

Barbour County Commission Meeting

March 21, 2025

9:00am

DAVID STRAIT COMMISSION PRESIDENT, JEDD SCHOLA COMMISSIONER, BOB RICHARDSON COMMISSIONER, LAURIE AUSTIN COUNTY CLERK, SHANA FREY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

H. David Talbott, Samantha Spotloe, Tammy Richardson, Kathryn Carter, Kim Lewis, Dylan Harper, Bob Wilkins, Corey Brandon, Katie Wolpert, Marjorie George, Ira Mayle, Brett Carpenter, Andrew Teter, Aaron Bostel

David Strait called the meeting to order at 9:05am and led the pledge.

On a motion by Bob Richardson, seconded by David Strait, meeting minutes from March 3, 2025 and March 5, 2025 was approved. 2/0 Commissioner Schola gave thanks for moment of silence and prayers for his son, Grant, during the March 3 meeting.

Exonerations were presented.

Final Settlements were presented and approved on a motion by Jedd Schola, seconded by Bob Richardson. 3/0

LORETTA B BOYLES, WILDA RUTH BURNER, THOMAS WADE MATIYASIC, THOMAS LEWIS HADDIX

Sheriff Carpenter requested the purchase of two cruisers and presented quotes for a Dodge Durango and a Dodge Ram from John Jones Automotive and Utilitac. David Strait made a motion to purchase one (1) 2024 Dodge Ram from Utilitac in the amount of \$67,318.82 from Coal Severance funds and a budget revision to be prepared accordingly. 3/0

David Strait made a motion to purchase one (1) 2024 Dodge Ram from Utilitac in the amount of \$67,318.82 from Opioid Settlement funds. 3/0 A cruiser meets an eligible purchase according to the West Virginia First Memorandum of Understanding.

Deputy Barcus provided an animal control report covering mid-January to current. Seven dogs were picked up and returned, two are on criminal hold, one stray, and one puppy sent to Animal Friends. The county shelter is currently housing 32 dogs. He had 65 animal related calls during this period.

The fencing has been installed at the Animal Shelter from the FOHO grant. When weather clears, the kennel floor will be poured.

Shana Frey reported that \$5,000 was awarded from the Department of Agriculture for spay and neutering services. The County Commission will be issuing \$75.00 off vouchers following execution of the grant award.

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Barbour County Ambulance Authority (BCAA) conducted a thorough and structured process for selecting the first EMS Director for the new county-wide ambulance service. Corey Brandon was instrumental in the process and provided an explanation of how the process ensured fairness and transparency.

A total of fifteen applications were received, which were narrowed to eleven candidates for the first round of interviews. The initial interviews were conducted via zoom by a diverse panel of local professionals, structured with predetermined questions and a numerical evaluation.

The top three candidates from the first round of interviews moved on to a seconded, in-person interview with the BCAA Board. After this comprehensive process, BCAA has submitted a letter of recommendation to the County Commission, endorsing Aaron Bostel as the top candidate.

David Strait made a motion to accept BCAA's recommendation to hire Aaron Bostel as the first EMS Director for the Barbour County Ambulance Authority; Bob Richardson seconded. This position will be under the County Commission for the first year; a budget revision is prepared accordingly. 3/0

Additional comments were made regarding the success of the interview process and also allowed time for Mr. Bostel to introduce himself over zoom.

Shane Whitehair, from the Region VII Planning and Development Council, explained how they assist communities with funding searches, navigating the application process, and their role in water extension projects. He estimated that project timelines can range from one to over ten years, depending on factors such as funding sources, programs, community needs, and other variables.

Whitehair also discussed situations where deficiencies in existing water systems may be prioritized over new additions. He noted that funding opportunities may be available for areas that had mining operations prior to 1977 - an avenue he plans to explore further regarding the Hackers Creek area.

Additionally, a discussion was held regarding mapping of current water lines and assets, as well as documenting locations without public water access. Whitehair's recommendation for next steps is to hold conversations with the City of Philippi to understand system's capacity and discuss potential upcoming extension projects.

Katie Wolpert introduced the Visit Mountaineer Country Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), an organization the City of Belington recently began collaborating with. Representatives from the CVB explained the advantages of this partnership and encouraged the County Commission to consider designating Barbour County as an official partner. They emphasized that the CVB does not compete with existing local CVBs, but rather works alongside them. Follow-up discussions will be scheduled to further explore this potential partnership.

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Andrew Teter of West Virginia Emergency Management provided a presentation on IFlow monitoring devices. These devices serve as river gauges for flood observation and warning. Currently, there is no gauge at the Junior Bridge. Corey Brandon and Dylan Harper emphasized the importance of adding more monitoring methods. They requested that the Commission purchase one IFlow device for the Junior Bridge and seek grant funds for additional locations. The Commission approved this request from the County Commission Capital Projects fund on a motion by David Strait, seconded by Jedd Schola. 3/0

The City of Philippi submitted a funding request of \$6,000 to assist with their Summer Concert Series events. On a motion by Bob Richardson; second by David Strait, the request was approved. 3/0

The county commission met with elected officials and reviewed organizational requests over several days and was provided with a synopsis for the proposed 2025-26 estimate. The estimate is using a levy rate of 13.31. The total budget for General County \$5,391,936.00 and \$375,000 for Coal Severance. The proposed budget is largely consistent with the prior year's allocations. Additional funds have been allocated for salary increases to be determined at the discretion of elected officials, as well as an increased insurance stipend to help offset premium increases. Organizational funding levels have remained steady compared to the previous year, with an increase in the allocation for the regional jail and the addition of the first-year salary for the EMS Director position. With no further questions or comments, David Strait made a motion, Jedd Schola seconded, to approve the Levy Estimate as presented. The Levy Estimate will be forwarded to the WV State Auditor's Office for review. 3/0

Laurie Austin presented an in-house budget revision for the Elections Budget. Updating the process of providing materials during elections has achieved significant cost savings. She is reallocating these funds to the salary line item to provide a pay increase to Elections Clerks.

Commissioner Strait opened the floor for public comment in order of the sign-up sheet.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2025 at 5:00pm. A special meeting will be held on April 15, 2025 at 4:00pm.

On a motion by David Strait, seconded by Jedd Schola, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30am. 3/0

David Strait, President

Barbour County
Laurie L. Austin, Clerk
Instrument 283222
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COUNTY COMMISSION MINUTES
Book 28 @ Page 638
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