

# KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

**Special Meeting**

**Monday – July 16, 2012 - 1:00 p.m.**

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Monday, April 9, 2012, at 1:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Carol L. Maines, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew L. Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards.

Others present: (*see below*).

## **Meeting with Knox County Municipalities – Agenda**

**Monday – July 16, 2012 – 1:00 p.m.**

### **I. Purpose of the Meeting**

Begin a dialogue with Knox County and Knox Municipalities to identify strategies for saving costs and improving service delivery.

### **II. Discussion of MCEDD’s Solid Waste Study Grant – Jeff Kobrock, Executive Dir., Mid-Coast Council of Governments**

### **III. Efforts that are in place within Knox County and surrounding municipalities/counties**

- Bids for Road Sand and Road Salt for winter roads
- Bids for Heating Fuel
- Animal Control inter-local agreements
- Mid-Coast Solid Waste and Tri-County Solid Waste
- Emergency Management Training

### **IV. Possible Areas for common sourcing/group purchasing/combined management**

- Public Works
- Ambulance Services
- Animal Control
- Solid Waste disposal
- Code Enforcement
- Public Safety
- Assessing
- Economic Development
- County-wide Road Engineer

### **V. Action List**

Items to be researched or followed up for the next meeting

### **VI. Next Meeting Date/Time/Place**

### **I. Meeting Called to Order**

Commission Chair Roger Moody called the special meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 1:00 p.m. He asked meeting attendees to introduce themselves:

- Jessica MacDonald Martin – Vinalhaven Selectboard Co-chair
- Marjorie E. Stratton – Vinalhaven Town Manager
- Charleton Ames – Rockport Selectboard
- Patricia Finnigan – Camden Town Manager
- Ed LaFlamme – Warren Selectman
- Martin Cates – Camden Selectboard Chair

- Nancy Colson – Owls Head Selectman
- Jeff Kobrock – Executive Director of Mid-Coast Economic Development District
- William Payson – Cushing Selectman
- Peter Lammert – Thomaston Selectman, Assessor
- John Snow – St. George Selectboard Chair
- Donald Grinnell – Washington Selectman, Knox County EMA Planner
- Jay Feyler – Union Town Manager
- Robert A. Peabody, Jr. – Rockport Town Manager
- Donald Burke – Appleton Selectboard Chair
- John Falla – St. George Town Manager
- Timothy Polky – St. George Fire Chief, Code Enforcement Officer, Plumbing Inspector
- Daniel Davey – Warren Selectman
- Linwood Lothrop – Knox Regional Communications Center Director
- Jeff Northgraves – Knox Regional Airport Manager and South Thomaston Selectman

## **II. Discussion of MCEDD's Solid Waste Study Grant – Jeff Kobrock**

Jeff Kobrock explained that the Mid-Coast Economic Development District is currently doing a solid waste grant in Sagadahoc County. MCEDD is about halfway through that process and expect to be done by the end of the summer. It has been so useful that MCEDD has also applied to do something in the Lincoln, Waldo, Knox Counties. The grants are funded by the US Department of Agriculture. MCEDD can't get the project started until October 1<sup>st</sup> because of the fiscal year. It will probably will be a 12-month project. The purpose of the program is to discover the needs and problems of the area and to find ways to be more efficient. The advisory committee in Sagadahoc was instrumental in driving the process. MCEDD will put together an advisory committee in September or October with representatives from the three counties. It's very important to have all parties involved in the process rather than try to decide what a good group size is, and let the advisory group drive the priorities.

## **III. Efforts that are in place within Knox County and surrounding Municipalities/Counties**

Commissioner Moody explained that the County hadn't really taken on any new responsibilities based on the meetings held in 2009, but having those meetings allowed the towns to discuss common needs and they were able to work some issues out amongst themselves because the opportunity had been provided to discuss things.

County Administrator Hart briefly reviewed a list of efforts already in place in the County:

- Bids for Road Sand and Road Salt (no towns were interested in Liquid Calcium Chloride this year so the County doesn't do that one anymore). The County Administration Office just does the leg work. It's up to the Towns to award the bid for their own purchases.
- Heating fuel – that process has changed. The County used to do more of a bid process but due to changes in the heating fuel industry making the turn-around time very short, the County now calls to see what the price is and locks in as quickly as possible because the price changes so quickly. The county has stayed with Maritime Energy mostly because they have traditionally had the lowest price. Checked with a couple other vendors but there aren't a lot of other fuel dealers in the area. Many vendors don't think it's cost effective for them anyway so their bids, if they bother, aren't competitive. Locked in at \$3.15/gal for FY2012-2013 (July 1 to June 30).
- EMA Training – the County has increased the amount of training offered to the Towns. Will have a much bigger training space in the 301 Park Street facility once the EOC is set up there.
- Mid-Coast Solid Waste and Tri-County Solid Waste, both of which are working well on their own.
- EMA - Cost sharing Mutual Aid Agreements. Nine public works departments developed a working mutual aid agreement so they can assist each other without wasting time, which is particularly

useful when time is a factor, such as during the middle of a snow storm. The town borrowing equipment or labor will just pay for the resources they've used. The public works directors were very grateful to get that in place last fall prior to the snow season.

#### **IV. Possible Areas for Common Sourcing / Group Purchasing / Combined Management**

*Below is a summary of comments made for each topic discussed:*

##### County-wide Meetings with the Legislative Delegation

The Island Coalition invites the legislative delegation four times a year but it might be productive for all of the municipalities to meet with them. It's hard to get the legislators to attend when they are in session. It gives them a chance to review what their focus is and what current legislation is being worked on. Discussed having an initial pre-meeting to see which municipalities are really interested in participating and develop a list of topics/concerns to discuss. There are some key issues that the municipalities have in common and this would be a good forum for letting the legislature know what that the municipalities are concerned about so that the legislative delegation is well informed. Including MMA somehow is also a good idea because the counties need to work better with MMA. It was suggested holding the pre-meeting for the municipalities in October and then have the first meeting with the legislators just after elections in November. It was also suggested that the County could send out a congratulatory letter to the delegation inviting them to the meeting.

##### Grant Writing

Smaller municipalities don't have the time or the expertise to write grants. It was suggested that the County could have a full-time person in EMA providing that service to the communities. Just getting the grants would pay for the person doing the work. Would be a county-paid position and billed out to the towns and the salary would be offset by the money coming in from the towns to cover "administrative costs". Need to develop a billing process. MCEDD can help towns that do not have staff capacity to work with the Community Development Block Grant Program. Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission also does that. Towns could also share resources by doing a cost-share or something else if a planner in one town helps a smaller town with no staff for that function. Maine Municipal Association assists towns in looking for grants and teaches grant writing workshops

##### General Assistance Administration

No town has someone doing GA full-time – the municipal employees doing the work usually wear multiple hats. Having a centralized place to go for help makes sense, especially when you're the one in need of the help. The governor is cutting the number of people eligible to get help from the State so the people losing that assistance are going to be going to their town for help. Having centralized GA would mean information would be all in one place and make it easier to direct the public to other sources of help. Having a standard for the entire County might prevent people from going to another town for help and lying about being denied in the previous town. There would need to be more than one person doing the job if it's a county-wide position, and the staff would need to transportation to the outer towns for when they need to visit people. It was suggested that some possible problems with centralization is that State law requires each town to have its own GA person. It also might be difficult to require people to have to travel from one town to the other to file for assistance. Recent legislation does allow for regional administration of GA, however.

##### Animal Control

The problem is finding someone who is really serious about doing the job and is interested in it. It was suggested looking at total costs for all 18 municipalities and see if it's more cost-effective to have a county-wide department. There would be several people doing it because of the size of the county and you need more than one at a time. When the sub-committee looked at it 3 years ago, it wasn't cost effective to centralize it. Towns contract with animal shelters so there are pros and cons to trying to centralize. In Warren there is a full-time person and an assistant and they are both very busy. You have to have a licensed facility to take the animals to. Washington uses Lincoln County Humane Society (in Edgecomb). ACO's put in a LOT of mileage.

### Code Enforcement

Probably not feasible to have centralized code enforcement when every town of the 18 municipalities has different codes, standards and ordinances. It's difficult to find people with the right expertise and judgment.

### Public Safety (Fire & EMS)

The selectmen from Warren were concerned about the proximity of a rifle range on Route 90 to a dump of 4,000 truck loads of inert (wouldn't cause any pollution) material. The concern was that if it ever catches fire, the disaster would require a lot of assistance from surrounding towns. It could take just one lightning strike to set off a huge fire. The selectmen felt that they could use some help convincing DEP to let them get rid of the material. The biggest threat is that if the fire were to be started somewhere in the middle of the dump, it would be impossible to put the fire out because of the amount of resources it would require. The preference was to truck the material somewhere else and bury it. DEP was supposedly safeguarding the townspeople on this project but ended up not following through. Mid-Coast Solid Waste looked at taking the material about six years ago but the DEP wouldn't let them. It was suggested that it was a good topic for discussing with the legislation and might also tie in with MCEDD's solid waste grant work. If the town takes the material, they own it and not sure if they want to.

It was suggested that the towns could look at seeing what could be done to make it easier for fireman to assist fire departments in towns other than the one they live in. That's part of why towns have mutual aid agreements. There had been some discussion of having "fire districts" at the EMA level (with municipal fire chiefs) but that is still in its initial phase.

### Assessing

It's difficult to find qualified assessors. The County has a Board of Assessment Review that is working well. The Board hears appeals for Towns that do not have their own Board of Assessment Review. It was suggested that municipal leadership come and witness the hearings. The next scheduled hearing is this Friday, July 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. The Board is a very informed group made up of assessors, appraisers, attorneys, and real estate agents. Cumberland County has looked at county-wide assessing and while there seems to be a lot of support for it, it really doesn't seem to be heading towards making the change.

### Solid Waste Disposal

This was mostly discussed during Jeff Kobrock's discussion. The Tri-County and Mid-Coast Solid Waste facilities are working well across town and county lines. It was suggested that removal of the material might be something that MCEDD could assist with. The acronyms MSW (Municipal Solid Waste) and C, D, and D (Construction, Demolition & Disposal) were mentioned.

### County-wide Road Engineer

A Road Engineer could be very helpful with determining estimates for damages to roads after a storm and assist with submitting paperwork. It had been previously discussed having someone on retainer in case a town needed help. It was noted that Maine Local Roads can assist to a certain extent. They don't really design a project but can give advice while you're doing it. They expect you to hire an engineer on your own. If it's a project above \$100,000, you have to have an engineer's stamp on it anyway so you'd already have one working with you. An engineer can save towns a lot of money by teaching better ways of doing things, set standards, and help with design and implementation. It was suggested that since a lot of engineers are grant writers, it might make sense to have a County-wide engineer also doing the grant writing.

### Ambulance Services

Issues from before were problems with billing, finding volunteers, etc. Eventually towns will have to consolidate services but probably aren't ready to make the change. It's a good idea to just keep it in mind so that when regionalization becomes a necessity, the municipalities will be ready once the town folks are ready.

Public Works

There may be some group purchasing that the County can do for the towns since every town uses culverts and cutting edges, machinery (like plow trucks) and some other resources. Some of the older trucks aren't going to meet emissions standards and will need to be fixed or replaced. One possible problem would be that every town has different specs or standards for what they are looking for when purchasing trucks/vehicles/etc. Some municipalities ask for the state bid price when they purchase equipment and save some money that way. There might need to be a centralized person to keep track of everything so towns know who to go with when they need to purchase things. It would probably never work to try to combine public works departments.

**IV. Action List**

1. Schedule a pre-meeting to prepare for meeting with the legislature (in October)
2. Schedule a meeting with the legislature after the elections in November

**V. Next Meeting Date / Time / Place**

Administrator Hart asked if there was a preference of time of day for future meetings. No one time of day seemed to be the best. Today's meeting at 1p.m. seemed to work out okay.

**VI. Adjourn**

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

The meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards  
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on August 14, 2012.**