their own fire chief and their own equipment.
- Rockport's transition from Camden First Aid to Northeast Health has been a very positive change. Very good response times and they also have brand new equipment.
- Northeast moved one of their ambulances out to Hope Corner so they can respond better to Hope and Lincolnville.
- If was enough interest from enough towns to put a larger bid out, companies like Northeast Health or Delta might be interested enough to submit a proposal. You could assemble 4 or 5 towns and do it under contract.
- St. George has 3 full time paramedics.
- South Thomaston has volunteers.
- St. George sent out surveys to the residents and the people wanted short response times and wanted their ambulance to be local.

WEBSITES / IT SUPPORT

Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- The towns have websites but not all have IT help to upgrade or update their website and keep it professional. People rely on websites for knowledge and information but you don't always have someone on your staff to keep it up to date because they have other responsibilities that often are a higher priority. Why not have a contract with a web designer or IT support?
- Sometimes IT support is something you need help with immediately.
- Many towns have TRIO and not every IT tech can work with TRIO so finding someone who can do that is crucial. It could be extended to include GIS services.
- It be better to contract with an IT company with a variety of staff to handle a variety of needs and when there are problems, that's who the towns would call. Also people need to worry about data backup and TRIO is extremely expensive.
- Office staff should be updating their own web pages to maintain security.
- IT equipment can be purchased fairly cheap through the State purchasing program. Sometimes all you have to do is ask the vendor for the State rate.
- There's also the federal purchasing through GSA, which is what the County does.

NATURAL GAS

Commissioner Maines commented that she wondered if the County should be looking to bring natural gas into the county. Right now it's cheaper than both heating oil and LP gas. Some businesses may come to our towns if they have access to natural gas. Commissioner Moody asked if any of the towns were interested in that.

Bill Chapman suggested that probably some larger businesses like the Samoset and the Pen Bay Medical Center would be interested in that. If the County spoke up with the support of it, the communities might get it done.

SOLAR ENERGY

Marguerite Cutroi asked if anyone had looked into solar energy. Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- If every house had solar panels there would be more energy generated than ever needed to be consumed.
- Some programs exist where they'll give you the roof with the panels on it and you're essentially leasing it and they will pay to upkeep the roof. It works really well for larger buildings.
- Panel pricing has come down every day as technology changes.

SOLID WASTE

Commissioner Moody said that he was waiting for the MCEDD study that will come out by summer. The SW directors in Knox County are participating. One thing they're looking at is finding places for construction waste.

There was a discussion of some of the local places where waste is stored and looking for new places to store it once the other places are full.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Some points/opinions/concerns raised:

- To have a central repository where people are trained at the County with all the resources would be helpful. Should see if there is interest there.
- The towns may not have GA anymore if the current governor is re-elected. There might be an advantage to having it regionalized at the County but some towns might end up paying more. Suggest waiting to see how the state government plays out.
- Accessibility is a problem because some of the people who need the assistance don't have cars.
- Some sort of information resource to reach via telephone when we don't know where to get help from for someone would be good.

- It takes time to sit down with people and find them the assistance they need.
- For the County to handle all GA for all of the towns there would need to be multiple staff to handle the work load.
- 2-1-1 Maine (either via telephone on or the web) is a huge resource for finding any kind of assistance for people. You can either look it up yourself on the website or call them and an operator can help find the information for you.

KNOX REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Administrator Hart let everyone know that the County was having a study done of the KRCC to have its governance looked at, and at some point the County will send letters to the towns asking the select boards or city council to reappoint representatives for the towns to serve on the Dispatch Advisory Committee. There has been low attendance and there's been concern that people who are supposed to be showing up are not, and people who aren't appointed by the towns to be there are the ones coming and voting..

IV. Action List:

Commissioner Moody recapped that some of the topics brought up that could potentially be discussed at future meetings:

- Animal Control Officers
- Bidding
- IT services
- Solid Waste
- General Assistance

He added that the minutes of the meeting would be sent to the towns.

V. Next Meeting Date and Place:

No meeting date or time was set.

VI. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roger Moody. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on February 11, 2014.