

BOARD OF GARRETT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC MEETING
Tuesday, March 16, 2021
Meeting was Held via Video Conference/Limited Seating

IN ATTENDANCE

Chairman Paul C. Edwards
Commissioner James C. Hinebaugh
Commissioner S. Larry Tichnell

County Administrator Kevin G. Null

CALL TO ORDER OF PUBLIC SESSION at 4:06 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chairman Edwards asked for a moment of silence for those who have lost their lives to COVID. This is the one (1) year anniversary of the Courthouse and County Offices being shut down due to COVID.

PUBLIC SESSION

1. Mr. Null indicated there was no addition or deletion to the Public Meeting Agenda. The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Hinebaugh, which was seconded by Commissioner Tichnell, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the Public Meeting Agenda for March 16, 2021.
2. The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Hinebaugh, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the Public Meeting Minutes of March 1, 2021.
3. **Update on County Response to COVID-19:** Robert Stephens, Garrett County Health Officer provided an update on COVID-19 and vaccine.

Good news and Bad news today

Bad News

- ❖ 1,874 total cases with 61 deaths
- ❖ Over the past ten (10) days the County went from the lowest rates in the State to the highest with a 7-day case rate of 12.8% and a positivity rate of 6.41%. The increase is primarily due to 25 cases.
- ❖ Concern that ten (10) days after the case rates goes up, the hospitalization rate usually goes up.
- ❖ Important to keep testing. Testing helps to gather important information on the variant spread.

Good News

Governor rescinded restrictions on gathering at restaurants and churches. While it is important to get businesses and schools open, six feet social distancing and face coverings are still required and may affect the number of people who can be in a space. We have already noticed people letting their guard down with shaking hands and not wearing face coverings.

Vaccinations

- ❖ Currently in Phase 1C - 22.6% of the population has been vaccinated with at least one shot. 65% of the over 65 population and 69% of the 69-84 population has been vaccinated.
- ❖ Vaccine is available at the Garrett County Health Department, Mountain Laurel Medical Center, CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. The Garrett County Health Department receives 300 doses a week. Vaccines are limited at all locations.
- ❖ A Mass Vaccination Site will be open in Hagerstown. 250 doses have been allocated for Garrett County residents. There are no age restrictions for the vaccine but must register.

Questions

❖ Lawsuit filed by Arc.

The Arc of Maryland, named the Garrett County Government, and five other entities, as a defendant in a case claiming people with disabilities were prevented from accessing the COVID-19 vaccine.

Upon notification of the suit, the plaintiff discussed the potential issues with Garrett County. In an effort to address possible concerns, Garrett County acted expeditiously.

Thus, The Arc Maryland, has dismissed its complaint for relief. At the start of the COVID pandemic, the Garrett County Health Department reached out to our vulnerable population to ensure they had access to the vaccine. What we didn't do was post the information on the website. We worked closely with Appalachian Crossroads to ensure their clients had access to the vaccine.

❖ Do we know how many vaccine doses the pharmacies receive? No, pharmacies receive their vaccines through a federal program and we do not know the allocation.

4. **PROCLAMATION** – American Red Cross Month – March 2021. Jason Keeling, Executive Director of Allegany Highland Chapter provided an update on the American Red Cross activity in Garrett County. The American Red Cross collected 1,400 units of blood, provided 25 emergency services to military personnel, and assisted three (3) residents due to fires.

5. **BACKBONE SOLAR PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT.**

John Hafner, Commercial Power Ventures presented an overview of the Backbone Solar Project (attached). The project is located on a reclaimed strip mine near the intersection of Route 135 and Route 38. The project is a \$250 million investment. Permitting is on-going with construction estimated to begin within a year and take 14-16 months and employ 150-200 construction jobs. The Board of Garrett County Commissioners supports the project.

6. The Garrett County Purchasing Department presented the following Bid recommendation:

Bid #21-0304 – Prefabricated Steel Bridge – Snowy Creek Road

Three (3) Bids were received for this Bid: Contech Engineered Solutions, LLC (\$302,992.00), Arrow Corporation of America (\$334,100.00), and U.S. Bridge (\$369,789.00).

After reviewing the Bids for compliance with administrative requirements and based on the feedback from the Department of Engineering, the Garrett County Purchasing Department recommended awarding the Bid to Contech Engineered Solutions, LLC. for \$302,992.00.

The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Hinebaugh, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the Bid Award as recommended.

7. **2020-2021 Garrett County Salary Study Review Commission Recommendations**

The Garrett County Salary Study Commission, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 91–2 of the Code of Garrett County, Maryland, met with the following: Garrett County Board of Education, Garrett County Board of Elections, and the Judges of the Orphans Court. The Board of County Commissioners, Sheriff for Garrett County, and Garrett County Liquor Control Board declined to meet with the Commission.

The Commission submitted the following recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners:

The Board of Garrett County Commissioners

No increase in salary was requested or recommended. Salary remains at \$32,500.

Judges of the Orphans Court for Garrett County

The Commission recommended a \$2,000 increase for each member. Chief Judge from \$4,500 to \$6,500. Associate Judge from \$4,200 to \$6,200. Also a flat rate of \$119.00/day for training, in addition to mileage reimbursement.

Sheriff for Garrett County

No increase in salary was requested or recommended. Salary remains at \$85,000.

Garrett County Board of Education

The Commission recommended an increase of \$1,500 for the President and \$1,000 for each Board Member.

- President from \$4,000 to \$5,500
- Board Members from \$4,000 to \$5,000

Garrett County Board of Election Supervisors

The Commission recommended no increase in salary, Salary remains at \$3,300 for the President, and \$3,000 for Board Members. However, the Commission recommended the following stipends:

- Daily stipend for each day worked (two days each election cycle) increase from \$200 per day to \$400 per day.
- Canvass stipend for each day worked (two days each election cycle) from \$50 per day to \$150 per day.

Garrett County Liquor Control Board

No increase in salary was requested or recommended. Salary remains at \$2,500.

Commissioner Tichnell questioned the increase for the Board of Education, specifically the President receiving \$500 more than a Board Member. He was not in favor of the salary difference due to concerns that it could create issues between Board Members.

After discussion, the Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Hinebaugh, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the recommendations of the Garrett County Salary Study Commission as presented with the amendment to adjust the salary of all the Board of Education Members and President to receive the same increase of \$1,000 to \$5,000 per year.

The Board of County Commissioners thanked the Garrett County Salary Study Commission for their service.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- ❖ 2022 will be the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Garrett County. The County is forming a committee to plan for the celebration – more updates to be announced.

- 9. The Board of Garrett County Commissioners announced that the next Public Meeting will be held on Monday, April 5, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. via live stream and with limited seating available.

ADJOURNMENT: The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Hinebaugh, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, adjourned the Public Meeting at 4:40 P.M.

- 10. **Garrett County Board Of Education Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Presentation** was held after the Public Meeting. Superintendent Barbara Baker and staff presented the Fiscal Year 2022 \$57.7 million Operating Budget of Garrett County Board of Education.

Attest:

By Order of the Board,

KEVIN G. NULL
County Administrator

PAUL C. EDWARDS, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners