

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION



Special Meeting

Wednesday – September 28, 2005 – 8:30 a.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Wednesday, September 28, 2005 at 8:30 a.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Commissioner Nash being the vice-chair and the deputy county administrator present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission Members Present:

Anne Beebe-Center - Commissioner District #1

Lawrence F. Nash - Commissioner District #3

Also in attendance:

Jane Desaulniers, County Administrator

Virginia Lindsey, Deputy County Administrator

Special Meeting – Agenda

Wednesday, September 28, 2005 – 8:30 a.m.

8:30 Meeting Called To Order

8:30 COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

✓ Consider Membership in Various Organizations

- NACo
- Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce

8:40 TAX ABATEMENT APPEAL DECISION

✓ Poole v. Town of Vinalhaven (Granite Island Road and North Haven Road properties)

9:00 ADJOURNMENT

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

In the absence of the chair, vice-chair Commissioner Nash chaired the meeting. The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:35 a.m.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Membership in Various Organizations Considered

The county administrator provided the commission with information regarding the Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Counties.

National Association of Counties (NACo)

The National Association of Counties membership would include representing the county nationally, and would keep the county abreast of national policy in both the senate and house. Additional benefits would include benefit programs, such as a 71% discount with Office Depot (based on a bid award for Los Angeles County), which could help pay for the membership. The cost of the membership was \$776 annually. Membership would also provide a prescription discount card that would be above and beyond employees' regular prescription benefits. Ms. Desaulniers also provided the commission with a list of counties already enrolled in NACo in Maine, including Lincoln and Waldo counties. The other benefit would be that the county could join NACo for the remainder of year 2005 without any additional fee. Ms. Desaulniers said there were a number of other benefits as well, and benefit packets would be sent to the county.

Ms. Desaulniers also reminded the commission that NACo sponsored National County Government Day, so the message to the public would be consistent and uniform, which would be an added plus. People would see county government as a state level organization; one that was responsive at the local level but involved up to the national level.

Commissioner Beebe-Center noted funding for EMA could benefit from lobbying by NACo.

Ms. Desaulniers suggested that as Knox County developed as a county, there would be tremendous benefits to being included in this national association.

Commissioner Beebe-Center suggested now with an administrator on board, the county was ready to join NACo.

Commissioner Nash said he was not ready to vote on this issue at this time. He suggested taking this under advisement. Commissioner Beebe-Center commented she was all for it, and saw it as a benefit for the county.

Ms. Desaulniers said this was a worthwhile organization for the county to belong to. She suggested a representative from NACo might be willing to meet with the commission at some time. She also noted NACo would be sending packets to each member of the commission, which detailed their organization and the benefits the county would realize by joining NACo.

Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Desaulniers then inquired about the commission's permission in joining the Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce– at a reduced rate of \$185 annually. This would permit the administrator and all members of the commission to participate in the chamber and its events. The chamber was very excited in having the commission join, the county administrator reported. She noted that some individual town/city officials belonged to the chamber, but they did not belong as members of the town/city.

Commissioner Beebe-Center suggested if the county was going to turn the corner and have collaborative efforts with local businesses, this would be the network that would have the greatest impact. She suggested joining the chamber would do an incredible amount of good for the county.

Mrs. Lindsey suggested this would get the county the recognition that was needed, as well as to put a professional face on county government. She noted there was money in the dues line in the commissioners' budget to pay for the annual membership dues.

Commissioner Nash said he leaned toward approving this, because it would improve the county's efforts in working with the communities. It would show that the commission was supportive of the business community, and economic development. He further suggested if this worked out the county would need to look at joining other local chambers, including Camden/Rockport and Union.

Ms. Desaulniers noted meeting commitments from the commission would be as much or as little as they wished to be involved. Otherwise, the annual meeting would be beneficial to attend. She suggested, with the commission's permission, she would participate on committees as would benefit the county.

Commissioner Beebe-Center suggested this would also give Ms. Desaulniers the opportunity to fulfill the tasks the commission had given her.

Motion and Vote

- ❖ Commissioner Beebe-Center motioned that Knox County join the Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce. Seconded by Commissioner Nash. Voted – All in favor.

BUDGET REVIEW CALENDAR APPROVED –non-agenda item

Ms Desaulniers presented the commission with a budget review calendar for their consideration.

Motion and Vote

- ❖ Commissioner Beebe-Center motioned to accept the budget review calendar, and to invite the budget committee members to attend the meetings to become familiar with the budget before it's turned over to the committee in early November. Seconded by Commissioner Nash. Voted – All in favor.

TAX ABATEMENT APPEAL DECISION

Poole v. Town of Vinalhaven

Mrs. Desaulniers noted she had spoken with the chair yesterday in regards to the Poole tax abatement appeals. Even though Chair Johnson finds that the tax might be excessive, he also believes that the town did not treat Mr. and Mrs. Poole differently than other taxpayers.

Commissioner Beebe-Center remarked that she felt Vinalhaven was not treating the taxpayers fairly but was uncertain how they were doing that.

Commissioner Nash asked that each case be taken up separately, and opted to discuss the Granite Island Road property first.

Granite Island Road – Map 20 – Lot 6

Commissioner Nash said he did not question the value of the building, but he did have a problem in raising the tax based on a view of the property. He said he had talked with another assessor recently, and this particular assessor did not add value for a view.

However, it was noted during discussion of the land value, that having a view did in fact add value to the land. Should the view change, then the land value would also have to be revised.

Commissioner Beebe-Center suggested Vinalhaven needed to be more responsive to their questions and concerns; and the town officials needed to be more sympathetic as to how the values were arrived at and explaining it in a clear and concise manner to the landowners.

Meeting Recessed

After further discussion, the meeting was recessed at approximately 9:41 a.m. to permit the commission to attend an appreciation ceremony for communications personnel.

Meeting Reconvened

Upon return to the courthouse by the commission and the county administrator, the September 28 special meeting of the commission resumed at approximately 11:20 a.m.

Discussion Continued Granite Island Road – Map 20 – Lot 6

After considering the land value factors of the Poole property, as well as comparable properties (as offered by the town), the following motion and vote was made:

Motion and Vote

- ❖ Commissioner Beebe-Center motioned that the commission deny the Poole's claim of discriminatory assessing on the Granite Island Road Property – Map 20 Lot 6. Seconded by Commissioner Nash.

Commissioner Beebe-Center suggested the commission also include in its decision a caution to the town that should the view become obstructed in the future, the town would be obligated to review the value of the property and factor the land as it had other properties within the town.

- ❖ Voted – All in favor.

North Haven Island Road – Map 6 Lot 14

There was a great deal of discussion on the second Poole property. The commission took a great deal of time in reviewing the property valuation records of the Poole property as well as comparable properties (as provided by the town). The Grade of the house was considered, and the reductions already made by the town due to errors made in the initial assessing, as well as a reduction made by the assessor. It was noted the town had graded the building as that of a camp, and with reductions made based on a number of factors the square footage valuation of the building had been reduced. The commission did wonder about a notation made on the Poole property valuation report that indicated an additional value of \$13,675. Further contact with the town revealed this additional value was due to a recent building addition to the camp.

Motion and Vote

- ❖ Commissioner Nash motioned, seconded by Commissioner Beebe-Center, that the land value on the property appeared to be consistent with that of the comparable properties. The building value also appeared to have been valued consistent with similar camps in the town. Therefore, the commission could find not basis that the values were erroneous or valued by a different method than other properties, and the abatement appeal be denied. Voted – All in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

The September 28, 2005 special meeting of the county commission concluded at approximately 12:22 p.m.

Attest: _____
Virginia B. Lindsey
Deputy Administrator