

Maine Cumberland County

CUMBERLAND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS **AMENDED** MEETING AGENDA

The County Commissioners will hold their meeting online using Zoom

The public may watch the video stream live on cumberlandcounty.org/live

Submit public comments to kennedy@cumberlandcounty.org prior meeting start time

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

5:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes of May 20, 2020.

INFORMATIONAL REPORT/PRESENTATIONS

There are no Informational Reports/Presentations this month

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Board Chair or staff member will read submitted public comments.

CONSENT AGENDA APPROVALS

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 20-047 | Approval of Communications Service Agreement between Town of Gray and Cumberland County Regional Communications. |
| 20-048 | Resolve – Joining Maine Municipal Association Workers' Compensation Safety Incentive Program |
| 20-049 | Sheriff's Office Commissioners – May/June 2020 |
| 20-050 | Authorizing the submission of letter to Department of Labor concerning unemployment benefits <u>and a separate letter to Governor Mills requesting consideration of funding for Cross Insurance Arena 2019-2020 losses due to COVID.</u> |
| 20-051 | Authorizing the submission and acceptance of \$58,008 from the |

20-052

Authorize the application submission and acceptance of \$136,259.00 from the State of Maine DHHS to support the County Jail's Medication Assisted Treatment Program.

NEW BUSINESS

20-053

Accepting the 2020/2021 Cross Insurance Arena Operations Budget & Trustees Budget

20-054

Accepting the 2020/2021 Cumberland County Jail Budget

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTY MANAGER

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE STAFF

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Executive Session

The County Commissioners will enter into Executive Session in accordance with 1 M.R.S.A §405 (6) (D) for the opportunity to discuss union negotiations.

ADJOURN

Next Commissioners' meeting: Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 6:00 PM.

June 25, 2020

Commissioner Laura Fortman
54 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0054

Dear Commissioner Fortman,

We write as the five elected Commissioners of Cumberland County, the most populous county in Maine, to thank you for the tireless work that you and your staff have committed to process an unprecedented volume of Unemployment Insurance payments brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is one matter, however, on which we feel compelled to ask for your intervention.

Since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic in March, our employees have continued to perform critical services with as many protective measures as possible. Within the County, we regard the fact that no one has tested positive for the virus as a combination of good preparation and a rather hefty dose of luck; which we all feel will run out eventually. As a workforce, we are far too exposed to avoid this forever. Nonetheless, we have watched with ever increasing pride as the employees of Cumberland County adapted to the unfamiliar and frightening conditions with stoicism and determination.

On May 20, our Finance Department discovered the first batch of what would turn out to be several fraudulent Unemployment Insurance claims. We were initially concerned that the breach came from within the County; but in looking at the case numbers, it was obvious that they were mixed in with a very large volume of other new claims that day. Reaching out to other municipalities quickly revealed that this was a statewide issue, and was in fact quite severe. Within a day, municipalities and counties across the state knew that there was a huge problem. They knew this because they communicated amongst themselves, not because of any messages from the Maine Department of Labor.

Over the next two weeks, the number of affected County employees swelled to 21. That represents over 5% of the County workforce, many of whom work in law enforcement and in facilities where the protective measures needed to fully insure against transmission of COVID-19 are simply not possible. Piling on identity theft to their list of stressors felt especially cruel.

As anyone in law enforcement knows, scammers love a crisis; and this is a very big crisis, with a duration longer than anyone has experienced in their lifetimes. Instances of widespread fraud were inevitable - and almost impossible to prevent. We are writing to you today, however, because the DOL's response to victims has thus far been noticeably lacking.

Consumers are sadly growing accustomed to the fallout of breaches in their personal data, most commonly through a private entity like a retail establishment or a financial service. In those instances the breached entity will send communication explaining the issue, and informing the consumer what measures have been taken to rectify it and to help them recover a feeling of control over their personal data. While the circumstances here are certainly different, the silence from Maine DOL has been a startling contrast.

Although we have limited information about how our employees may be compromised, we've taken it upon ourselves to offer whatever advice we can. We've encouraged our employees to notify Maine DOL that a fraudulent claim was made in their name, and to file a police report and take other protective measures. Only three of our employees have heard anything back from Maine DOL at all – a brief form email, pointing employees to a federal reporting website, with no instructions on how to fill it out.

Last week, a Cumberland County employee who was among the first fraud victims on our payroll received notice from Maine DOL that the Department was depositing a UI payment to his account. This employee had already notified DOL that his claim was fraudulent, and never received a response. He was especially appalled to learn that funds were being distributed to a fake bank account based on a fraud claim he had already reported, considering that Maine DOL had recently frozen payments to those who genuinely needed them. Our staff's attempts to alert the Department earned no response.

Learning that somebody may be using a bank account to steal from the government in your name is a truly frightening prospect. Maine DOL and the individual victims of this widespread act of fraud are co-equal victims, and must have open lines of communication. Right now, our employees – and presumably, thousands of others across the state – are being ignored. We don't expect Maine DOL to have all of the answers, and we understand that the Department is under a great

deal of strain; but we are asking for the Department to identify themselves as an ally, and maintain contact with victims to provide some kind of guidance and assurance that they are working on our behalf.

We thank you again for the work that you're doing on behalf of Maine people during this challenging time, and we look forward to hearing how the MDOL plans to address this issue.

Sincerely,

County Commissioners

District One – Neil Jamieson, Jr.

District Two – Susan Witonis

District Three – Stephen Gorden

District Four – Thomas Coward

District Five – James Cloutier

June 22, 2020

Governor Janet Mills
1 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-001

Dear Governor Mills,

We write to call your attention to financial losses accruing at the Cross Insurance Arena, a multi-purpose venue owned by the citizens of Cumberland County.

For the first-time in more than ten years, the Cross Insurance Arena was trending to potentially break even this fiscal year. But due to the Covid-19 pandemic, business activity at the Arena has effectively ceased for the foreseeable future - subjecting the County of Cumberland to a large and unavoidable financial burden.

Based on events canceled through the middle of June alone, Cumberland County will see a loss of \$1,524,587 in gross revenue this year, for a net profit loss of \$409,453. Events in the fall are beginning to cancel now, which will drive that deficit higher. Any operating deficits of the Cross Insurance Arena ultimately accrue as a liability for the County's General Fund, creating a potentially significant burden on the taxpayers of Cumberland County.

Furthermore, the Cross Insurance Arena does not qualify for a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan, as publicly owned venues are excluded from the SBA program. We find ourselves in a circumstance where the county is seeing a consistent financial loss, and falling through every net.

We're proud to have the site under contract to serve as an emergency Alternative Care Site for the people of Maine, despite hoping that such a need will never come to pass. It's our hope that the state will recognize the value of the site, and the contributions that it makes to Cumberland County residents and the state as a whole.

When your Administration gets the assurances it needs to be flexible with federal funds in order to help towns and counties replace revenue losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we're requesting that you take the losses at the Cross Insurance Arena into account and work with our finance office to help mitigate the significant losses to our facility and the citizens of Cumberland County.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to the great State of Maine.

Sincerely,

County Commissioners

District One – Neil Jamieson, Jr.

District Two – Susan Witonis

District Three – Stephen Gorden

District Four – Thomas Coward

