

Barbour County Commission Meeting
July 17, 2026
9:00am

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

Robert W. Guthrie, Sharon C. Guthrie, Margie George, Ira Mayle, Kim Lewis, Marsha Smith, Herb Smith, Joshua Raschella, Dylan Harper, Dana Gould, Drew Phillips, H. David Talbitt, Corey Brandon, Wendy Madden

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

Bob Richardson made a motion to approve minutes as presented from the July 6, 2026 and July 14, 2026 meetings; Jedd Schola seconded. 3/0

Exonerations were presented.

Final Settlements were presented and approved on a motion by David Strait, seconded by Bob Richardson; Jedd Schola abstained. 2/0

CHARLES RUPERT SCHOLA, RODDY VUCKOVICH, PHILIP LYNN DAUGHERTY

Invoices were presented.

AJ Hammon and Dana Gould presented the Stroke Smart Proclamation for Barbour County. The acronym B.E.F.A.S.T. serves as a simple and effective tool to help the public recognize the most common signs of stroke. Balance problems or dizziness, Eyes and vision changes, Face drooping, Arm or leg weakness, Speech difficulty or sensory changes, and Time to call 911.

David Strait made a motion to approve a resolution for the Economic Development Authority to submit an application to the WV Department of Economic Development and WV DOH for the purpose of access road funding to the Belington Industrial Park, not to exceed \$717,851.00. The \$7,178,512.00 investment made by Prodigy in Barbour County provides leverage for funding through the Access Road Program.

The Barbour County Ambulance Authority submitted the following recommendations for board appointments: Corey Brandon, President; Evan Workman, Vice President; Shana Frey, Secretary (non-voting); and members Rod Kimble, Suzanna Skidmore, Cheri Sturm, Jon Wright, Rhonda Robinson, and Bob Wilkins. During its July 10, 2026, meeting, the Ambulance Authority amended its bylaws to provide that the appointed County Commissioner would serve as a non-voting member. David Strait currently serves in that position.

Jedd Schola made a motion to accept the recommendations as presented; Bob Richardson seconded. David Strait abstained. 2/0

Wendy Madden requested approval for the Barbour County Health Department to manage the Healthy Grandfamilies Program in order to provide direct kinship-care services to families in Barbour County. The program is currently a shared resource with Tucker County. Under the proposed arrangement, Wendy Madden will serve as the primary contact, Shelby Stalnaker will provide classes, and Karen Lewis will manage meetings.

David Strait made a motion to authorize the Barbour County Health Department to manage the Healthy Grandfamilies Program in Barbour County; Bob Richardson seconded. 3/0

The Barbour County Health Department was nominated for the Wild, Healthy, Wonderful West Virginia program and was selected to move forward. As part of the program, the Health Department will have the opportunity to participate in long-range planning with input from Barbour County.

She also reported that a CEOS group placed a hygiene box outside the Health Department.

Although no cases of rabies have been reported in Barbour County, she reminded residents to exercise caution around unfamiliar animals and not to approach them. She also provided information regarding the cyclosporiasis outbreak and noted that testing is available through the hospital, local clinics, and the Health Department.

Carolyn Waddell submitted her resignation from the Barbour County Health Department Board. David Strait made a motion to accept the resignation, and Bob Richardson seconded the motion. The resignation was also accepted by the Health Department Board at its last meeting. The Commission thanked Carolyn Waddell for her service and dedication to Barbour County.

C.W. Dent, Director of Business Development, presented information regarding the Arch Recovery Center, which is expected to open in September. The Philippi facility will offer a 90- to 120-day recovery program, with the possibility of extending participation up to 180 days. Participants must complete a 30- to 45-day detox program before entering the long-term recovery program.

The facility will provide on-site medical staff, case management, individual and group therapy, and clinical groups. The program is designed to help individuals address the underlying causes of addiction and learn strategies to manage their recovery. A privacy fence will be installed around the facility, and residents will not be permitted to come and go from the facility without staff supervision.

An additional goal of the program is to provide residents with the opportunity to enter back into the workforce and begin saving money for their next step, typically sober living, and to establish the stability necessary to move forward in their recovery.

Mr. Dent also serves on the coaching staff for Philippi Barbour Football and Baseball programs and a motivational speaker at local schools, where he shares his personal story.

OEM/911 continues to monitor air quality alerts related to wildfires in Canada. The office has also been working on grant applications. An award letter was received for the Emergency

Management Performance Grant (EMPG), and notice of acceptance was received for the CDS radio grant. Final approval is expected between now and September.

Aaron Böstel reported that the new ambulance is being prepared for service. He also announced that a friendly competition is being held for the design of a new logo.

Sergeant Major Raschella presented information regarding the Operation Rebuild 410 initiative. He discussed financial and organizational challenges faced by Post 410 in previous years, while emphasizing that Post 410 is now rebuilding and working to make a positive difference in the community.

In early 2025, a water line failure caused catastrophic damage throughout the building, resulting in the loss of the dining hall and the ability to rent or otherwise utilize portions of the facility. Operation Rebuild 410 is a phased effort to restore the building, with the upstairs area identified as the priority for reopening. The goal is to make the space available for veterans, meetings, community events, and hall rentals.

The damages are currently the subject of litigation with the insurance company. A funding application was submitted requesting \$20,172.43 to do the necessary repairs to the space. Following discussion, David Strait made a motion to approve \$5,000.00 in Coal Reallocation funds to support Post 410's initiative for community improvement; Bob Richardson seconded the motion. 3/0

Heather Perkins presented information regarding the proposed Teen Leaders Demonstration Garden, which will be located at the Barbour County Fairgrounds and maintained by 4-H Teen Leaders. The completed project will include raised garden beds, water features, a concrete walkway, and split-rail fencing. The group requested approval to construct the garden between the Old Schoolhouse and the Grist Mill. They also received a My Hands to Larger Service community grant to provide signage for the project. Bob Richardson made a motion to approve the proposed location; Jedd Schola seconded. 3/0

The Barbour County Commission heard from citizens throughout the county and attended the Valley Link open house regarding the proposed Valley Link transmission project. In response to citizen feedback and after reviewing suggested resolutions, the Commission developed a resolution reflecting the concerns expressed by the public.

The Commission noted that it had previously adopted a resolution in support of the Kelley Road community after community members presented their opposition to the proposed project. At that time, the Commission did not have sufficient information to establish an official countywide position.

After extensive consideration of the information presented and the concerns raised by Barbour County residents, the Commission unanimously adopted a resolution declaring its opposition to the proposed Valley Link North 765 kV transmission project and any similar extra-high-voltage transmission corridor affecting Barbour County, West Virginia. 3/0

Bob Richardson made a motion to approve the submission of a grant application to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for a Runway Light Rehabilitation Project at the Philippi/Barbour County Regional Airport; David Strait seconded the motion. 3/0. The County's required matching contribution is \$2,328.00.

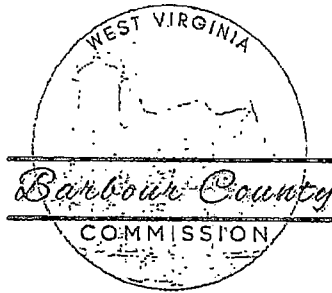
The floor was open for public comment by order of the sign-in sheet.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 10, 2026, beginning at 5:00 p.m. The meeting date and time were changed due to a West Virginia State Auditor conference occurring during the regularly scheduled meeting time.

David Strait made a motion for adjournment at 11:04am, seconded by Bob Richardson. 3/0

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

David Strait
Jedd Schola
Bob Richardson



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Philippi, West Virginia 26416

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A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE OPPOSITION OF THE BARBOUR COUNTY COMMISSION TO THE
PROPOSED VALLEY LINK NORTH 765-KILOVOLT TRANSMISSION PROJECT AND ANY SIMILAR EXTRA-HIGH-
VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION CORRIDOR AFFECTING BARBOUR COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

WHEREAS, Valley Link Transmission Company LLC, a joint venture formed by Dominion Energy, Transource Energy (a partnership of American Electric Power and Energy), and FirstEnergy Transmission, has proposed construction of the approximately 260-mile Valley Link North 765-kilovolt electric transmission project extending from Putnam County, West Virginia, to Frederick County, Maryland, with potential routes affecting Barbour County; and

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission recognizes that the proposed transmission project has been represented as supporting the transmission needs associated with the Commonwealth of Virginia's clean energy and electric reliability objectives; and

WHEREAS, the Commission believes that the costs and burdens associated with meeting another state's energy policy objectives should not be disproportionately borne by the landowners and citizens of Barbour County, West Virginia;

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission is charged with protecting the health, safety, welfare, property, natural resources, and long-term economic interests of the citizens of Barbour County; and

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes previous proposals for similar extra-high-voltage transmission projects, including the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) Project, and the substantial public concern such projects generated throughout West Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Barbour County is characterized by productive agricultural lands, working forests, rural communities, historic resources, scenic landscapes, streams, wetlands, groundwater resources, native wildlife, and other natural assets that contribute significantly to the County's economy, heritage, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Barbour County's economy benefits from agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, heritage tourism, scenic travel, and other industries that depend upon preserving the County's rural character and natural beauty; and

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes the importance of protecting private property rights, family farms, working forests, historic homesteads, cemeteries, and generational family lands, together with the ability of landowners to use, conserve, improve, and transfer their property free from unnecessary governmental or private encumbrances; and

WHEREAS, residents throughout Barbour County have expressed substantial concern regarding the potential impacts of the proposed transmission project upon their homes, farms, businesses, communities, property values, and quality of life; and

The Barbour County Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission recognizes that the proposed Valley Link Transmission Project threatens to impose significant economic harm upon Barbour County by reducing the market value and marketability of affected and adjacent properties, diminishing property tax assessments, discouraging residential and commercial investment, and weakening the County's long-term tax base, thereby shifting a greater financial burden onto remaining taxpayers while reducing revenues available for schools, emergency services, infrastructure, and other vital governmental functions;

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission further finds that any project resulting in diminished property values and reduced local tax revenues imposes costs upon the citizens of Barbour County that are not adequately offset by the limited economic benefits associated with the construction and operation of the proposed transmission line;

WHEREAS, based upon information presently available, the Commission has not been presented evidence demonstrating that the proposed project will provide substantial or commensurate benefits to Barbour County while raising significant concerns regarding private property rights, agricultural operations, forestry resources, groundwater protection, historic resources, tourism, public safety, property values, and the County's long-term economic interests.

WHEREAS, Barbour County contains extensive working forests that support timber production, forest products industries, wildlife habitat, recreation, watershed protection, carbon sequestration, and private conservation efforts, all of which contribute significantly to the County's economy and natural heritage; and

WHEREAS, permanent transmission rights-of-way require perpetual vegetation management and maintenance that permanently converts and fragments productive timberlands into utility corridors, reduces forest canopy, increases edge effects, disrupts wildlife movement, diminishes carbon storage capacity, and adversely affects the long-term ecological integrity and economic value of forest resources; and

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes that forest fragmentation resulting from utility corridors may increase the spread of invasive plant species, alter wildlife habitat, reduce biodiversity, and adversely affect species that depend upon large, contiguous forest ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, Barbour County's agricultural economy includes family farms, pastureland, cropland, orchards, livestock operations, maple production, and other agricultural enterprises that depend upon maintaining productive soils, efficient farm operations, intact drainage systems, and uninterrupted access to farmland; and

WHEREAS, the acquisition of permanent utility easements and construction of transmission infrastructure may interfere with agricultural operations by reducing productive acreage, restricting future land use, complicating equipment movement, affecting livestock management, limiting improvements to farm properties, and diminishing the long-term economic viability of family farms; and

WHEREAS, Barbour County contains numerous springs, seeps, groundwater recharge areas, private wells, streams, wetlands, floodplains, and watersheds that provide drinking water, support agricultural operations, sustain aquatic ecosystems, and contribute to the health and welfare of County residents; and

WHEREAS, portions of Barbour County include areas characterized by limestone geology, karst features, sinkholes, underground drainage systems, and other hydrogeologic conditions that may be particularly sensitive to excavation, blasting, heavy equipment, and other ground-disturbing construction activities associated with large transmission infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, construction and long-term maintenance of extra-high-voltage transmission facilities may increase erosion, sedimentation, stormwater runoff, soil compaction, and alteration of natural drainage patterns, thereby affecting streams, wetlands, groundwater resources, and downstream water quality if not carefully avoided or mitigated; and

WHEREAS, the Barbour County Commission recognizes that Barbour County contains ecologically significant forests, streams, wetlands, karst landscapes, and other sensitive natural resources that provide habitat for numerous native, rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species, and that construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed Valley Link Transmission Project may result in habitat fragmentation, disturbance of wildlife corridors, degradation of water quality, the introduction of invasive species, and other adverse environmental impacts that could irreparably harm these important ecological resources;

WHEREAS, Barbour County contains cold-water streams and aquatic habitats supporting native brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), a species recognized as an important indicator of high-quality stream ecosystems and particularly sensitive to increases in water temperature, sedimentation, habitat disturbance, and degradation of water quality; and

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes that disturbance of stream corridors, riparian buffers, and forest cover associated with transmission line construction and maintenance may adversely affect native brook trout populations and other aquatic species through increased sediment loads, altered stream temperatures, changes in hydrology, and degradation of aquatic habitat; and

WHEREAS, Barbour County also provides habitat for numerous native wildlife species, migratory birds, bats, pollinating insects, and species identified under federal or state law as threatened, endangered, or of conservation concern, and the Commission believes these biological resources warrant careful protection through comprehensive environmental review; and

WHEREAS, the Commission further recognizes that the cumulative impacts of multiple utility corridors, when considered together with existing infrastructure and future development, may exceed the impacts associated with any individual project and therefore should be fully evaluated through comprehensive environmental analysis before any approvals are granted.

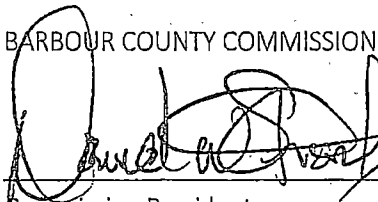
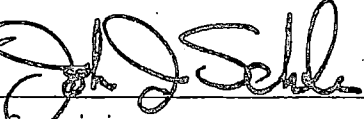
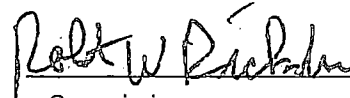
WHEREAS, the construction phase of a project of this magnitude and the siting of towers and a transmission corridor substantially changes the character of the affected lands. The construction may create unwanted light, noise, dust, and a multitude of other issues. The towers themselves affect viewsheds and the affected property. These effects may extend from the boundaries of the affected property to that of other citizens and landowners. Any and all of these issues may create a nuisance, that being a substantial and unreasonable interference with the private use and enjoyment of the lands of the citizens of Barbour County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. The Barbour County Commission formally opposes the proposed Valley Link transmission project, and any substantially similar extra-high-voltage transmission corridor, through Barbour County.
2. The Commission opposes any route that would adversely affect private property, agricultural operations, forests, groundwater, streams, wildlife habitat, historic or cultural resources, residential communities, scenic viewsheds, or the long-term economic interests of the County.
3. The Commission opposes the use of eminent domain for acquisition of property for this project and affirms the right of every landowner to negotiate voluntarily and without coercion.
4. The Commission requests complete GIS overlays of tax parcel maps, all alternative alignments, and independent environmental, agricultural, historic, groundwater, health, property value, and economic impact studies funded by the developer and performed by qualified experts acceptable to affected landowners.
5. The Commission requests meaningful public participation, certified notice to potentially affected landowners, and no less than one year for review of project materials and consultation with legal and technical advisors.
6. The Commission urges PJM, the West Virginia Public Service Commission, and all applicable agencies to require full evaluation of alternatives, including maximizing existing corridors, reconductoring, grid-enhancing technologies, distributed generation, demand-side management, and co-location within existing utility or transportation corridors before approval of any new overhead corridor.
7. The Commission reserves all rights to participate in administrative, judicial, and regulatory proceedings concerning the project and to adopt additional resolutions or take further action as appropriate.
8. The Commission will 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, and reserves the right to decide on additional action upon review of complete project information and public input.
9. The Commission directs that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to Valley Link Transmission Company LLC, the West Virginia Public Service Commission, PJM Interconnection, the Governor of West Virginia, the Barbour County legislative delegation, and other appropriate state and federal agencies.

Adopted this 17 day of July, 2026.

BARBOUR COUNTY COMMISSION


Commission President
Commissioner
Commissioner