

Monroe Commission Holds November Meeting

The Monroe County Commission met in regular session on November 2, 2009 at the Courthouse. President Joyce Pritt called the meeting to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer.

Carl Taskes, a consultant with US Cellular, met with Commissioners concerning the installation of additional cell phone towers in the county. Taskes reported that US Cellular recently installed a tower just north of Peterstown and another tower is scheduled to be installed near Ballard in the spring of 2010. He went on to say that US Cellular was now looking at a third site near the intersection of Rt. 219 and Rt.122 at Raines' Corner.

Commissioners reviewed the annual insurance loss run report and the monthly meeting minutes for the Red Sulphur and Gap Mills Public Service Districts and the Monroe Board of Health. The annual Fire Marshal's report was also reviewed. A Deputy Fire Marshal recently conducted an inspection of the Courthouse, 911 Center, Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Magistrate's Office. He commended county officials for their efforts in addressing deficiencies and making numerous improvements to the Courthouse.

Cathy Abernathy met with Commissioners to introduce herself as a new employee of the AmeriCorps program. Ms. Abernathy said she will primarily be working on the "Welcome Wagon" program. This program provides new residents with information on the different services offered by the businesses throughout the county.

The County Clerk told Commissioners that there were a total of 334 individuals vaccinated for the HINI virus at the clinics held by the Monroe Health Center last Saturday. Of the total of vaccines given, 159 were given at the Union clinic and 175 were given at the Peterstown site.

Marion Shiflet appeared before Commissioners and advised that Steve Weir has been hired as the new Executive Director of the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation. He said Mr. Weir had originally planned to attend the meeting today but received a last minute notice that he had to go to Charleston in an effort to secure a grant on behalf of GVEDC.

Mr. Shiflet also said there was an effort underway to secure funding to construct a helicopter landing pad somewhere in Union. He said some of the funding was in place and a site search was underway. He said emergency medical helicopters needed a safe place to land instead of landing in a field when the need arises to transport someone to a medical facility.

Commissioners reviewed the county's monthly financial statement and adopted a resolution of support for a Governor's Community Partnership Grant for the Monroe Animal League.

Commissioner Ashley reported that the Department of Highways has awarded the contract to make the necessary repairs to the Knobs road. Commissioners authorized the Clerk to place a notice in the local newspaper that there is a vacancy on the Building Commission and anyone interested in being appointed to this commission should submit a resume to the County Commission by their December 2nd meeting.

The County Commission denied a request from Sweet Springs Rescue Squad to pay for the electricity needed to operate a radio communications repeater recently

installed by the county in the squad building. The repeater, which cost over \$10,000.00 and was paid for by the county, was installed in an effort to improve radio communications in the Sweet Springs area. Commissioners felt it wouldn't be fair to pay this expense when they don't pay any of the operation expenses for any of the other emergency responding agencies in the county. 911 Director Bruce Power reported that this repeater has indeed improved communications.

Jeannie Gullette, Magistrate Assistant, met with Commissioners concerning a previous funding request made by Magistrates Kevin Miller and Nancy Crews. Miller and Crews requested funding to install a chair lift on the steps leading up to the Magistrate's Office. The County rents the second floor of the Union Volunteer Fire Department for the Magistrate's Office. Commissioners told Ms. Gullette that the county doesn't have adequate funds on hand to install the lift and the county couldn't apply for grant funding for this project because the building is not owned by the County. Commissioner Ashley suggested the fire department apply for the grant. He said he would work with Delegate Gerald Crosier and fire department officials in an effort to secure funding for this project.

The Clerk advised Commissioners that the Board of Education has purchased property on Rich Creek Valley road, just outside of Peterstown, to build a new middle school.

Commissioners approved a request from Shirley Hall, Executive Director for the Family Resource Network, to help sponsor a seminar to conduct sensitivity training for officials and other individuals who are required to deal with domestic violence issues.

The Clerk reported that the county now owes \$72,000.00 in legal fees in reference to the tax assessment appeal filed by Mountain America. Mountain America is the company that developed the Walnut Ridge development near Union. The case has been heard by the Supreme Court of Appeals and county officials are now awaiting a ruling.

Commissioners reviewed a "Notice to Proceed" for the Potts Valley Rails to Trails project in Waiteville. Former County Commissioner Dr. Craig Mohler is spearheading this project.

The Clerk reported that the county's Tourism Bureau has purchased and installed two information kiosks in the county. One of the kiosks has been installed at Beckett's Park near Pickaway and the other one has been erected at the "Old Fountain", located north of Peterstown in Rt. 219. These kiosks contain information about the county as well as a county map.

Ross Lewis, President of the Communications Worker of America from Beckley, met with Commissioners and advised them that Verizon is proposing to sell all phone lines in West Virginia, excluding Verizon Wireless and Verizon Business, to Frontier. Mr. Lewis said this is a bad deal for West Virginia and the only winners would be Verizon and Wall Street. He said Frontier is a very small company that struggles to maintain the lines it presently owns. Commissioners denied Mr. Lewis' request to adopt the resolution but did agree to send a letter to the Public Service Commission advising that they have concerns about such sale.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Thompson and Ethel Van Buren met with Commissioners again concerning the name of the road leading from Rt. 3 to Moncove Lake State Park. Ms. Van Buren said there have been two "W. Marion Shiflet Parkway" signs erected

along this road and the “Moncove Lake” road sign has been moved from Rt. 3 to the top of the stop sign at the intersection of Rt.3 and this road.

In 2002, the WV Legislature adopted a resolution requesting the Department of Highways name this road as the “W. Marion Shiflet Parkway”. When 911 officials began the countywide mapping and addressing project, they named the road as the “Moncove Lake” road.

The three individuals in attendance asked the County Commission to officially notify the Department of Highways that the name of this road is “Moncove Lake” road and to relocate the “Moncove Lake” road sign to an appropriate location on Rt. 3. They also asked Commissioners to make a request to the Department of Highways to remove the “W. Marion Shiflet Parkway” and find out who authorized the erection of the Shiflet signs. Commissioners unanimously agreed to write the letter to the Department of Highways confirming the name of the road as “Moncove Lake” road but declined the request to ask Department of Highways’ officials remove the “W. Marion Shiflet Parkway” signs.

Commissioners scheduled a public hearing for December 1st to hear comments and receive input on the draft of a comprehensive plan for the county as prepared by the Monroe County Planning Commission. The hearing will be held at 7:00 pm at the Courthouse. The draft plan can be viewed at www.monroecountywv.net and then click on “Comprehensive Plan”.

The County Commission

Commissioners approved ten final estate settlements and four exonerations.