

Barbour County Commission
Agenda
May 15, 2026 (9:00am)
Barbour County Commission Chambers

The County Commission meeting can be accessed on conference call by:
Dial Number: 304-848-6940 Conference Number: 1315791

1. Approve minutes and corrections
2. Discuss exoneration/estates/settlements/appointments/cancelled orders/budget adjustments/resolutions/invoices
3. Barbour OEM/911/EMS
 - a. MOU's with WV Emergency Management Division for iFlows and SIRN site
4. Contribution request
 - a. FBLA- National Conference expenses
 - b. Philippi Library- Ramp, Rails and Basement Doors Project
5. IT Services- Larry McGill
6. Resolution for Kelley Road and Hunter's Fork Landowners Regarding Opposition to Valley Link Transmission Project
7. Barbour County Fairgrounds
 - a. July 4th Independence Day Celebration
8. Discuss opening the front entrance of the Courthouse
9. Consider approving Prosecuting Attorney to contract for Professional Services of an Expert Witness (*item may lead to Executive session*)
10. Public Comment
11. Setting of Next Regular Meeting
12. Adjournment

Barbour County Commission Meeting

May 15, 2026

9:00am

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

Kim Lewis, Larry McGill, Sam Mayle, Margie George, Dylan Harper, Corey Brandon, H. David Talbott, Arthur Dodds, Pamela Dodds, Douglas Luke Thomas, Rachelle Channell, Drew Phillips, Aaron Bostel

David Strait called the meeting to order at 9:00am and led the pledge.

The Prosecutor requested item 9 to be moved to the beginning due to court obligations. Jedd Schola made a motion to enter Executive Session at 9:03am; Bob Richardson seconded. 3/0

Regular Session was resumed at 9:22am.

Bob Richardson made a motion to approve the May 8, 2026 meeting minutes as presented; Jedd Schola seconded. 3/0

Exonerations were presented.

David Strait made a motion to approved General County and Coal Severance budget revisions as presented; Jedd Schola seconded. 3/0

Landowners were in attendance to express opposition to the Valley Link Transmission Project and requested the Commission's support of a resolution opposing the proposed route. Those in attendance waived the reading of the resolution aloud. The resolution stated that landowners on Kelley Road and Hunters Fork oppose the project as a potential transmission line path. The Commission also noted they support for the rights of all landowners, regardless of their position on the project. Bob Richardson made a motion to pass the resolution as presented; David Strait seconded. 3/0

Dylan Harper presented MOUs with the WV Emergency Management Division for IFlows and SIRN. David Strait made a motion to approve the MOU's; Bob Richardson seconded. 3/0

Corey Brandon discussed upcoming events and a planned tabletop exercise with the Grafton mines. He also reported that the Prom was a success, noting that first responders did an excellent job monitoring the event while keeping interference to a minimum.

The Barbour County Ambulance Authority celebrates its one-year anniversary on May 15. The Authority currently employs 43 staff members and is now fully staffed with full-time employees. Operations currently include two 24-hour ambulances and one 12-hour shift ambulance serving the county.

Over the past year, ambulance crews have expanded their presence at community events. Improvements have also been made in billing operations and financial stability.

Commissioner David Strait commended Director Aaron Bostel for his leadership and the significant strides made by the Authority during its first year of operation.

Commissioner Richardson discussed potential event fees for ambulance service coverage at community events. The Barbour County Ambulance Authority Board plans to review proposals submitted by the Director; however, no fee structure or implementation timeline has been established at this time.

Philip Barbour High School FBLA submitted a funding request for \$10,000 to assist with expenses for their trip to the national competition. Bob Richardson made a motion to approve \$6,000. Following discussion, the motion was amended to approve \$7,000; Jedd Schola seconded the motion. 3/0

Commissioner Schola is also challenging the FBLA members to create a Run for It team.

David Strait made a motion to approve the Philippi Public Library's funding request in the amount of \$4,000 from Coal Reallocation funds to assist with the ramp, rail and basement door project; Bob Richardson seconded. 3/0

A discussion was held on opening the front doors of the Courthouse. Sheriff Carpenter is to have a discussion with WV Court Security and report back to the commission.

Larry McGill discussed IT services for county facilities. His suggestion is to end contractual services with GST and hire a full time IT professional. Discussion was held.

A budget was presented for the July 4th Community Celebration event in the amount of \$16,000.00 from the Park & Recreation fund. The schedule of events includes ATV races, color walk, Car/Tractor show, pet show, Mountain State Wrestling Federation event, parade, entertainment, vendors, facepainting, food vendors and fireworks. On a motion by Bob Richardson; seconded by David Strait, the budget was approved. 3/0

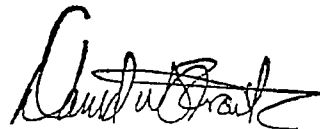
The floor was open for public comment.

Commissioner Schola discussed a water pressure issue at Duane Bennett's residence on Stalnaker Road. Discussion was held.

Commissioner Richardson reported the gas station in Belington will be opening tentatively by the end of the month.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2026 at 5:00pm.

David Strait made a motion to adjourn at 10:36am; Bob Richardson seconded. 3/0

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Strait", with a stylized flourish at the end.

BARBOUR COUNTY COMMISSION

RESOLUTION NO. ____

**A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CONCERNS AND OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED
HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION PROJECTS SPECIFICALLY THE PROPERTIES
AFFECTED BY THE PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED POTOMAC APPALACHIAN
TRANSMISSION HIGHLINE ROUTE PASSING THROUGH KOONTZ HOLLOW a/k/a
KELLEY ROAD AND HUNTER'S FORK**

WHEREAS, Valley Link Transmission Company LLC ("Valley Link"), formed through a partnership between Dominion Energy, Transource Energy (a partnership between American Electric Power and Evergy) and FirstEnergy Transmission seek to construct a 260 mile 765 kv high voltage transmission project called Valley Link Transmission North (name may vary) from Putnam County, WV to Frederick, Maryland, and crossing through multiple counties, including that of Barbour County;

WHEREAS, from 2009-2011, a similar project called the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline ("PATH") was also proposed, in which the properties of Koontz Hollow – Kelley Road and Hunter's Fork were directly impacted by the route, within the broader corridor, or in close proximity to the route;

WHEREAS, the Commission is aware of ongoing discussions and outreach efforts by Valley Link regarding the proposed high-voltage transmission line that may affect areas within or near Barbour County;

WHEREAS, ALL of the residents and landowners of Kelley Road a/k/a Koontz Hollow near Belington ("Kelley Road Landowners") has and does vehemently object to any high voltage transmission line that would pass through or within eyesight of their property;

WHEREAS, residents of Hunter's Fork ("Hunter's Fork Landowners") also attended the May 4, 2026, meeting and that area has and does vehemently object to any high voltage transmission line that would pass through or within eyesight of their property as well;

WHEREAS, the Kelley Road Landowners and Hunter's Fork Landowners which are a part of the Koontz Hollow–Kelley Road, Hunter's Fork, and Sugar Creek Community Preservation Coalition came to the County Commission meeting on May 4, 2026, and made their objection well known and that their opposition to any line that would pass through their property or ruin their view shed would be protested heavily for numerous reasons including but not limited to the fact the high voltage transmission line will create significant safety risks, destroy land, reduce property values, increase the health risks, contaminate ground water, and cause numerous other issues some of which are known and many of which are not known at this time;

WHEREAS, West Virginia ranks 5th in the nation in energy production but yet is one of the poorest states, with West Virginia consuming only three fifths of the energy it generates;

WHEREAS, out of the 55 counties in West Virginia, Barbour County is the fifth lowest in per capita income and land is one of resident's main venue for full or partial subsistence;

WHEREAS, no specific route through Barbour County has been formally disclosed to the public but at a meeting between the Economic Development Authority and Valley Link Transmission Company LLC occurred in April and one of the routes disclosed as a possible route followed a similar route to the route that was proposed in 2009 for the PATH (PSC case# 09-0770-E-CN);

WHEREAS, Barbour County contains rural residential communities, agricultural lands, and environmentally sensitive areas that could be adversely affected by large-scale transmission infrastructure;

WHEREAS, certain properties of the Kelley Road Landowners and Hunter's Fork Landowners are historically significant properties and are listed on the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), some of which will be applying to be on national registries;

WHEREAS, the transmission project would irreparably harm landowners, farms, forests, communities, ground water, generational and long-standing family properties, environmentally sensitive areas cause negative health effects, reduce property values, damage certain historical properties owned by the Kelley Road Landowners and/or Hunter's Fork Landowners, alter and/or damage Barbour County as a whole, and forever damage view-sheds to serve out-of-state interests while turning Barbour County and the entirety of West Virginia into a transmission corridor without delivering any meaningful benefit;

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission values private property rights, generational heritage, historic properties, and the right to bequeath land and familial heritage to future descendants, the health of its' citizens, and the importance of protecting the livelihoods and quality of life of its residents;

WHEREAS, the Commission understands that preliminary meetings and informational briefings may occur prior to formal project proposals, but affirms the importance of transparency, safety of its citizens, and public awareness in matters affecting the county and its residents;

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes that landowners have the right to determine if they would grant a right of way and the price for such right of way and that additionally they have the right and need for adequate time to consult with legal counsel without being coerced to sign documents pertaining to their land and wealth within a timeframe determined by Valley Link or any other entity;

WHEREAS, the Commission opposes the use of eminent domain by Valley Link to acquire any property in Barbour County for a transmission line as it will not benefit Barbour County, West Virginia or its residents;

WHEREAS, this project would negatively impact Barbour County's property values, agricultural industry, tourism industry, safety of its citizens, the ground water of Barbour County, and natural scenic integrity, while providing no positive impact on Barbour county or its residents;

WHEREAS, the Commission stands with its citizens and opposes any transmission project or route that would pass through the property of the Kelley Road Landowners and/or Hunter's Fork Landowners' properties as those landowners have made it known that they oppose any transmission line, project or route passing on, through or near their respective properties;

WHEREAS, the Commission opposes any and all eminent domain and siting or construction of this high voltage transmission line as it brings no benefit to the county and would impair the natural beauty of our county, impair tourism, diminish property values, increases health risks or the potential thereof, damage ground water, and force all of our citizens to ultimately pay for this project through increased electricity rates while none of the electricity will be used in this county;

WHEREAS, the Commission understands the importance of grid reliability, this project will do nothing to create grid reliability in Barbour County, nor the State of West Virginia, but believes these goals are better supported by power plants and renewable energy to be located nearer to the locations where the electricity is needed to reduce the vulnerability of extended transmission lines, or other alternative solutions;

WHEREAS, prior transmission proposals in the region, including the PATH project, generated significant public concern regarding property rights, environmental impacts, health risks, and long-term land use, decline in property value, as well as a significant amount of cost in both time and money to deal with these prior projects;

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission opposes any and all high voltage transmission projects coming through Kelley Road Landowners and Hunter's Fork Landowners; however, if it were impossible for a high voltage transmission project to be routed around the Kelley Road Landowners and/or Hunter's Fork Landowners properties, then the Barbour County Commission would request at least until appropriate independent studies can be completed to prove these projects do not create increased health risks, will not impact ground water, and so that all risks can be fully and properly vetted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

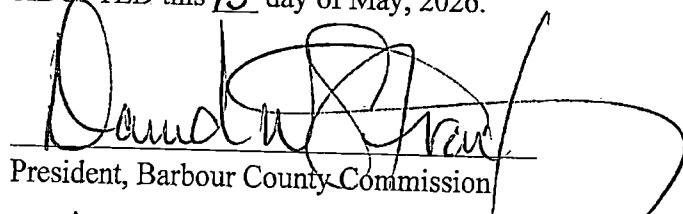
1. The Barbour County Commission expresses its concern regarding any proposed high-voltage transmission line that may impact the Kelley Road Landowners and Hunter's Fork Landowners generally without full transparency, meaningful public engagement, appropriate independent studies being conducted outside of the control of Vally Link, and thorough evaluation of potential impacts.
2. The Commission expresses opposition to any proposed route that would:
 - a. Adversely affect established residential communities;
 - b. Impact environmentally sensitive or scenic areas;
 - c. Impact any historical or family generational land;
 - d. Impact any private land owned by residents;
 - e. Increase health risks;
 - f. Contaminate ground water;
 - g. Unduly burden agricultural lands or private property rights;
 - f. Create disproportionate impacts on the county without corresponding local benefit; and
 - h. Take land via eminent domain – as the County Commission fully supports the rights of individual landowners to make the decision to sell, or not sell, a right of way upon the terms and conditions of the individual landowner without coercion and the threat of eminent domain.
3. The Commission formally requests that project developers provide:
 - a. Detailed route maps with GIS overlays of tax parcel maps, along with all alternative alignments;
 - b. Environmental, visual, health, safety, and land use impact assessments from consultants or experts of resident's choice but at the expense of Valley Link Transmission or any affiliated organization;
 - c. Information regarding right-of-way acquisition and property impacts from consultants or experts of resident's choice but at the expense of Valley Link Transmission or any affiliated organization;

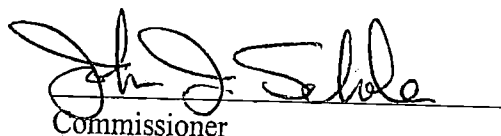
- d. Opportunities for public comment and local government input prior to route selection;
 - e. Multiple reach out attempts including three or more advertisement in the newspaper The Barbour Democrat and that such advertisements or notifications be large and noticeable and for individual letters to be mailed, via certified mail, to any potentially affected landowner; and
 - f. at least one year, at a minimum, for landowners to review all documentation involving their property and to obtain independent evaluations.
- 4. The Commission affirms that transparency and public participation are essential and encourages that information shared in preliminary discussions be made available to the public in their entirety.
- 5. The Commission urges PJM Interconnection, Valley Link, project developers, state regulatory bodies, and relevant federal agencies to give first priority to alternatives that avoid new overhead corridors-specifically:
 - a. maximizing existing transmission assets;
 - b. deploying grid-enhancing technologies;
 - c. promoting efficiency and distributed generation near the load;
 - d. where new lines are indispensable, burying them within state or federal highway rights-of-way using proven underground high-voltage technology; and
 - e. where new lines cannot be buried within state or federal highway rights-of-way using proven underground high-voltage technology to avoid destroying the view shed of Barbour County.
- 6. The Commission fully supports the opposition of the Kelley Road Landowners and Hunter's Fork Landowners to the proposed Valley Link routes that may pass through their lands or encroach upon their view shed.
- 7. The Commission will request Valley Link to agree to fund completely any and all independent testing that would be requested by the Kelley Road Landowners, Hunter's Fork Landowners, and any other landowners of Barbour County where a transmission line is proposed to go and will ask that no path proceed forward for a minimum of one year, or until all assessments can be completed and fully reviewed, whichever is longer, after Valley Link agrees to fund

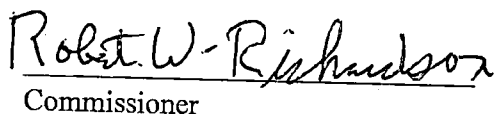
independent testing and testing, including but not limited to safety risks, land damage, property valuations, health risks and diseases, ground water contamination risks, and to determine if any other risks are associated therewith, can be completed.

8. The Commission may take further action upon the project being formally filed, including, but not limited to, formal opposition to the project and any parts thereof which affect Barbour County and its residents who oppose such transmission projects, and reserves the right to decide on additional action upon review of complete project information and public input.
9. The Commission directs that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Valley Link, the West Virginia Public Service Commission, and any other relevant agencies or stakeholders immediately and again upon formal filing of the project.

ADOPTED this 15th day of May, 2026.


President, Barbour County Commission


Commissioner


Commissioner

Barbour County
Laurie L. Austin, Clerk
Instrument 288591
06/09/2026 @ 02:24:22 PM
COUNTY COMMISSION MINUTES
Book 29 @ Page 115
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