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**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEWS  
RELEASE**

Review of Actions Taken in the Washington County  
Board of County Commissioners Meeting  
Tuesday, July 29, 2008

**COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS**

Commissioner Bill Wivell commented on the landfill mulch issue raised last week, and stated that there will be a policy in effect in time for next year's sales season that allows citizens equal service with commercial firms.

Commissioner Kristin Aleshire reported on attending the Smithsburg Fire Company's most recent meeting. Fire officials requested the Board hold its next Smithsburg meeting at the company's facility. The Commissioner also attended the Maryland Municipal League County chapter meeting. The Town Mayors are pleased with the Hotel-Motel tax distribution, Aleshire said.

Commissioner Jim Kercheval commented on attending the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Legislative Committee meeting last week. State budget numbers were presented by the State Department of Legislative Services. \$70 million in Highway User Revenue will be used to cover expenses at the state level associated with repeal of the Computer Technology Tax. An additional; \$150 million is expected to be cut from the current state budget. MACo is fighting to prevent those cuts from affecting Counties, Kercheval said. The Emergency Medical Services Council met on Monday evening and reviewed Phase I of the EMS Master Plan at the end of one year. Hiring of Advanced Life Support "Chase Vehicle" personnel is underway. The Fire and Rescue Association is looking to develop a training site on its own, Kercheval said, and is looking for land for such a facility. A phone call from the Bill Abeles of Federal Little League requested funds from the Hotel-Motel tax to support the State Little League champion Federal All-Star 11-12 team for expenses incurred at the regional tournament in Bristol, Connecticut August 1<sup>st</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup>. Kercheval stated that ESPN has requested permission to record video footage of the team and its members, and that games in the Little League Tournaments are carried by that sports network. Commissioner Wivell stated he was uneasy with the funding, saying that providing direct Commissioner support set a questionable precedent. Commissioner Terry Baker stated that this is the first time in 18 years that a local team has won the State title, and made the motion to approve the funding. Baker also requested County Recreation Department help in having T-shirts

made and distributed to the team, and the County will provide County pins and other memorabilia to the players and Coaches. The measure passed on a 2-1 vote with Commissioner Wivell, voting "no".

Commissioners' President John Barr commended Hagerstown Regional Airport Director Carolyn Motz and Economic Development Commission officials for continued growth and development of businesses at the airport. Barr cited a report given in earlier closed session, about another major company investing at the airport, and said details of that investment will be announced soon. Barr also distributed copies of articles from the Wall Street Journal, chronicling an 80% rise in the cost of asphalt in the last year and on how Federal Tax shortfalls will affect State budgets.

#### REAL PROPERTY TAX CREDITS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL KILLED OR DISABLED IN LINE OF DUTY

No formal action was required by the Board. Assistant County Attorney Andrew Wilkinson requested direction by consensus as to whether to draft an ordinance providing for a Real Property Tax Credit for Police and Correctional Officers and Fire/Rescue/EMS Personnel killed or permanently and totally disabled while on duty. New state enabling legislation allows counties the option to provide a real property tax credit against the county tax to police officers, correctional officers, or Fire/Rescue/EMS personnel killed or permanently and totally disabled while on duty. The credit can be available to the injured person or the surviving spouse if the surviving spouse remains unmarried. The credit would apply to the legal residence of the injured person at the time of a determination of disability or death, to a legal residence owned within 2 years of the date of disability determination or death, and to any subsequent legal residence. The amount and duration of the tax credit would be determined by the County Commissioners by Ordinance. Discussion centered on any retroactive benefits that would be awarded. The legislation took effect on July 1, 2008, and benefits from that date would be awarded. An Ordinance will be drafted and returned to the Board for review.

#### CONSOLIDATION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Consensus was reached to support these items Sheriff Doug Mullendore brought these items to the Board for discussion. The Sheriff recommended that new radio equipment at his Dispatch Center not be installed, but rather move ahead with consolidation of the new 911 Center when the radio system comes online. Mullendore told the Board that with the delay in the Central Booking project and the delay in the installation of the radio equipment, the fiscal impact of installing radio equipment at the Sheriff's Office is no longer positive. Originally, the timeline for the radio project to go online was in the January to March 2009 timeframe. Since this project has been delayed about 6 months, this is only about three months from the time that Central Booking will come online. All warrants and NICK stolen article files will be maintained in Central Booking, which eliminates the need to have records personnel working around the clock. Mobile data will come online at approximately the same time as Central Booking. Therefore, if funds can be used to keep records personnel on duty 24 hours, 7 days a week, between the time the radio project comes online and when Central Booking comes online this should prove to be more cost effective to the County and citizens. Mullendore asked if funds can be used from the Radio Project CIP to keep records personnel on duty

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If not, could the Sheriff's Office be reimbursed for any overtime required for this purpose if the Patrol budget goes over budget at the end of FY '09 because of this need for overtime. The cost for maintaining records personnel on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during this 3 to 4 month period would be minimal. Overtime would only need to be paid during vacations or other leave taken. Mullendore also asked for consideration from the Board to remediate electrical violations resulting from the renovation of the Patrol facility in 2006, due to a contractor's error. Additional funding would be needed to bring the facility into compliance with the Electrical Code, Mullendore said. County Administrator Greg Murray told Mullendore to use existing budget funds, and review the costs at the end of the current fiscal year.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

**Appointments to Boards and Commissions:** County Clerk Joni Bittner brought a request from the Disability Advisory Committee before the Board for approval. Jennifer Maust of Smithsburg was appointed to a three-year term on the Committee following closed session discussion by the Commissioners.

**County Administrator's Comments:** County Administrator Greg Murray discussed touring Montgomery County's waste energy facility last week. That County works with Maryland Environmental Services to prepare solid waste for incineration. Recyclables are sorted and removed from the waste stream and the remaining trash is moved by rail to the incinerator site near the County power plant, where it is burned to fuel electric generators. That County burns about 100 tons of waste per day, Murray said. A request was received from Hagerstown Community College that the Board sign a resolution supporting the proposed Arts and Sciences complex at the School. The resolution was needed to show local support for the facility in order to obtain State funding. Funds for that project are already committed in the Commissioners' Capital Improvement Projects budget for FY 2009. The documents will be circulated for Commissioners' review.



Staff Comments: Human Resources Director Bill Sonnik introduced Quinn Hoover, a Boy Scout working on the Eagle Scout classification. Hoover is doing intern duty in HR this summer, to earn a local government merit badge.

Public Works Director Joe Kroboth told the Board that construction work on traffic improvements at the entrance to the Smithsburg School complex is underway, with work being provided by the County Highways Department and a local contractor. A contract will be let soon for repairs to the pedestrian bridge in Devil's Backbone Park and bids are out for drainage improvements on SanMar Road. Kroboth requested permission to hire Merle Saville as Transportation Engineer at Grade 15, as discussed in closed session earlier in the day. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

#### CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Each week the Board of County Commissioners sets aside time to hear from citizens of Washington County on matters of importance to the community.

Dean Joyce of Sharpsburg commented on conservation efforts versus the weed ordinance in Washington County. Joyce stated he had a federal grant to construct a small wildlife conservation area at his residence along Mondale Road, that has been cited as in violation of the County policy on control of noxious weeds. Joyce requested amendment of the Ordinance to exempt such projects.

Johnathan Kays, Natural Resources Specialist with the Maryland Extension Service's Western Maryland Research and Education Center commented that a number of seminars have been presented promoting creation of small wildlife habitats and also requested modification of the Weed Control Ordinance.

John Himes of Sandy Hook commented on traffic safety and public safety communications needs in the southern portion of the county.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

County Attorney Issues: County Attorney John Martirano commented on the Citizen Participation issues regarding the small wildlife habitats, and told the Board that the Department of Permits and Inspections advised Mr. Joyce that the issues will be looked at over the time left on his current federal grant, which will expire on August 31. The project would be exempt until that date. The Attorney's office will confer with Permits and Inspections on the issue, Martirano said.

#### GRANT: PUBLIC SAFETY INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS

The Board approved this request by unanimous vote. Kevin Lewis, Director of the Division of Fire and Emergency Services brought the Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant (PSICG) for Fiscal Year 2007 before the Board, with a request to accept the grant in the amount of \$600,000 and to execute a Memorandum of Agreement with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Department of Homeland Security as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, were authorized to expend \$1 billion in grants to public safety agencies to improve interoperable communications. With execution of this agreement, the funds were acquired to establish fiber connectivity with the Sheriff's Office, the 911 center, and

the state-wide communications network (PSI-NET) as part of the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP).

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