

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Tuesday – February 14, 2012 – 2:00 p.m.

The regular monthly meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Tuesday, February 14, 2012, at 2:00 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine.

Commission members present were: Carol L. Maines, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Administrative Assistant Candice Richards, Technical Support Specialist Mike Dean, Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, KRCC Director Linwood Lothrop, Sheriff Donna Dennison, Chief Deputy Tim Carroll, Patrol Administrator Lt. Kirk Guerrette, Jail Administrator Major John Hinkley, EMA Director Ray Sisk, DA's Office Victim Witness Advocate Stephanie Laite, DA's Office Victim Witness Advocate Lynn Talbot, EMA Administrative Assistant Donna Allen, Sheriff's Office Administrative Assistant Linda Lasko-Hall, Assistant Jail Administrator Lt. Kathy Carver, Programs and Services Officer Lt. Cindy Gardner, C/O Andre Charette, DA Secretary/Systems Administrator Kelly Leland, Deeds Clerk Madelene Royer, Registrar of Deeds Lisa Simmons, Register of Probate Elaine Hallett, and Deputy Register of Probate Julie Allen.

Budget Committee members present: Lawrence Nash, Bob Duke, and Randy Stearns.

Members of the media in attendance: Christine Parrish of the *Free Press*; Steve Betts of the *Bangor Daily News*; and Shlomit Auciello of the *Village Soup*;

Municipal leaders in attendance: Greg Grotton, Union Selectman; Duane Vigue, Washington Selectman; Wes Daniel, Washington Selectman; Dan Davey, Warren Selectman; Daniel Staples, Cushing Selectman; Alton Grover, Cushing Selectman; Linda Post, Owls Head Selectman; Valmore Blastow, Thomaston Town Manager; Bill Reinhardt, St. George Selectman; Grant Watmough, Warren Town Manager; and Pat Finnigan, Camden Town Manager.

Others in attendance: Paul Gibbons, attorney for the Town of Thomaston; Lee Houghton, Union resident; Patricia Egan, Rockport resident; Stan Graffam, Union resident; Lynn Athearn, Union resident; Cathy Athearn, Union resident; Stephen Sawyer, Warren resident; Harold McCuff, Union resident; Doris Vertz, union resident; Jean Perimord, Union resident; Peter Lammert, Thomaston resident; Anthony Jameson, Warren resident; Wayne Kirkpatrick, Union resident; Karen Poulin, Union resident; Sylvia Rundevall, Union resident; Deborah Kuneds; Wayne Luce, Warren resident; Mike Ledger, Union resident; Wayne Brown, South Thomaston resident; Joel Moore, Union resident; Sara Moore, Union resident; Will Russell, National Correctional Employees Union; Mike Nessinger, National Correctional Employees Union; Bill Peace, Rockport resident; Andy Vaughan, Warren resident; Linda McAllister, Union resident; Robert Moors, Rockport resident; Lyle Cramer, Union Resident; Charles Crafford, Rockland resident; Colin Wentworth, Rockland resident; Mike Ugue, Rockland resident; George Kuntson, Warren resident; John Dolute, Rockport resident; Bill Packard, Union resident; Rodney E. Royer, Rockland resident; and Cynthia Rosen, Washington resident.

Regular Meeting – Agenda
Tuesday – February 14, 2012 – 2:00 p.m.

- I. 2:00 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 2:01 Public Comment** - Public Comment during other portions of the meeting will only be granted by permission of the chair.
- III. 2:15 Consent Items**
1. Approve Consent Items as Presented:
 - i. Agenda - Non Agenda Items Only Permitted if Emergency in Nature.
 - ii. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of January 5, 2012.
 - iii. Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of January 10, 2012.
 - iv. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of January 12, 2012.
 - v. Monthly Written Departmental Reports.
 - vi. Reserve Withdrawals.
 - vii. 2011 Budget Line Transfers.
- IV. 2:20 Action Items**
1. Act to Approve the Revised Airport Public Advisory Committee By-Laws & Charter.
 2. Act to Call for Nominees to Fill Seats on the Airport Public Advisory Committee (APAC), Set the Timeline, and Approve the Press Release.
 3. Act on Request for a New Public Hearing, and Budget Committee and Commission Votes, Regarding the Adoption of the 2012 County Budget.
 4. Act to Award EMA Bid for Radios/Pagers/Batteries.
 5. Act on NACo Rx Drug Prescription Card Program.
 6. Act to Approve the Changes to the Technical Support Specialist Job Description.
 7. Act to Approve the Revised Legal Secretary II Job Description for the DA's Office.
 8. Act to Set a Date for Meeting with Municipalities to Discuss the Participation of Knox County and Municipalities within the County in the Orthoimagery Program.
 9. Act to Vote on Procedure for the County Administrator Performance Evaluation and Employment Agreement.
- V. 3:00 Discussion Items**
1. Discussion of Grandfathered Employee Health Benefits and Follow-Up on the Meeting with Employees.
 2. Update on 301 Park Street.
 3. Discussion of Legislative Update.
- VI. 3:15 Other Business**
- VII. Adjourn**

- I. Meeting Called to Order**
 Commission Chair Roger Moody called the regular meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 2:00 p.m.
- II. Public Comment**
 Commissioner Roger Moody asked for public comment. There was none.
- III. Consent Items**
1. Approve Consent Items as Presented:
 - i. Agenda - Non Agenda Items Only Permitted if Emergency in Nature.
 - ii. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of January 5, 2012.
 - iii. Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of January 10, 2012.
 - iv. Minutes of Special Commission Meeting of January 12, 2012.

- v. Monthly Written Departmental Reports.
- vi. Reserve Withdrawals.
- vii. Budget Line Transfers

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to approve the consent items as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

Reserve Withdrawals – November & December 2011:

Airport Projects	461608-14640	\$570.00
Building	200008-12655	\$8.97
Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant	300008-10046	\$3,600.00
Legal Expense	200008-12650	\$8,478.35
Resignation Benefits	200008-12670	-\$6,984.00
Unemployment Compensation	200008-12610	\$942.36
	Total	\$6,615.68

Reserve Withdrawals – Airport Projects:

Airport Projects	461608-14640	\$24,063.57
Airport Equipment	461608-14610	\$356.79
	Total	\$24,420.36

Reserve Withdrawals:

Deeds Surcharge	200008-12740	\$150.00
	Total	\$150.00

2011 Budget Line Transfers:

**FROM:
ADMINISTRATION & IT**

TO:

Overtime	004003-53800	\$685	Administrative Asst.	004003-53044	\$10
FICA	004003-53900	\$2,977	Technical Support	004003-53049	\$35
Health Insurance	004003-53910	\$2,611	MSRS Retirees	004003-53971	\$576
ICMA	004003-53960	\$568	Auditing Services	004004-54005	\$6,507
Lodging	004004-54115	\$1,346	Consultation Fees	004004-54015	\$515
Postage	004004-54520	\$917	Labor Relations	004004-54050	\$3,101
Training & Seminars	004004-54545	\$2,242	Legal Fees	004004-54055	\$3,036
Office Supplies	004005-55335	\$2,421	Telephone	004004-54315	\$200
Computer Supplies	004005-55385	\$1,410	Dues & Registration	004004-54515	\$85
			Equipment Copies	004004-54570	\$1,112

AIRPORT

Medical Exams	416004-54550	\$128	Postage & Shipping	416004-54520	\$12
			Gas	416004-54650	\$57
			Hangar Electricity	416004-54750	\$59

BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Electrical Repair	006004-54600	\$1,027	Building Repair	006004-54595	\$1,027
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COMMUNICATIONS

Dispatcher	518003-53812	\$2,604	Radio Repairs	518004-54580	\$375
Part Time	518003-53820	\$4,570	Building Radio	518004-54910	\$7,174

Telephone	518004-54315	\$375
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DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Administrative	003003-53033	\$3	Drug Analysis	003004-54025	\$386
Victim Witness	003003-53410	\$28	Computer Consultant	003004-54051	\$1,191
FICA	003003-53900	\$39	Printing	003004-54525	\$6
Photography	003004-54060	\$54	Superior Court	003004-54540	\$33
Meals	003004-54110	\$103	Computer Repairs	003004-54585	\$303
Telephone	003004-54315	\$204	Office Supplies	003005-55335	\$226
Metro Line	003004-54325	\$451			
Dues & Registration	003004-54515	\$683			
Postage	003004-54520	\$28			
Equipment Copier	003004-54570	\$198			
Audio/Video	003005-55350	\$58			
Books & Subscriptions	003005-55505	\$296			

EMA

Equipment Repairs	002004-54575	\$214	Telephone	002004-54315	\$214
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FINANCE

FICA	005003-53900	\$106	Training & Seminars	005004-54545	\$106
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JAIL

Food Service	818003-3112	\$387	Unemployment	818003-3910	\$4,213
Holiday Overtime	818003-3603	\$16,146	Inmate Expense	818004-4016	\$1,927
Employee Medical	818003-3902	\$3,528	Inmate Programs	818004-4019	\$11,000
FICA	818003-3904	\$8,706	Medical Lab Tests	818004-4021	\$2,197
ICMA	818003-3908	\$5,445	Gas	818004-4206	\$1,687
Resignations	818003-3909	\$17,106	Electricity	818004-4302	\$5,037
Audit	818004-4001	\$2,524	Fuel/oil	818004-4303	\$24,004
Water	818004-4312	\$3,158	Sewage	818004-4308	\$20,450
Computers	818004-4604	\$2,714	Telephone	818004-4310	\$1,808
Heating	818004-4610	\$7,358	Equipment Rental	818004-4403	\$1,240
Parking lots	818004-4617	\$3,056	Rubbish Removal	818004-4621	\$2,121
Plumbing	818004-4619	\$4,759	Food	818005-5101	\$1,421
Insurance	818004-4703	\$4,030	Institutional	818005-5225	\$4,884
TAN interest	818004-4817	\$9,833	Maintenance	818005-5227	\$8,829
Uniforms	818005-5303	\$2,743	Office Supplies	818005-5230	\$514
			Uniforms	818005-5302	\$161

PROBATE

Transcripts	010004-54080	\$73	Office Supplies	010005-55335	\$6
			Telephone	010004-54315	\$67

SHERIFF

Auto Repairs	011004-54655	\$1,499	Gas	011004-54650	\$372
			Emergency Transport	011004-54700	\$160
			Criminal Investigative	011004-54730	\$69
			Medical Exams	011004-54550	\$485
			Safety Supplies	011005-55305	\$12
			Auto Supplies	011005-55310	\$174
			Computer Supplies	011005-55385	\$210
			Uniforms	011005-55405	\$17

Total:	\$119,411
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IV. Action Items

1. Act to Approve the Revised Airport Public Advisory Committee By-Laws & Charter:

Administrator Hart explained that the last revisions by the Airport Public Advisory Committee (APAC) had been sent to County Attorney Peter Marchesi's office. Cassandra Shaffer sent back a few revisions which have been incorporated into the drafts.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to approve the revised Airport Public Advisory Committee By-Laws and Charter as presented with the three changes noted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines.

Commissioner Maines suggested that since the issue of participating in meetings via phone conference just came up with the County Charter, the County Commission should probably revisit the wording in these documents as well.

Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves commented that physical attendance is preferred but electronic attendance is allowed as long as the charter supports it, and its at the discretion of the chair. It also depends on the quality of the technology being used. A lot of businesses and governments are doing this because people around the world need to have and attend meetings without traveling.

There was a brief discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of term limits, and about the APAC's goal to have diversity on the Committee.

Commission changes to the documents:

1. Remove the word "constitution" in the title of the By-Laws.
2. Define diversity as "an important" goal, not a "priority".
3. Put term limits back in but change from 2 terms to 3 terms (for a total of nine years).

- A vote was taken with all in favor.

2. Act to Call for Nominees to Fill Seats on the Airport Public Advisory Committee (APAC), Set the Timeline, and Approve the Press Release:

Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves explained that every year there are three seats on the APAC that need to be filled since the terms are overlapping in a cycle. The APAC called for nominations a month ago. He said that he had received some comments as well as one nominee since then.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to call for nominees to fill seats on the Airport Public Advisory Committee, approve the timeline, and approve the press release as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor.

3. Act on Request for a New Public Hearing, and Budget Committee and Commission Votes, Regarding the Adoption of the 2012 County Budget (Taken Out of Order):

Commissioner Moody said that the Commission had received Greg Grotton's letter asking to have the matter placed on the Commission meeting agenda, and he invited Mr. Grotton to speak.

Mr. Grotton read the following statement:

"I want to thank the Commissioners and the County Administrator for the opportunity to meet with you today. I am here to request a new public hearing, Budget Committee vote and a final vote by the commissioners regarding the adoption of the 2012 County Budget. The County's previous process for the budget adoption was flawed; the county administrator has admitted that the County did not comply with the legal requirement of a ten day notice, citing instead that a 9 day notice was given. I personally feel that the vote by a Budget Committee member who was absent and voted by phone is also not allowed under the County Charter. Mistakes have been made....and the only way to correct them is to re-do the

process, following the prescribed rules and regulations. Members of the Board...it is time to demonstrate your 'quality of character' and do the right thing for the County and for the residents who have put their faith in you to do the jobs for which you were elected. I believe your actions in this matter can do much to restore your credibility in the community and I urge you to give serious consideration to my request. Thank you again for your willingness to let me speak."

Attorney Paul Gibbons stated that he was in attendance representing the Town of Thomaston. He said that the County's charter requires certain notice but no notice was ever sent to the paper. No written mail was sent, just email. The Right to Know Law requires the County to inform the public of meetings. Because the County didn't do this, the meeting was illegal and to do anything under that meeting is illegal. Waldo County uses certified mail to make sure their municipal clerks get the notices and advertise in the local newspapers. He said that if the County doesn't call a new meeting, he has been instructed by the Board of Selectmen to file a document with the court and he was confident that he would win. He added that he believed this was all an innocent mistake and that it just needs to be corrected.

Dan Davey introduced himself as being a selectman for the Town of Warren. He said that he looked at this as a larger picture. The Federal government is fiscally irresponsible, is stepping all over the constitution and not doing the right thing for the people who elected them. The State is also fiscally irresponsible and has been finding corruption in multiple agencies. Now county government is showing signs of fiscal irresponsibility. The County needs to be adhering to the rules. Setting pay scales at or above private sector is not responsible.

Mr. Grotton commented that this will be a very easy problem to correct by having a new hearing. He asked the County to refrain from spending more taxpayer dollars to hire a lawyer to get an opinion on whether to have another hearing.

DA's Office Victim Witness Advocate Lynn Talbot stated that she appreciated that the County had finally had a pay study to correct the pay of its employees. She felt like she was finally getting the right wage. She added that there were at least 15 County employees in this room who work very hard for the taxpayers of Knox County. Not all of them could be here.

Budget Committee member Lawrence Nash stated that the editorial in the paper was right – the County did not give due notice. The County should do the right thing and operate under the 2011 budget until the 2012 budget is approved.

Rockport resident Bill Peace commented that he was in opposition to how it was handled, not to the employees getting raises. He said that he didn't think the Budget Committee vote was handled correctly with no notice going to the people of the County. If more people had known about the hearing, they would have been there to voice an opinion.

Owls Head Selectwoman Linda Post said that the Town of Owls Head's objection was the process. Someone voting over the phone is not in the Charter and shouldn't be allowed to vote. The problem wasn't so much the budget itself but rather the way it was handled.

Commissioner Carol Maines commented that something similar happened in the City of Rockland in 2001 with a 10-day notice that was only given in 9 days. She said that she had read some other cases that were cited during that process which indicated that just the ten day notice issue by itself is enough to mandate a rehearing of that budget. In this instance, besides the late notice issue, the County also did not have a hard copy of the notice and budget taken to each municipality and did not advertise as it was mandated to in the Charter. She felt that probably the biggest issue was having one Budget Committee member participating by phone but that could be rectified by having another hearing with notice complying to the letter for the 2012 budget.

Commissioner Richard Parent stated that the only question that he had was whether or not the Commission has the authority to insist that the Budget Committee do a revote.

Commissioner Roger Moody stated that it's actually the Budget Committee's public hearing and it would be up to the Budget Committee to have another hearing. He added that he felt that the County better start the process to have another hearing. He asked Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke if he had any comments.

Budget Committee Chair Bob Duke commented that the budget process has been beat up a little bit and he didn't think that was necessarily fair. He said that he had served on the Committee for about seven years. He explained that Bill Jones, the Committee member who participated at the public hearing via teleconference, had participated throughout the rest of the budget process in person. Mr. Jones ends up missing one meeting during the budget process because he's selling Christmas trees in Washington D.C. He has been part of the discussion and could hear most of the comments made during the public hearing, some of which were contrary to the compensation package being discussed, so Mr. Jones was aware that there were concerns. The Committee let everyone be heard that wanted to be. The notice is an issue, so that's something to be considered. Mr. Duke added that he was more concerned about suspending the budget after the County has already started spending it. If the Commission feels strongly that this hearing should take place, he asked that a letter be sent to the Budget Committee as a whole and start setting that up. The Committee has always deemed that Bill was in attendance even though he wasn't physically in the room for that one meeting. He felt that it would be proper to get a legal opinion and then get the Budget Committee together to decide if we should have another public hearing.

Mr. Grotton commented that he agreed that the Charter has some holes in it that need to be fixed. He read aloud from *Article V Budget Procedures, Section 4, C – Quorum* of the Charter:

“No action of the Budget Committee shall be effective unless approved by a majority of committee members in attendance.”

Mr. Grotton stated that most organizations try to follow Roberts Rules which indicate that you can hold a board meeting by conference call but it must be noted in your charter or by-laws that it's allowed. If the County needs to make changes to the Charter, then get it back out to the voters, but right now that provision isn't in the Charter.

Attorney Gibbons stated that this does not require the approval of having another hearing. The lack of notice and illegality of the first meeting had nothing to do with the Budget Committee. The only thing the County can do to repair the problem is to have another meeting.

Mr. Grotton commented that the Charter states that you can continue into the budget season with the last budget's numbers so the only real problem will be the pay raises.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to proceed with a new public hearing on Thursday, March 15, 2012 at 7:00 p.m., and send proper notice. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines.

Administrator Hart explained that the Budget Committee doesn't set the date for hearings. The Commission sets the budget meeting schedule. Mr. Duke commented that if the Commission set a date he didn't see a problem with everyone being able to come. Administrator Hart added that they just have to allow enough time to send out the notice to newspapers and to municipalities.

Commissioner Moody suggested that Thursday nights seemed good for meetings. Administrator Hart said that he would check on where the hearing could be held so that there would be room if a large number of people came.

- A vote was taken with all in favor.

(Majority of the meeting attendees left. Remaining attendees were mostly employees.)

4. Act to Award EMA Bid for Radios/Pagers/Batteries:

EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that bid requests were sent out to ten Maine vendors to cover mobiles, portables, and pagers used by Fire/EMS/EMA agencies in Maine. The apparent low bidder was RCM (Radio Communications Management, Inc.). The volume of the pool has grown which allows even better savings for everyone participating. This last buy will finish the County off being ready for the narrow-banding required by the state, and it also gets about 70 percent of the state ready as well.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to award the EMA pooled bid to Radio Communications Management, Inc. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor.

5. Act on NACo Rx Drug Prescription Card Program:

EMA Director Ray Sisk explained that in January, NACo announced a transaction revenue sharing option to the popular program which we provide to county residents. If the Commission agreed to the new revenue sharing plan, \$1.00 of revenue to the County would be generated for each prescription filled. If the County chooses to maintain status quo, residents will see a slightly higher discount than available now. Had this option been in place at the plan's inception in Knox County, it would have generated approximately \$3,124 revenue for the County. Director Sisk strongly recommended that the Commission maintain status quo in order to pass the greatest possible savings to the County's residents.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to approve the County maintaining status quo so that the \$1 savings goes directly to the residents participating in the program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

6. Act to Approve the Changes to the Technical Support Specialist Job Description:

Administrator Hart explained that the Job Evaluation Committee had recently met and came to the conclusion that some changes needed to be made to this job description. Some of the important changes were a change in title (it is now the Systems Administrator), the pay grade, and it was changed to an Exempt (salaried) position.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to approve the changes to the Technical Support Specialist (changing it to the Systems Administrator) as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor.

7. Act to Approve the Revised Legal Secretary II Job Description for the DA's Office:

There are two minor changes that Geoff Rushlau, DA recommended to be made.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to approve the changes to the Legal Secretary II job description as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carol Maines. A vote was taken with all in favor.

8. Act to Set a Date for Meeting with Municipalities to Discuss the Participation of Knox County and Municipalities within the County in the Orthoimagery Program:

Administrator Hart explained that he and Commissioner Moody have had discussions with a few Assessor's Agents for towns within Knox County about the Orthoimagery program. The State has

awarded a contract with a vendor for this program and the County now needs to schedule a meeting with the municipalities to find out what they would like to do. Dan Walters, Geospatial Liaison for ME, MA & RI would attend the meeting with the municipalities to explain this in more detail and answer questions.

Commissioner Moody asked Administrator Hart to check with the managers group meeting on Friday to see if they had dates that would work. Administrator Hart said that he would and added that if all of the commissioners come it will be a Special Commission meeting. The County would invite assessors, code enforcers, selectmen, town managers, fire, police, EMS, etc.

Commissioners picked Tuesday, March 20th at 4 p.m. Administrator Hart said that he would check with the managers group and see if they have any issues with the date and time.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to set a date and time of Tuesday, March 20, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. for a meeting with the municipalities to discuss the participation of Knox County and municipalities within the County in the Orthoimagery Program. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

9. Act to Vote on Procedure for the County Administrator Performance Evaluation and Employment Agreement:

Commissioner Moody explained that Administrator Hart and HR Consultant Laurie Bouchard had discussed doing the county administrator's performance evaluation with the same questions that were used in the past but to create an online version of the performance evaluation using "Survey Monkey", an online service. This would also allow what's called a "360 evaluation" where the department heads that report to the county administrator would also be invited to take the same survey to evaluate the administrator as well. The responses would be anonymous. This way there will be feedback from both the Commission and the department heads. He added that Administrator Hart was okay with that.

Commissioner Maines asked if they would be able to tell whether a comment was made by a commissioner or a department head. Systems Administrator Mike Dean answered that it depends on how the survey is set up. Most of the time the surveys are designed to be completely anonymous unless the participant wants to identify themselves. If the commissioners all put their names on their surveys, you could assume the others were done by department heads. The Commission can decide how they want the survey designed – it could be multiple choice, check boxes, essay style, or a combination.

Commissioner Moody said that he, Administrator Hart, and Ms. Bouchard had also discussed the timing of the annual review. The current contract expires in May. The evaluation would be done in March this year, since it should be done before the new agreement is put in place. In the future, the evaluation will be done in June so that new commissioners will have some time with the administrator before they are asked to complete an evaluation.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to agree to the procedure of using Survey Monkey that involves not only commissioner feedback but also department heads. The time frame for completing that is May 15th. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

V. Discussion Items

1. Discussion of Grandfathered Employee Health Benefits and Follow-Up on the Meeting with Employees (Taken Out of Order).

Administrator Hart explained that he, Commissioner Moody and Laurie Bouchard had met with 22 non-union County employees on February 9th. Many employees at the meeting expressed opinions about the possibility of discontinuing grandfathered employee health benefits. Some of the highlights of comments made by employees at that meeting:

- Some felt that the County was targeting the long-term employees which was seen as unfair.
- The study was done to retain people and if you change a benefit for a group of employees that doesn't look like you're trying to retain your people. They may decide to leave.
- Some employees got raises from the study while some didn't, and now the ones who didn't are also losing that benefit.
- Eventually as people retire those with grandfathered benefits will be leaving and then it won't be an issue anymore.
- They wanted a face put to this and not just a dollar amount.
- Maybe phase it in over a few years instead of doing it all at once.
- It sends a message to long-term employees that the County wants them to leave so they can be replaced with other people who would be paid less because they have less longevity or experience.
- If there are going to be any changes, the employees will need a lot of notice before it happens.

Employees present for this portion of the meeting: Linda Lasko-Hall, Mike Dean, Kathy Robinson, Ray Sisk, Donna Allen, Cindy Davis, Kathy Carver, Elaine Hallett, Lisa Simmons, Sheriff Dennison, Jeff Northgraves, Linwood Lothrop.

Commissioner Moody stated that Laurie Bouchard would be researching some options and ideas for finding a way to make both sides happy. He added that it may not prove to be anything worth pursuing but that it has enough feasibility to at least give it some review. He was not sure if the information would be available by the regular meeting in March. Administrator Hart commented that he was also having negotiations with two unions so making a decision might have to be postponed until the April meeting.

Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves commented that he is not grandfathered but the only thing that comes to his mind is the issue of fairness about grandfathering in general. At the time the employees were grandfathered, they were given options with benefits and they made a decision on their benefits based on what the County was offering at the time. If you get rid of grandfathering, you've taken away that choice.

Commissioner Parent stated that the Commission should postpone having any decision on this until after the budget is resolved. The other two commissioners agreed. Administrator Hart said that he would put it on the April meeting agenda as a discussion item to review the information Ms. Bouchard will have collected by then.

2. Update on 301 Park Street.

Administrator Hart explained that the RFP for Architect/Engineering services will be going out soon. The bids will be due back at the beginning of March and then the Commission will award the bid at the March Regular Commission meeting.

Commissioner Maines asked about whether there would be someone contracted to specifically see over the Communications piece since this RFP doesn't cover that. Administrator Hart explained that the County is talking to a communications engineer from Connecticut to get some vendors and their references to see who would be qualified to serve in that capacity. There's no one in Maine with that expertise. At this point the costs for that are still unknown.

EMA Director Ray Sisk commented that having an overseer saves the County time and expense in the long run and that person runs interference between the architect and contractors, which the county administrator just won't have the time to do. Airport Manager Jeff Northgraves expressed a similar opinion and added that the County has smart people working for them but there really needs to be someone with more expertise overseeing the project.

3. Discussion of Legislative Update.

Commissioner Moody explained that he had asked Administrator Hart to put this on the agenda. He asked the other commissioners if they had also received the legislative information in their email, which is sent by Howe & Co. on behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association. Commissioner Moody specifically referred to the update on the lawsuit regarding the Registry of Deeds and the fees.

VI. Other Business

Compensation for Elected Officials

Administrator Hart explained that this wasn't put on the agenda because he had forgotten to send a memo to the Sheriff, Register of Probate, and the Probate Judge to ask for their recommendation for how compensation could be handled in the future. He said that he did send them a memo on February 6th and gave them a short deadline because it was so close to the Commission meeting already. In response, the three women submitted a letter to him asking to have it on the March meeting agenda because there wasn't enough time for them to respond for the February meeting.

2012 Budget

Commissioner Moody wondered if the administrator should put a cap on some spending until the public hearing so the County doesn't end up in the hole.

Administrator Hart commented that the Charter says to follow the previous year's budget so there shouldn't be any problems since we're still in the beginning of the year. Not all employees have been getting the increases yet anyway because of the union negotiations. He added that you can't take back the wage increases that have already been instituted. If the public hearing and new vote makes a change in the budget on those salaries, the Commission and Budget Committee will have to decide what to do then. If the budget isn't reapproved as is, the County will have spent more in during January – March than was spent in 2011 during the same time frame, so the 2012 year may end up with shortages in funds.

VII. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Commissioner Carol Maines to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Richard Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice Richards
Administrative Assistant

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on March 14, 2012.**