

**WORK SESSION: TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024, 1:00 P.M.**

Location: Commissioners Meeting Room, Basement.

*\*Public meetings are being held both in-person and by Zoom. To participate in the meeting please dial-1-309-205-3325 or-1-646-876-9923, enter meeting number 988 9066 9264, and enter the meeting passcode 423423.*

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Commissioner Kessling called the meeting to order.

**MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION:**

Commissioner Kessling called for a moment of silent reflection.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:**

Commissioner Kessling requested that those participating in the meeting please stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Commissioner Kessling, Commissioner Burke, Commissioner Webster, and Chief Clerk Hemminger.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Solicitor Nathan Karn and Assistant Solicitor Jeff Muriceak.

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Kay Stephens (Altoona Mirror), A.C. Stickle IV (Controller), Lindsay Dempsie and Brandon Meck (Finance), Katherine Swigart (Human Resources), Paul Shaffer (Public Works – Highway), Mindy Hostler and Brooke McCready (CYF), Allison Senkevich and Lori Guyer (Commissioners), Abbie Tate (Prison), Sarah Seymour (Elections), Wendy Pielmeier (Assessment), Scott Bailey (APO), Carol Dannenberg (Holidaysburg Community Watchdog), Becky Robinson (Purchasing), Emilie Deffenbaugh (Fort Roberdeau), James Ott (Sheriff), Robin Patton (Prothonotary), Sue Ammerman (Cris Fredrickson, and Hannah Mitchell (Public Safety), Sherry Socie (Blair Planning), Judy Rosser (Blair Drug & Alcohol), Anita Terchanik (Register/Recorder), Don Weakland (IT), Jessica Kester (4H – PSU), Nate Taylor (Public Access Channel), Margaret Ebersole, Helen Schmitt, Reverend Roy Stewart and Melissa Harpster (Public).

**EXECUTIVE SESSION ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger confirmed there were no executive sessions since the last meeting, February 29, 2024.

**APPROVAL OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES – 2/20 AND 2/22**

Chief Clerk Hemminger requested 2/20/24 and 2/22/24 minutes approval being delayed till the next meeting on 3/14.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Commissioner Kessling called for public comment.

Margaret Ebersole commented that her county property taxes went up over 10% from last year as well as her federal taxes and water bill. She expressed her concern that because Social Security payments did not go up to cover these increases, elderly people cannot afford or budget for these increases.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Kessling called for commissioner comments.

Commissioner Burke expressed her gratitude to Solicitor Nathan Karn and Assistant Solicitor Jeff Muriceak for their service to Blair County over the years.

Commission Burke read the following statement:

“I would like to take this opportunity to express publicly my gratitude to Nathan Karn for the many years he has served Blair County. Solicitor Karn has been a law clerk, assistant solicitor, and solicitor. His tenure is more than 20 years long, which is remarkable given our current average tenure of 7 years. Prior to becoming a Commissioner, I did not know Attorney Karn well. Over the course of the last four years, I came to appreciate not only his consistency in providing timely, risk averse legal advice, but also the vast amount of institutional knowledge he has regarding the County’s idiosyncratic legal situations. Nathan’s value is apparent not only by his day-to-day work on our legal issues, but also in his dedication to the operations of the County.

A good example of this is the 2020 General Election when our Elections Director was too sick to be on site on Election Day. It was the worst possible time this could happen – international eyes were on our state, the two other members of the Board of Elections were substitutes due to COVID travel quarantines, and it was our first year handling mail in ballots. Nathan jumped in, performing many of the tasks Sara completes throughout the day that could not be done remotely and stayed long past the time he normally leaves. I also think of the Tax Claim office. When we were unexpectedly without employees as of 4 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, Nathan was there Monday morning explaining RETSL to Nicole and I. He made sure we were on a good legal ground to continue operating the office in the absence of trained staff and that we were able to pull off the upset sale with as few disruptions as possible.

Finally, on a personal note, my husband Sean also works with Nathan in his role as solicitor to the Borough of Hollidaysburg and it was mind blowing to our oldest daughter when she realized that when she heard us each mention Nathan we were talking about the same person. She dubbed him “the Nathan character” and developed quite a mythology surrounding him that was shattered when she learned that he drove a pick-up truck and had brown hair. To the Burke Family, Solicitor Karn will always be Nathan Character and I will miss working with him.”

Commissioner Webster echoed Commissioner Burke's sentiments and added the commissioners are looking to reduce costs for the county.

Commissioner Kessler also thanked Nathan Karn, Jeff Muriceak, and Every Black for their services. He stated the Commissioners need to continue looking for ways to reduce costs to the county. Although this decision was hard to make, he reiterated that discontinuing their services is purely financial.

**PROCLAMATION:**

Commissioner Webster read the following proclamation:

**Proclamation  
Pennsylvania 4-H Week: March 17 - 23, 2024**

**WHEREAS**, 4-H is America's largest youth development organization, supporting nearly six million youth across the country; and,

**WHEREAS**, 4-H has helped over 910 youth in Blair County to become confident, independent, resilient, and compassionate leaders as they learn by doing; and,

**WHEREAS**, 4-H in Pennsylvania is delivered by Penn State Cooperative Extension in rural areas, small towns, and cities in all 67 counties of the Commonwealth to more than 77,000 youth ages 5-18; and,

**WHEREAS**, 4-H youth in Blair County, Pennsylvania are served by a network of staff members and more than 6,000 adult volunteers who engage and mentor youth in learning activities and hands-on projects in topics such as animal science, civic engagement, STEM, and health and wellness; and,

**WHEREAS**, Pennsylvania 4-H Week showcases the incredible ways that 4-H inspires kids to achieve and highlights the remarkable 4-H youth in county who work each day to make a positive impact on those around them; and,

**WHEREAS**, 4-H's network provides youth with opportunities for leadership development, career exploration, problem solving, friendships, community involvement, passion, and purpose;

**NOW, THEREFORE, WE**, the Blair County Board of Commissioners, do hereby proclaim, March 17 - 23, 2024 as Pennsylvania 4-H Week throughout Blair County and encourage our citizens to acknowledge and celebrate 4-H for its valuable service and continued efforts to empower youth with a foundation of success for a lifetime.

**BLAIR COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Kessler, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amy E. Webster, Vice-President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura O. Burke, Secretary

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk

Jessica Kester, an Educator from 4-H, was present to receive the proclamation and expressed her thanks to the commissioners for their support of the 4-H program over the past several years. She also mentioned that the program is not only agricultural but has expanded into broader topics to include knitting, cooking, marine science, and STEM.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessler and unanimously approved to accept the Proclamation as prepared.

**CONSENT AGENDA:  
Resolution 119 - 2024:**

a. Payment of the following 2-Two Warrant Lists:

EFFECTIVE DATE	WARRANT NUMBER	AMOUNT
03/12/2024	240312WW	899,748.45
03/12/2024	240312SS	272,669.79

- Which includes a payment to McCarl's Preferred Services in the total amount of \$150.00
- Which includes a payment to Thomas and Chandra Jandora in the total amount of \$14.50.

b. Ratification of the following 20-Twenty Warrant Lists:

EFFECTIVE DATE	WARRANT NUMBER	AMOUNT
03/08/2024	240312WW	150.00
03/07/2024	240305CO	39,690.56
03/07/2024	240308FP	239,593.52
03/07/2024	240304WC	35,187.86
03/06/2024	240306TC	175.00
03/06/2024	240306WW	52,039.55
03/06/2024	240305CY	7,500.00
03/06/2024	240306WW	448,068.54
03/05/2024	240305ML	27,859.56
03/05/2024	240125HR	13,304.00

03/05/2024	240119HR	25,830.97
03/04/2024	240202RF	4,338.18
03/04/2024	240227RF	3,003.75
03/04/2024	240110RF	62.01
03/04/2024	240304RA	27,503.72
03/04/2024	240304FS	2,379.95
03/01/2024	240301HI	568,232.53
03/01/2024	240301FN	117,016.70
03/01/2024	240301DA	12,986.00
03/01/2024	240226FS	1,076.28

- Which includes a payment to Thomas and Chandra Jandora in the total amount of \$1,450.00 Ratification of Total Payroll, for the Check Dated 3/8/2024, in the total amount of \$879,083.59.

c. **2023 Budget Transfer:** To cover fees from a December Invoice from Nason Hospital.

From	To
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$68.00 01150-42000 Register and Recorder

e. **2023 Budget Transfer:** To cover fees from a December Invoice from Campbell Durrant.

From	To
01101GCO-44080 General County Operations	\$4,734.50 01209PO-44080 Prison

f. **2024 Budget Transfer:** To cover fees from February 2024 from Justifacts, Inc.

From	To
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$29.19 012012-42000 APO Satellite
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$58.25 01101-42000 Commissioners
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$162.19 01112-42000 Controller
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$972.01 113201-42000 CYF
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$154.65 01202-42000 JPO
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$25.65 01153-42000 Prothonotary
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$158.19 011192-42000 Records Management
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$710.31 01151-42000 Sheriff

g. **2024 Budget Transfer:** To cover fees from HealthForce for the period ending January 31, 2024.

From	To
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 01160CO-42000 Custody
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$220.00 113201-42000 CYF
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 113202-42000 CYF Annex
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$110.00 34156-42000 Domestic Relations
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 01105-42000 Human Resources
01110GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 01202-42000 JPO
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 01161FM-42000 MD Tyrone
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$440.00 01209PO-42000 Prison
01101GCO-42000 General County Operations	\$55.00 01164711-42000 Victim Witness

h. **Resignations:** Bell, Joshua, FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$22.65/hr., effective 2/13/24; Cardone, Lawrence, PT, Deputy Coroner, Coroner, Per Diem, \$80.00 per 8 hour shift, effective 2/29/24. Heinlein, Kathy, PT, Court Administration, \$12.04/hr. (19 hr. workweek), effective 3/6/24.

i. **Rescinded Resignation:** Wyant, Denise, PT, Tipstaff, Court Administration, \$12.71/hr., effective 3/1/24.

j. **Termination:** Musselman, Matthew, FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$22.65/hr., effective 2/28/24. Claypoole, Kristin D., FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$22.66/hr., effective 3/7/24. Cruz, Ricardo, FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$21.53/hr., effective 3/1/24. Miller, Shelsa L., FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$22.66/hr., effective 3/7/24. Romano, Joshua J., FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$21.53/hr., effective 3/7/24. Yednak, Seth K., FT, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$21.53/hr., effective 3/1/24. Karn, Nathan, FT, Solicitor, Solicitors, \$60,373.04/yr., effective 3/29/24. Murceak, Jeffrey, FT, Assistant Solicitor, Solicitors, \$21,960.90/yr., effective 3/29/24.

k. **Employments:** Tatar, Christopher, FT, Adult Parole & Probation, \$16.30/hr., effective 3/4/24; Tenley, Molly, FT, Receptionist/Clerk, Prothonotary, \$11.03/hr., effective 3/4/24; and Scalamonga, Marisa, Per Diem, Temporary Caseworker II, Children Youth and Families, \$20.50/hr., effective 3/5/24. Hamer, Daniel O., FT, Deputy, Sheriff, \$15.52/hr., effective 3/1/24. Johnston, Curtis D., FT, Deputy, Sheriff, \$15.52/hr., effective 3/11/24. Mitchell, Hannah P., FT, Administrative Support, Public Safety-EMA, \$12.16/hr., effective 3/1/2024. Yeager, Luke R., PT, Deputy, Sheriff, \$15.52/hr., effective 3/1/24.

l. **Status Changes:** Wharton, Sandra, Program Specialist, Children Youth and Families, \$49,118.42 annual, to add \$94.46 per pay (adding +.5% for max payment period of 13 pay periods from effective date), effective 2/17/24; Karichner, Adam, PT, Probation Officer Support, Adult Parole & Probation, \$11.87/hr., 19 hours per week to FT, Probation Officer Aide, Adult Parole & Probation, \$21,603.40 annual, 35 hours per week, effective 3/4/24; and Wyant, Denise, PT, Tipstaff, Court Administration, PT, 19 hours per week, \$12.71/hr., to Tipstaff, Judge Kagarise, 29 hours per week, effective 3/4/24.

Commissioner Burke noted her abstentions on the payment to Blair Senior Services and payments to Thomas and Chandra Jandora due to conflicts of interest.

Commissioner Burke also voted nay on the termination of Nathan Karn.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessling and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 119-2024 with abstentions and nay vote as noted.

**STAFF REPORTS & SPECIAL BUSINESS:**

**Prison:**

- i. Warden Abbie Tate requested approval for the acceptance and the award or rejection of the bids received for two-2 milk products for the Blair County Prison.

**Resolution 120-2024:** Approving the acceptance of the bids received for two-2 milk products for the Blair County Prison and the award and or rejection within 30 days according to the county code.

Motioned by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster, and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 120-2024.

- ii. Warden Abbie Tate requested approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Blair and the Borough of Hollidaysburg to grant access to the jail management system.

Commissioner Kessling noted this Memorandum of Understanding names a specific individual and he would prefer a version that is more general. He feels the MOU needs to be reviewed for accurate language.

Commissioner Burke confirmed that the previous version was broader and agreed that the MOU needs additional review.
- iii. Warden Abbie Tate requested approval of the Addendum to the Comprehensive Health Services Agreement between the County of Blair and PrimeCare Medical, Inc. to establish a Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) at \$12.00/day per inmate, plus any additional MAT related costs.

Warden Tate stated it was necessary to implement a MAT program prior to the state mandating this requirement. She noted that Blair County was one of the last counties to incorporate this program into the Prison.

Judy Rosser from Blair Drug & Alcohol (BDAP) stated she applied for a grant on behalf of the Prison, which would help cover start-up costs for the first 2 years of the MAT program.

Commissioner Kessling expressed his appreciation of the efforts of BDAP and the Prison to bring this program to the county.

#### **Human Resources:**

Katherine Swigart requested approval of a last-chance agreement between the County of Blair and SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 668 – Custodial/Highway/Maintenance, at no cost to the County.

**Resolution 121-2024:** Approving the last-chance agreement between the County of Blair and SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 668 – Custodial/Highway/Maintenance, at no cost to the County.

Motioned by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Burke, and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 121-2024.

#### **Fort Roberdeau**

Emilie Deffenbaugh requested approval of an advertising agreement between the County of Blair and Where & When for a summer and fall ¼ page advertisement in the total amount of \$1,486.00.

No further discussion.

#### **Children, Youth, and Families:**

Mindy Hostler requested approval of a FY 2023/2024 Renewal Purchase of Service Agreement and HIPAA Business Associate Agreement between the County of Blair, Blair County Children, Youth and Families and Pressley Ridge.

No further discussion.

#### **Elections:**

Sarah Seymour requested approval of an Agreement between the County of Blair, on behalf of the Board of Elections, and Election Systems & Software, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company, for coding the 2024 Presidential Primary and Election ballot with coding fees as outlined in the contract and twelve-12 days of on-site support, in the total amount of \$34,650.00.

Ms. Seymour confirmed this is an eligible expense for reimbursement under the Election Integrity grant to help cover this cost.

#### **Adult Parole and Probation:**

Scott Bailey requested approval to accept the PCCD Grant-In-Aid Award between the County of Blair and Blair County Probation and Parole in the total amount of \$70,288.00.

Mr. Bailey confirmed that this is an annual request and the amount was similar to last year.

#### **Finance:**

- i. Lindsay Dempsie requested approval of the allocation of Opioid Settlement Funds to the Specialty Courts for 2023 eligible expenditures in the amount of \$322,733.81.

Commissioner Burke asked when the deadlines were to spend the funds from the Opioid Settlement.

Ms. Dempsie clarified that the first payment has already been spent. The second payment had a previous deadline of June 2024 which has been extended to December 2024 to allow the County additional time to expend the funds.

- ii. Lindsay Dempsie requested approval to submit the 2022-2023 County Settlement Allocation Report to the PA Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust

No further discussion.

#### **Public Works – Highway:**

Commissioner Amy Webster requested approval of a resolution authorizing temporary and permanent easements to undertake the bridge project along the eastern and western sides of Bedford Street (County Road 101) for the reconstruction of Bridge #69 located in Freedom Township.

Commissioner Webster confirmed that she received the mortgage releases from Wells Fargo on the property in a mortgage. She also clarified that the temporary easement is necessary to have during construction and the permanent easements grant access once the project is complete.

**Commissioners:**

- i. Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger requested approval of the AYSO Field Use Calendar for 2024.

Chief Clerk Hemminger explained that this is an annual request as part of the lease agreement with AYSO.

- ii. Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger requested approval of a letter of support for the Family Services, Inc.'s grant application to Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for the full-time employment of the Children's Advocacy Center "CAC" Forensic Interviewer.

Chief Clerk Hemminger advised that this request is at no cost to the County.

- iii. Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger requested approval of a Fee Agreement Letter received from Gabriel Fera, PC for Solicitor Services in a not to exceed amount of \$150,000.00 + out of pocket costs, for the remainder of the calendar year 2024 charged at the rates listed below:

- Partner Rate: \$225
- Senior Associate Rate: \$210
- Associate: \$190
- Paralegal: \$145

The discussion then circled around the annual, not to exceed rate as well as the definition of "out of pocket costs".

Chief Clerk Hemminger clarified that the out of pocket costs for the County will include items like travel reimbursement, filing fees, and printing costs. She also confirmed that the County will be billed hourly by Gabriel Fera as their services are rendered.

Discussion continued.

- Resolution 122-2024** Approving a Fee Agreement Letter received from Gabriel Fera, PC for Solicitor Services in a not to exceed amount of \$150,000.00 + out of pocket costs, for the remainder of the calendar year 2024 charged at the rates listed below:

- Partner Rate: \$225
- Senior Associate Rate: \$210
- Associate: \$190
- Paralegal: \$145

Motion by Commissioner Kessler, seconded by Commissioner Webster, nay vote by Commissioner Burke, and approved by a 2-1 vote to adopt Resolution 122-2024.

**Emergency Services:**

- i. Sue Ammerman requested approval of a Preventative Maintenance Agreement between the County of Blair, on behalf of the Department of Emergency Services 911E, and Palco Power Systems for the maintenance of two generators at the 911 Center in the total amount of \$1,180.03 (for one visit).

No further discussion.

- ii. Sue Ammerman requested approval of a CritiCall End User License Agreement between the County of Blair, on behalf of the Department of Emergency Services 911E, and Biddle Consulting Group, Inc. for TestGenius /CritiCall Skills Testing, in the total amount of \$1,195.00, for the subscription period of May 21, 2024 through May 20, 2025.

No further discussion.

- iii. Sue Ammerman requested approval of a Professional Services Agreement between the County of Blair, on behalf of the Department of Emergency Services 911E, and Mission Critical Partners LLC for Consulting Services to the County of Blair, as defined in Exhibit B of said agreement, not to exceed \$25,000.00, including expenses.

Chief Clerk Hemminger asked if Ms. Ammerman could provide the terms of the contract.

- iv. Cris Frederickson requested approval of the 2023 Annual Report on the Hazardous Materials Preparedness HMERP report to be entered into the ESA by Cris Frederickson, which serves as the HMRF grant application for July 2024-June 2025.

No further discussion.

- v. Cris Frederickson requested approval of list of individuals seeking a five-year term membership (January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2028) to the Blair County Local Emergency Planning Committee as per Section 6022.203(b) of Act 165, Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, and EPCRA 42 USC § 11001, and nominated to the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as outlined on the nomination form.

No further discussion.

**Old Business:**

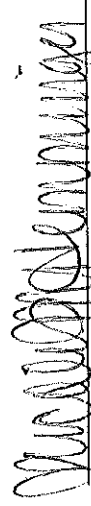
- i. Chief Clerk Hemminger requested approval of the Third Addendum to Lease Agreement between the County of Blair and Blair Senior Services for an additional parcel of land for expansion of the Blair Senior Services facilities.  
No further discussion.
- ii. Chief Clerk Hemminger requested approval of a Storm Water Facilities Perpetual Maintenance Agreement between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
**Resolution 123-2024:** Approving a Storm Water Facilities Perpetual Maintenance Agreement between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Commissioner Burke noted her abstention on this item due to conflicts of interest with both Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 123-2024 with abstention as noted.
- iii. Chief Clerk Hemminger requested approval of a Land Development Plan Developer's Agreement for the Blair County Salt Shed/Blair Senior Services Maintenance Building between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
**Resolution 124-2024:** Approving a Land Development Plan Developer's Agreement for the Blair County Salt Shed/Blair Senior Services Maintenance Building between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Commissioner Burke noted her abstention on this item due to conflicts of interest with both Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 124-2024 with abstention as noted.
- iv. Chief Clerk Hemminger requested approval of the Land Development Plan and signature on the Title Sheet between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
**Resolution 125-2024:** Approving the Land Development Plan and signature on the Title Sheet between the County of Blair, Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Commissioner Burke noted her abstention on this item due to conflicts of interest with both Blair Senior Services, Inc., and the Borough of Hollidaysburg.  
Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 125-2024 with abstention as noted.

**New Business:**

None.

**Adjourn:**

Meeting Adjourned,

  
Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk