

The regular meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date and time in the Commissioner's Meeting Room with the following present: Commissioners Walls, Reeder, and Thomas; Chief Clerk, Alayna Clark; Solicitor, Larry Newton; CYS Director, Kelvin Abrashoff; Treasurer, Susan Harry; EMA Interim Director, Joe Thompson; Warden, Brad Glover; Planning Director, Laurie Nearhood; Planning Development, Jen Bellis and Jayme Reck; Visitors, Danny Davis, Curt McConaughy, John Hayde, Dwight Rittenhouse, Barry Wright, Scott Merrill (Vice President of Board of Realtors), Joani Harlan, Michael Miller, and Mike Scott; Daily News Reporter, Byron Mantoan.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Commissioner Walls. Prayer was led by Commissioner Walls and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Commissioner Thomas.

It was moved by Commissioner Reeder, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, abstained; Reeder, yes) to approve the August 18th meeting minutes.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Reeder and carried (Thomas, yes; Reeder, yes; Walls, yes) to approve payment of bills.

There were no additions to the agenda.

There were no announcements by the Board.

Under Public Comments, Curt McConaughy questioned why the food trucks were cancelled. Mr. McConaughy recalls that there was no vote taken to cancel the food trucks in the last meeting. Commissioner Reeder commented that there will be a food truck this Thursday.

Mr. McConaughy also wanted to say that Huntingdon Borough is only responsible for giving permits to trucks who want to operate within the county or within Huntingdon Borough. The jurisdiction of those trucks or any foot facility falls under the Department of Agriculture, not Huntingdon Borough. Mr. McConaughy stated that he has a public website where you can access to see which trucks are licensed and current.

Dwight Rittenhouse wanted to address Commissioner Wall's comments about money being taken out of the general fund for the lake project. Mr. Rittenhouse commented that he did research on Hall County's budget. He found that funds totaling \$190,513 came out of the Park Marina Fund, not the general fund. There was also a depreciation totaling \$51,690 that came out of that fund. Commissioner Walls commented that he made his decision based off the idea of the Army Corps directing how those monies are spent and where they're spent no matter who takes it over.

Constance Wilson-Andreson wanted to formally address the critical matters of the record and accountability at Huntingdon County. Ms. Wilson-Andreson wanted to first publicly call on District Attorney, Dave Smith, to fulfill the duties of his office by launching a full investigation into the deliberate tampering of public records by the following parties: Lawrence Newton, Mapping Department, Tax Assessment Department. Ms. Wilson-Andreson commented that the evidence is there to show identity theft and placing false owners in September 2025 discovered on the deed owned by the Wilson Family Trust, deed number 2017-4949. Ms. Wilson-Andreson wanted to also address Judge Zanic's illegal tampering of ordering records to be removed for two years, docketed, stamped into the files and material, ongoing litigations. Ms. Wilson-Andreson wanted to also address the defamatory email sent out by the county personnel to an outside attorney falsely claiming her barring from the county building. Lastly, Ms. Wilson-Andreson demanded an immediate public retraction apology from Commissioner Walls and Commissioner Thomas regarding false statements claiming that Commissioner Reeder and herself have been in contact with each other. Ms. Wilson-Andreson stated that no such contact ever took place. Ms. Wilson-Andreson commented that she demands a public apology from Commissioner Walls for his unprofessional behavior on May 6th, 2026, and that he provides the names of both security personnel on duty. Ms. Wilson-Andreson wanted to compliment the Prothonotary office and Register & Recorder's office for their help and professionalism. Commissioner Reeder agreed with Ms. Wilson-Andreson about the derogatory

statement that he has been in contact with her. Commissioner Reeder commented that he has never had any conversations with her.

There were no matters to be addressed by the Solicitor.

Under new business, Kelvin Abrashoff, CYS Director, requested Consideration of Approval to accept Corby Hess, Caseworker II, resignation effective September 11, 2026. It was moved by Commissioner Reeder, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Reeder, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Director Abrashoff requested Consideration of Approval for Cecelia St. Clair, CYS Fiscal Supervisor, and Kelvin Abrashoff, CYS Director, to attend the Fall Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrator's Conference in Lancaster, PA October 14th and 15th. Director Abrashoff highlighted the education these conferences offer: This conference enhances the quality-of-service delivery for children and youth and their families. Each year county administrator and support staff attend 3 conferences in the spring, summer, and fall. In October, members will receive training leading through transitions and uncertainty. The session is going to help organizations recognize when it is time to let go of the past, navigate uncertainty, and change by reframing transition. It's a time of enhanced creativity and connection, and by preparing them to embrace the new whether that transition involves leadership change, pragmatic shift, transition management, etc. Additionally, administration will be trained in Immigration and Child Welfare Laws, Release of Information Laws, changes to Child Protective Service Laws, budget updates leading into the submissions of 2027-2028 budget year. The cost per person for the conference is \$225 for a total of \$450. The lodging fee costs \$295.26 per person for a total of \$590.52. The grand total is \$1,040.52. These are budgeted amounts that are put into CYS budget every year for training and ongoing purposes. This amount is reimbursed at the 80% rate by the state. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Reeder and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Reeder, yes).

Brad Glover, Jail Warden, requested Consideration of Approval to hire Tyler Dickson as Correction Officer effective 8/31/2026. It was moved by Commissioner Reeder, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Thomas, yes; Reeder, yes; Walls, yes).

Joe Thompson, EMA Interim Director, requested Consideration of Approval for Cordelia Beatty, Operations and Training Officer, and EMA Director to attend the 2026 Pennsylvania Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security Conference hosted by Keystone Emergency Management Association (KEMA) on September 27th through 29th. This year, the program focuses on all hazards planning, response coordination, and recovery strategies. The registration fee of \$200 per person is paid for by the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). The LEPC Chairman, Bob Shaw, will also be attending. It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Reeder and carried (Reeder, yes; Walls, yes; Thomas, yes).

Laurie Nearhood, Planning Director, requested Consideration of Approval of Act 13 Legacy Grant Agreement for the Cassville Borough Community Building Electrical Upgrade Project. The grant was \$5,000. \$300 will be withheld for admin costs and \$4,700 will be used for the project. It was moved by Commissioner Reeder, seconded by Commissioner Thomas and carried (Walls, yes; Thomas, yes; Reeder, yes).

Commissioner Reeder requested Consideration of Approval of a Resolution Imposing a Demolition Fee under Act 152 of 2016 and establishing the Huntingdon County Demolition Fund. Commissioner Reeder wanted to put on the record that he owns a commercial property in Mount Union and if this moves forward, he will recuse himself from any award that touches a property he has interest in, or that adjoins one. Commissioner Reeder explained this item: This would be a county wide fund. Any blighted property anywhere in Huntingdon County could be considered (any borough or township). A private property owner can apply directly rather than through their municipality because most of our small boroughs do not have the staff to put the application together on somebody else's behalf. This resolution does 5 things: authorizes the recorder of these to charge \$15 on each deed or mortgage recorded, established the Huntingdon County Demolition Fund (money can only be spent on demolishing blighted properties), sets an effective date of January 1st, 2027, names Planning and Development to administer it (somebody has to be named and the Recorder said that her office does nothing here beyond collecting), and it directs that program guidelines and an application come back to this Board for adoption before the fee ever begins to collect. Act 152 of 2016 lets the county collect up to \$15 on a recorded deed/mortgage for that money to be collected into a fund to be used exclusively for demolition (cannot be used to fix up a building- not a window, not a roof, not stabilizing something, etc.) This fund is only used for taking buildings down. The fund covers the whole job- not just the machine (asbestos testing, removal/disposal of hazardous material,

disconnecting utilities, demolition permits, hauling debris, etc.). The goal is to take a dangerous building down and leave a safe level seated lot. It will run as a grant program; the county would not be knocking buildings down itself. In every county that spends this money, a municipality or an eligible nonprofit applies, the county reimburses a share, the applicant carries the rest, and a lien goes on the property, so the money comes back if it sells. Mifflin pays up to 70% or \$35,500, whichever is less, and the municipality carries at least 30%. One thing worth heading off. The word rehabilitation does show up in this area of law, but it shows up in the definition of what counts as blighted, not in what the money can buy. If anybody quotes that back as proof this fund can renovate buildings, that is where the confusion comes from. Kelsey Dunn has sent Commissioner Reeder the county's actual recording counts, and he wanted to thank her on the record, because she turned his guess into a number. Last year this county recorded 1,374 deeds and 1,160 mortgages. At \$15, that is \$38,010. Commissioner Reeder wanted to add that her count is a floor and not a ceiling. She excluded sheriff deeds, tax sale deeds, corrective deeds and mortgage modifications. The act says each deed and mortgage recorded. Whether the fee reaches those is a question I want the Solicitor to answer, and the answer only moves the number up. On what it buys. Across 40 itemized payments in 24 county filings, the county's share of a demolition runs a median of about \$6,800. So, this pays the county's part on 5 or 6 buildings a year. Bank 2 years and you can do 10. The county pays a share, not the whole job. Recording a deed in this county costs \$59.75 today. This fee would take it to \$74.75. That is exactly what Jefferson County charges right now. Jefferson has 43,864 to our 43,653, and they had our identical base fee before they adopted this. Commissioner Reeder stated what the Recorder told him, "I do think this additional fee would get some pushback from the filers as it would increase their recording fees." She is the one who takes those calls. That is the real cost of doing this and it remains on record. Commissioner Reeder wanted to highlight the risk. Raising this money is easy. Spending it is not. Of the 70 counties whose filing Commissioner Reeder read, 3 collected about \$186,000 between them and demolished nothing. Jefferson's own filing says it is continuing to develop an application. Potters says it promoted the program to every municipality and there has yet to be a firm commitment to applying. And the reason is not money, and it is not code enforcement. It is getting title to the building. Saltillo and Dudley and Three Springs do not have staff who can assemble a title search, a contractor estimate and a municipal match. If this county sits back and waits for applications, they will not come. That is why this motion does not simply turn on a fee. It sets the effective date of January 1st, and it requires the guidelines and the application to come back here for adoption before a dollar is collected. That gap is the time to build the program. That sequence is the whole difference between McKean County and Potter County. And the January date is not arbitrary. The Recorder told me her software would take time to implement this. So, the lead time she needs and the lead time we need to build a program are the same months. Commissioner Reeder quoted her again: this would be "strictly on the Commissioners to initiate, administer and control the fund. The Recorder of Deeds has nothing to do with this act except collect the fee." Commissioner Reeder said she is right, and it means we cannot pass this and assume somebody else runs it. That is why the motion makes us adopt guidelines before a dollar comes in. Commissioner Reeder brought this agenda item because it is the only money for this that does not come out of the general fund and does not touch the millage, and nothing forces us to do it, which is exactly why it has sat undone through multiple boards. It will still be undone in 2028 unless somebody puts it on an agenda. Commissioner Reeder move that the Board adopt a resolution under Act 152 of 2016 authorizing the Recorder of Deeds to charge and collect a fee of \$15 on each deed and mortgage recorded; establishing the Huntingdon County Demolition Fund, the proceeds of which may be used only for the demolition of blighted property situate in the county as that term is defined by the act; setting the effective date of the fee at January 1, 2027; designating the Department of Planning and Development to administer the fund; and directing that program guidelines and an application be brought back to this Board for adoption before any fee is collected, those guidelines to provide that the program is available county wide in every municipality of the county, that private property owners may apply directly, that no local cash match is required, and that any award on privately owned property carries a lien in favor of the county forgiven at ten years; all subject to the Solicitor's review as to form.

Commissioner Thomas discussed that in 2014 a UPI fee was implemented, and he sees that has a user fee because it assured the accuracy of your deed; you were paying for something and getting it. Commissioner Thomas doesn't see how this fee would be seen as a user fee where the person paying it is getting any benefit.

Commissioner Walls commented that this has been discussed over the years, maybe not publicly, but the individual component of this for him encourages people who do not take care of their properties and just let it go.

Commissioner Reeder commented that in our 10-year plan, we have blight identified as one of our main issues, but we don't have any lever to work on that. Commissioner Reeder also commented that we have about 1,600 or more homes in Huntingdon County that was identified as any plan that is blighted and that number keeps on increasing each year. Years ago, Mount Union tore down a building and used CDBG funds.

Jen Bellis, Community Development Administrator, commented about the 1,600 blighted properties that Commissioner Reeder brought up. Ms. Bellis stated that that's not tear down, that's spotlight which means rehabilitation. She has reached out to municipalities and has presented it twice.

Scott Merrill, Vice President of the Board of Realtors, commented that the Board of Realtors have discussed this and thinks it is a bad idea. They don't think it is a good idea to put another charge on a first-time home buyer or another charge on people doing deeds. Mr. Merrill believes that there are enough charges on a closing disclosure already and people are economically hurting right now. This \$15 fee is promoting someone else's misbehavior. This fee would be

rewarding somebody who is letting their property run down. There are other programs out there that are available for this. Mr. Merrill stated that Huntingdon County does very well with the transfer fee.

Mike Scott, public visitor, commented that if you shop around, you can find local businesses who will pay for scrap materials from that building being torn down. He recently did that with a barn where he marked it as antique. People came and bought materials from the barn. He was able to build a new structure from it. Mr. Scott commented that it is a land/homeowner responsibility to take care of those things. Mr. Scott disagrees with the fee and believes that we pay enough fees for different things.

Barry Wright, public visitor, commented that he has talked to individuals, taxpayers, and their response was that the last thing we need is another tax fee. He believes it is a bad idea. There are young people/families trying to build, remodel, buy homes and another fee is not needed.

John Hayde, president of Huntingdon Borough, commented that it would be a challenge for smaller municipalities, but he doesn't think it a totally bad idea. Mr. Hayde doesn't believe it's a perfect idea for all townships/boroughs.

Commissioner Reeder commented that on most of these occasions, you can't find a homeowner. They searched for several years to find the owner of the building that was torn down in Mount Union. A family member was finally located in Texas that was able to sign off on it. There are burnt down homes in different locations, but who tears them down? In some communities you have great volunteers but outlined areas don't always have those types of resources. There are several blighted buildings in villages that don't have an owner. Right now, smaller communities are stuck.

Dwight Rittenhouse, public visitor, commented that he agrees with the idea that we need a way to clean up those buildings, but asked if there is a fund or any monies that can be tapped into within the county for situations like this instead of imposing another fee.

Commissioner Reeder replied there are 2 other ways to raise funds but one of them consists of taking out CDBG which does our infrastructure. The county is limited in a way to raise funds.

A public visitor suggested turning those buildings over to fire companies.

Brad Glover, Warden, commented that he has been in the fire company for 30 years and Fire Chief for at least 20. Warden Glover commented that you will not find a fire company that will burn down someone's house. It is easier to pay someone to tear the building down. There are ways to tear buildings down.

Susan Harry, Treasurer, asked if there are no homeowners for those properties, who is paying the property tax then? Treasurer Harry stated that in 2 years if they are not sold as an up to sale, then it goes to a judicial sale. IF they are not sold there, then they are in a repository. Treasurer Harry commented that she has seen maybe a dozen in the repository phase and half of those are trailers.

Commissioner Walls commented that to him this is just further government reach and growth.

Constance Wilson-Andreson, online visitor, commented that blighted homes attract rodents and lower the value of the neighbor's property. The EBT train coming through and all outside visitors make the county look deplorable.

It was moved by Commissioner Reeder, seconded for discussion by Commissioner Walls and failed (Thomas, no; Reeder, yes; Walls, no).

Before the meeting adjourned, Jen Bellis asked Commissioner Reeder that we he states he wants transparency and discussion is this what he wants? Commissioner Reeder stated that he thinks this is pretty good. Ms. Bellis questioned if Commissioner Reeder is going to make a Facebook post later about his agenda item being voted down. Ms. Bellis believes this was good and a good discussion. Commissioner Reeder replied that Ms. Bellis makes defamatory comments and name calling under his posts and doesn't appreciate it. He wishes for her to stay on the subject. Ms. Bellis commented that she does have issues with the stuff she sees on Facebook as an employee and never name called. She brought up the post Commissioner Reeder made about the agenda's being posted early when they are. The agendas are posted on the website in advance. Commissioner Reeder stated that he takes the agenda from the website and posts them on Facebook. Ms. Bellis commented that's it's embarrassing to see what our own leader is doing within our community.

There were 2 Veteran Burial Allowances

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Thomas to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Alayna L. Clark, Chief Clerk.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeffrey Thomas, Secretary