

## Minutes

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Carlton, Commissioner Fowler, Commissioner Gilbert, Commissioner Saviello, and Commissioner Skolfield

The meeting was held via: Zoom

**Franklin County Commissioners' Meeting  
March 17, 2026**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Carlton at 10:00 a.m.

**AUDIENCE:** Mt. Blue T.V, Earl Martin, Lee Ireland, Jake Ducharme, Sarah Caton, Neil McLean, Richard Wilde, James Driscoll, Heidi Jordan, Bill Gilmore, Richard Wilde, Steve Francek, Sue Pratt, Dave St. Laurent, Sue Pratt, Susan Black, Steve Lowell, Hart Daley, Scott Nichols, Ryan Close, Richard Morton, Pam Prodan, Shawn O'Leary, Robert Lightbody, Amanda Simoneau, Karen Rea, Amy Bernard, and Jamie Sullivan.

**ZOOM:** Jake Nichols, Noelle Coyne.

**Public Hearing – Pepin's General Store Liquor License Renewal**

**Open Hearing 10:00 a.m.**

**Motion to Close Hearing at 10:01 a.m.: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0)**

**Motion to issue license**

**RECOGNITION:** Jake Nichols' commended Richard Wilde for making is past his probationary period. Since the beginning of his employment, he has made a noticeable impact within the County.

**APPOINTMENTS: None**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Administrator's Report – Motion to accept the Administrator's Report: Tom Skolfield/Tom Saviello (5/0).**
- 2. Minutes – None**
- 3. Treasurer's Report – Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented: Tom Skolfield/Jeff Gilbert (5/0).**
- 4. Sheriff's Office – Purchase of Radios from Reserve Account –** The Sheriff's Office received four (4) quotes for eight (8) new vehicle radios to replace ones that are no longer working or are more than 20 years old. The Sheriff's Office has requested to use the sum of \$28,633.28 from the Sheriff's Office Capital Reserve account to purchase and install the eight (8) new vehicle radios from Island Tech Services. **Motion to approve the request to be paid from the Sheriff's Office Capital Reserve account: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
- 5. Caribou Pond Dam – TIF Project Repayment –** In 2020, Sugarloaf was granted TIF funds for the Caribou Pond Dam Project. In 2023, the County Administrator and Commissioner Carlton met with representatives from Sugarloaf, and it was determined

that the project was no longer viable. The County Administrator reviewed the prior invoices provided by Sugarloaf and discovered that many of the invoices submitted for reimbursement were for costs incurred prior to the signed Agreement, invoices not attributable to the project or were invoices submitted after it was determined that the project was not viable. The County met with a representative from Sugarloaf again and discussed repayment of the TIF funds for the invoices that did not meet the guidelines set forth in the Agreement. In September 2024, the County submitted an invoice for the repayment of TIF funds in the amount of \$221,771.43 of which only \$69,547.79 has been paid back. **Motion to engage the attorney to provide options/steps to recover this money: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).** Richard Morton suggested that the County request specific information from the Attorney as to who would be doing the debt collection, whether their fees will be based upon what percentage is collected or on an hourly rate.

6. **Personnel Policy – 5.3 Annual Vacation Lease** – Requests were made by new hires to be able to use vacation time prior to their first 120 days of employment. The current policy does not allow any flexibility for new hires to be able to use their paid time off prior to their 120 days of employment. HR drafted an amendment to the policy that leaves it to the discretion of the County Administrator to grant use of paid time off to new employees during their first 120 days of employment. Commissioner Saviello indicated that he believed that the County had good rules in place, good salaries and benefits and did not see the need for this. Susan Black spoke against this amendment, indicating that past practice was that if you were going to take time off during your first 120 days of employment, it would be time off without pay, however she did state the current policy is unclear. Commissioner Fowler spoke in favor of this amendment stating that if he were to have a planned family vacation prior to being hired and was told he could not take that vacation because it fell within the 120 days, he would consider not taking the job. Family comes first. He also indicated that he was in favor of allowing the Administrator the flexibility to make those decisions on a case-to-case basis. The HR Director indicated that there was no added cost to the County as it is already set in the budget. **Motion to approve the amendment to the Franklin County Personnel Policy, Section 5.3.2, allowing the County Administrator the discretion to approve vacation leave for newly hired employees within their first 120 days of employment: Fen Fowler/Jeff Gilbert, Motion to move the Questions Fen Fowler/Bob Carlton (4/1) Commissioner Saviello opposed. The Motion was restated (3/2) Commissioner Saviello and Commissioner Gilbert opposed.**
7. **Abatements – Schedule Abatement Appeal Hearings** – Abatement Appeal Hearings scheduled for April 2, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.
8. **District Attorney’s Request for a Trial Assistant II** – The District Attorney requested the Commissioner’s consider allowing the DA to offer the leading candidate for the position to come in at a four-step increase on the salary structure based on her experience. This will be at no extra cost to the County. **Motion to offer the position to the preferred candidate at Grade 5, Step 9: Jeff Gilbert/Tom Skolfield (4/1) Commissioner Saviello opposed.**

**Recess at 11:40 a.m.**

**End recess at 11:45 a.m.**

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Legal questions regarding Budget Committee Status** – Commissioner Saviello requested this matter be discussed. He requested that this matter be sent to Attorney Libby to get his opinion regarding the questions presented within his drafted letter provided in the packet. Commissioner Fowler questioned how much money we were spending on asking our attorney for his opinion and asked if we could structure the letter to ask a specific question versus a broader approach letter. Richard Morton suggested that asking the attorney structural questions about the organization within the existing statute is acceptable, however, it is a waste of money to request the attorney to provide an opinion regarding the one-person one-vote matter, he considers it to be an administrative law question for the Attorney General and would advise against it. Commissioner Fowler recommended collaborating with the Budget Committee instead of the Attorney to reach a consensus regarding wording that would go into a State Law in November be more effective. Amy suggested drafting the changes they would like to make and submitting them to the attorney for any legal challenges he might foresee. **Motion to Table: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
- 2. Salary Structure – Set the COLA** – The Commissioner requested at the prior Commissioners meeting to do some research on the COLA, retention and the overall cost. The HR Director submitted and memo briefing the Commissioners an overview of the COLA and outlines the factors supporting a COLA increase. The HR Director indicated that any COLA increase would effectively be a financial wash due to the increase in health insurance and in some cases some employees may see a reduction in their take-home pay. Commissioner Fowler suggested a recommendation of \$.50 increase per hour for every employee plus the step increase. Commissioner Saviello indicated that he would support Commissioner Fowler’s recommendation. Heidi Jordan questioned why the elected officials were taken off from the salary structure and put on their own salary structure. She indicated that she would, along with Susan Black would like to be put back on the original salary structure. Commissioner Skolfield recommended potentially continuing the salary structure scale. **Motion to give a 2.85% COLA plus step increase, if entitled, to all non-union employees and all elected officials: Tom Skolfield/Bob Carlton (3/2) Commissioner Saviello and Commissioner Fowler opposed.**
- 3. Acceptance of the Highway Safety Grant Funds** – The Sheriff’s Officer received notification that they had been awarded the Highway Safety Grant in the amount of \$16,232. The purpose of this grant was to reduce speed related crashes within Franklin County. The Sheriff’s Office is now requesting permission to accept the award. **Motion to accept the Highway Safety Grant Award in the amount of \$16,232: Tom Saviello/Tom Skolfield (5/0).**
- 4. Elected verses Appointed Treasurer’s Position – Vote** – Commissioner Saviello indicated that they did not need to act on this matter at this time as the candidate elected to the four-year term in November would serve out their term before this would go into effect. He indicated that this would be an ongoing discussion. He indicated that even if the person resigned, the party caucus would make a recommendation to the Governor, and the Governor would appoint a new Treasurer. Amy suggested discussing this matter in January 2027. **Motion to Table until January 2027: Tom Skolfield/Tom Saviello (5/0).**
- 5. MainePERS Actuary Study results – Vote** – In December 2025, the Commissioner authorized MainePERS to conduct an actuary study for four employees for the time period

between July 1, 2006, through December 31, 2013, to see what the cost would be to purchase the difference between the AC Plan and the Special Plan 3C. It was requested to be broken out per employee, the County's portion of the buyback and the employee's portion of the buyback. The results of the study indicated that the liability to the County would be \$248,842.00. MainePERS indicated that the County could not pass any of the cost onto the employees, nor could they opt to make the change for only certain employees within this job classification. **Motion to deny the MainePERS request: Bob Carlton/Fen Fowler (5/0).**

6. **Approval of HR Legal Request** – There was a request for any legal review to go through the Commissioners. There are certain circumstances in which HR matters should not go through the Commissioners due to the Commissioners being the final authority for any grievances. The HR Director suggested the Commissioners authorize the County Administrator to seek legal review with respect to HR matters and FOAA Requests. **Motion to accept the recommendations with the addition of FOAAs: Tom Saviello/Fen Fowler (5/0).**
7. **Schedule Budget Review** – Budget Review scheduled for March 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. other scheduled meetings: April 23, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. – County Administrator's Annual Review. April 2, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. Abatement Appeal Hearings. April 7, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. regular Commissioner Meeting and vote on Budget, no meeting April 21, 2026, but a Warrant will need to be signed.

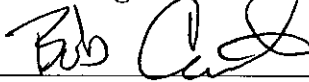

#### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

1. Steven Francek discussed the upcoming Cultural Evaluation the County will participate in. His goal is to listen to employees to determine what is working well, what is not working well, along with challenges. This evaluation is voluntary and confidential, however, the more participation we have, the more accurate and meaningful the results will be. This is not an investigation or performance evaluation, it is a structured listening process designed to understand the culture, communication, leadership and workplace climate. Once the evaluation has been completed, he will analyze the data and identify themes and patterns. The final report will include organizational strengths, opportunities for improvements and recommendations.

**WARRANTS: County AP, Payroll & UT – Motion to sign Warrants: Tom Skolfield/Fen Fowler (5/0).**

**ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 1:24 p.m.: Tom Skolfield/Jeff Gilbert (5/0).**

A recording is available for this meeting.

  
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Judy Hus

Franklin

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ATTEST: Angela B. O. CLERK