The Board of Hocking County Commissioners met in regular session this 21st day of December 2023 with the following members present: Sandra Ogle, Jason D'Onofrio

### **MEETING**

The meeting was called to order by President Sandra Ogle.

### **MINUTES**

Motion by Jason DOnofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve the December 14th, 2023 minutes.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### AGENDA

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### <u>BILL</u>

#### Name Amount

Purpose

Ricketts-Smith, Georgia \$320.00

Laurelville Advocate

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

### 9:30 AM - EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio to approve going into Executive Session with Sheriff Lanny North, Chief Leif Bickel, Chief Pennie Stack - Compensation of Employees.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### **10:00 AM - EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION**

With no action taken and no decisions made.

10:01 - Laurelville Fire Chief Butch Valentine discussed the 500 thousand dollars the Governor is giving each County for demoing abandoned buildings, such as the Laurelville Nursing Home. Commissioner D'Onofrio stated he is working with Buckeye Hills on that and the Nursing home is on the list. Commissioner Ogle stated that there is \$50,000.00 in back taxes on that property and grants will not reimburse back taxes. Chief Valentine asked why the County couldn't waive the back taxes and allow the building to be torn down with a grant, then sell the property and get the money back for the taxes

Commissioner Ogle said that in order to do that, there would have to be a land bank and is something that would have to be discussed with the Treasurer. Chief Valentine stated that he is the Fire Chief at Laurelville and has been with the Fire Department for 52 years and the Fire Chief for 35 years. It is the largest Fire Department in the County, with 4 stations, one which is in Eagle Township, One Rescue, six engines, a tanker, two grass trucks and 40 volunteers, and a chase truck to pull a mule that is used to rescue at Old Man's Cave anywhere we have someone lost in the woods.45 volunteers with 20 that do all the work.

In Benton Township there is a company putting in a 100 count glamping site on Goosecreek Road. They also have one in South Carolina. The company also has two rentals already. The Trustees can do nothing to stop it, And because there is no zoning the Commissioners can not stop it either. The fire department runs have considerably gone up, with 4 people per run the last 2 years compared to 7 people per run 5 years ago. Mr Valentine also stated that the volunteers are getting older, they don't have many young guys and they are getting run to death. In 2017 29% of runs were first response with the squad from station 2 in Laurelville for assist, 64 of 294 runs were assisting the squad. In 2018 out of 293 runs there were 94 times they assisted the squad. In 2021 of 283 runs, 110 were assisting the squad, not including car wrecks. Part of the problem is the cabin renters will call 911 for tree limbs down blocking driveways which is the landowners responsibility but they can't be reached so they call 911, and if 911 is called someone has to go.

Commissioner Ogle asked if there could be a fee put on those kinds of runs. Chief Valentine said he hasn't looked into that. In 1990 their Fire Department had 67 runs a year, in three townships. In 1999 they had 79 runs, in 2003 they had 203 runs. People abuse the system calling with things like somebody needs an aspirin or has a finger cut.

He needs to be able to cover the day shift in two stations and does not have the money to do so. Operating on 2 mils. And does not feel it's fair to go to the voters and ask for 5-8 mil to be put on for property taxes to take care of the needs of the visitors coming into the County and the alternative he looked at is the Hocking County Tourism Association. Chief Valentine had sent a letter to the Tourism Association in November of 2022 asking if they offer any type of grant or funding help the fire department purchase 40 Marcs Portable radios. Chief Valentine said the letter he received came from a mailing address in Chicago, Illinois, and stated that the Tourism Association does not have funding for such a purchase and that the Ohio Revised code is specific in regarding allowable expenditures of County

Lodging tax revenues. And the equipment would not be an allowable expenditure under ORC.

Chief Valentine asked when it is going to stop?? We don't have the manpower to take on more and more of these cabins,parks, lodges and everything else that is coming to Gatlinburg number two. That is what Benton township is becoming, That is what Hocking County is becoming.

They have done door knocks handing out brochures to get volunteers, in the last 3 years they have only gotten 3 volunteers. The Budget for 3 townships is \$213,000.00( Benton, Salt Creek and Perry) and also supply fire protection to Eagle Township in Vinton County whose 2 mil levy generates \$23,000.and had 19 runs in that township this year.

Commissioner D'Onofrio asked if they track how many responses are visitor related. Chief Valentine said last year they started doing soft billing for non residents. The majority of the people that they help carry out are from Cleveland Pennsylvania or Michigan that do not stay on the designated trails. He stated that he would like to see Conkles hollow closed all together as that is where most of people die from doing stupid things. 6 percent of the runs are going to the parks to carry people out.

Chief Valentine asked about the bed tax, and how much the townships get. He expressed that the bed tax should be raised from 6 to 8 percent and the two percent should go to the township fire departments to cover the cabin renters. When they go on the Old Man's cave runs, the EMS, the Parks people, ODNR people all get paid, The fire department people do not get paid, they get a 10.00 clothing allowance once a year to help with gas. He feels it's not fair to ask the residents to pay for the visiting people.

Commissioner D'Onofrio said that will involve legislation, Commissioner Ogle said the Commissioners are willing to look into it and understand the need.

Chief Valentine suggested adding a \$25.00 fee per night to the rentals to help cover the cost of emergency personnel; Gatlinburg already has a similar plan. Commissioner Ogle said a destination fee is an option but that would have to go through legislation. But the Commissioners will look into any way they can help the fire departments.

Chief Valentine stated he would appreciate it as they cannot continue as it is.

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to go into Public Comment.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Nihiser stated that the last time he checked, The tourism tax return had approximately a million dollars in County public tax money just sitting there. And also stating that the camping places ,if they don't have running water and electricity they don't pay bed tax, because sometimes there is a shower unit.

### RECESS

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve going into recess at 10:02

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **RECONVENE -** 10:03

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve going into General Business Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

### ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION

Commissioners - 01 County - Transfers - A15A15 -\$316,634.17 Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **FUND TRANSFERS**

Commissioners - 01 County - A15A15 -610 Agricultural Society Fund -\$316,634.17 Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **Plates for County Vehicle**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve plates for a County Vehicle.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### ADVANCE REQUEST

Commissioners - 01 - County - A15A15 - 186 Opioid - HOPE Grant - \$356.00

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **DECREASE OF APPROPRIATIONS**

Auditor on behalf of various departments Hocking Co. CDBG West St. CI 906 - Ho. CO. CDBG West St. CI-Con. Serv.-H06-36 - \$68,955.50 Rockbridge Sewer Bond Ret.214 - Bond Interest - EO214-05 - \$113.88

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **CERTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL REVENUE**

Auditor on behalf of various departments PSI Writer Grant- CP Additional money received above budgeted amount in the amount of \$28,887.71 WPCLF- Household Sewage Treatment- Money was received and not certified at the time. \$18,828.53 OCJS ARPA 2022- money was received and not certified at the time. \$15,170.81 LE Victim Specialist Grant - Money was received and not certified at the time. \$21,249.02 Hocking County CDBG PY21- Money was appropriated but not certified. \$32,120.25 Capital Budget Grant- Additional money received above budgeted amount. \$40,403.75 Murray City Sewer- Loan funding was not figured in the original budget. \$47,049.24 Enterprise Sanitary Sewer Imp.-Loan funding was not figured in the original budget. \$1,861,455.25 Ho. Co> Hospitalization- Actual amount not available until the end of the year. \$528,497.70 Und. General Tax Rel-Additional money received above budgeted amount. \$3,758,463.11 Payroll Clearing- Actual amount not available until the end of the year \$774,846.00 Help Me Grow - Certifying money for Purchase Orders carried over from 2022,was not budgeted in 2023. \$7,359.82 High Visibility Enforcement- An Advance was done and the money was not certified at the time.\$5,000.00

Grand Total of all funds to be certified. \$7,139,331.19

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **APPROPRIATION TRANSFER**

Lodging Tax - Commissioners - Travel- admin Lodging C03-05 - Salaries C03-01 \$289.35 Probation Services - Contract Services (D85-05) - Salary 9 D85-01) \$155.00

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION

EMA - EMA 0091 - Equipment - W91-03 \$5,000.00 Juvenile Court - 23 Felony Delinquent Care and Custody- Probation/Salaries MM23-24 - \$531.00

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **RFQ Advertisement**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve advertising the RFQ notice as written.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **APPROPRIATION TRANSFER**

Prosecutor's Office - VOCA - Salaries TT62-01 - TT62-12A PERS - \$125.08 Commissioners - Sewer -038 - P38-12 Workers Comp - P38-10 Hospitalization - \$2,425.60

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### SEWER TAP

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve a sewer tap for Stanley Tansky at 11973 Dalton Road, Rockbridge Ohio, Ohio 43149 Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **APPROPRIATION TRANSFER**

Sheriff - Workers Comp. SS50-03 - Hospitalization SS50-04 -\$668.14 Common Pleas - T-CAP Other Expense - TT73-06 - Fringes - TT73-02 -\$5,000.00 Other Expense - TT73-06 - Salaries T-Cap - TT73-01 - \$5,000.00 Sheriff - General Fund - Equipment X45-04 - SalariesX45-01 - \$1,421.60

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **DECREASE OF APPROPRIATIONS**

Sheriff - Concealed Handgun License - 045	-	Supplies - X45-03 -
\$4,382.00		
		Equipment - X45-04 -
\$5,7756.60		Mah Charle VAE 07
\$20,000.00		Web Check - X45-07 -
φ20,000.00		Other Expense - X45-09 -
\$6,935.00		
		OPOTA - X45-08 -
\$1,053.40		

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve. Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### FUND TRANSFER

Sheriff - 01-County - A06A02 - 772 LE Victims Spec. Grant - \$3,945.65

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### 811

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve tabling 811 member representative change until next meeting.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **PAY INCREASES**

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio that all appointments, establishments, and modifications of pay must be approved by the Board.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea

### PAYROLL MISTAKE

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio to correct a 64 hour payroll error.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to go back into appointments.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

Chastity Schmelzenbach with Buckeye Hills presented to the Board an update: Going over re- appointments for the Policy Council, Programs and Services, Return on Investment Report along with the programs associated, Arts and Economic Prosperity Report,

Commissioner Ogle stated that one priority is the Murray City school,

Commissioner D'Onofrio stated that he has a meeting with Melissa Zoller at the first of the year.

Commissioner Ogle stated we need help with getting funding for the volunteer fire department.

Chastity stated that 4 of 6 counties have volunteer fire departments on their priority list.and they are going to try to pool the fire departments to have better options for funding.

Commissioner Ogle also stated that the Laurelville nursing home is on the priority list, and asked if the municipality can be reimbursed if they pay the back taxes to get it demolished.

Chastity stated that it will be hard because it's private property. But reminded Commissioner D'Onofrio when he meets with Melissa Zoller to make sure he lets her know it's a priority, because when we asked Buckeye Hills Regional to be the lead applicant in the Brownfield Program they also combined that into the demo program.

Commissioner Ogle stated that help is needed with the sewer projects for future upkeep.

Chastity said she will take a look at the sewer system and help with a plan and path forward, and find ways to trim expenses and avoid a rate increase.

Commissioner Ogle was inquiring about solar so it can be worked with a phone. Chastity responded that a dedicated system may work.

Commissioner D'onofrio asked if it can be used at Lift Stations.

Chastity asked where the County is with broadband.

Commissioner D'Onofrio stated that Frontier and South Central Power and AT&T have approached.

Chastity stated that Broadband should be a priority as well, as there are programs to help people pay the bill. Also to Prioritize areas and partner with South Central Power, Frontier, AT&T etc. as they can use the same poles.and also is good to hold stakeholder meetings with the public.

Commissioner Ogle will work on the sewer projects. Commissioner D'onofrio will work on the Fire Dept., Laurelville Nursing home and Broadband projects.

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to go back into General Business.

Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

## SICK BANK TIME

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to add to the previous motion that sick bank requests also need to be approved by the Board.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea D'Onofrio, yea.

### Policy

Commissioner Ogle stated that if someone has benefit time of any kind, that is to be used before sick bank time can be drawn from. Commissioner D'Onofrio stated that they should get legal advice on the matter.

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio to contact the attorney that is handling the policybook and get what he has completed so far on the policybook and a final bill and pay it.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea

### **Courthouse Closure**

Commissioner Ogle expressed her concerns with the courthouse being closed to the public on Friday as we serve the public and the Courthouse should be open for business.

### Plumbing

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio to approve transferring 1 million dollars into Capital Improvement for plumbing renovation of the Courthouse.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea

### **Estimate for Plumbing**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve Commissioner D'Onofrio to get estimates for renovating the Courthouse Plumbing Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### Budget

Commissioner Ogle stated that the Budget is 15 Million and the projected revenue is 13 Million, And that pay raises be 3 percent across the board.with the exception of one employee that was promised a dollar raise when hired. And if anyone had gotten a raise in mid year they would be ineligible for the raise.

There was discussion on how much needs to be put in the budget for the grant coordinator as half of the salary comes from a grant. Commissioner Ogle said she will figure it out.

### **South Central Power**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to approve Commissioner D'Onofrio set up a meeting with South Central Power regarding broadband.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### **County Insurance**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to opt for the replacement cost coverage on the Courthouse and Prosecutor's Office.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### **Floor Mats**

Motion by Sandra Ogle and seconded by Jason D'Onofrio to approve up to \$600.00 for floor mats with cloth for the atrium.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Deb Tobin stated that she had " several questions for both Commissioners, starting with Sandy, something that I feel is very degrading, there was, well still going on, there is a lot of photos on facebook and through text messages and everything of Jason wearing a shirt with your (Sandy) picture on it, and alot of people are really upset about it because they feel like he is making a mockery out of you. So how do you feel about that?" Commissioner Ogle replied, "Well, I anticipated that that may come up, So I tried, I thought about it, and I kinda come up with something, it's very short, I don't like to be negative, but I'd say shocked was the first thing, But, The one thought that I had, I know that, Jason, you support the shop for cops, and I thought that if the money spent on Jason's Christmas shirt, it would have been better served, if he would've given it to the needy, like the shop with a cop. And I did have an attorney reach out to me and explained the possible repercussions. But with so much going on in the County, In our own Office and another Offices, I feel the people of Hocking County has just about had enough of the turmoil and humiliation. So for the benefit of the County I'm taking the high road. I will continue to be professional and work for those who elected me, which is the people of Hocking County. I really sincerely appreciate the many text messages and phone calls that I got of encouraging messages that I have received over the past few days and I thank you for your continued support. So basically that is my answer." Deb Tobin asked Commissioner D'Onofrio "what were you thinking?" Commissioner D'Onofrio answered "The entire intent behind that was to be a happy, joyous, fun-spirited piece of attire. There was no ill intent, if there was, or I

wouldn't have shown the people that I showed it to. I still think it's a very cute photograph, Commissioner Ogle interrupted asking "I'd like to know where you got it?" Commissioner D'Onofrio replied, "It's your picture from the Commissioner's page. Commissioner Ogle said," Is that where it's from?" Commissioner D'Onofro said yes, Ma'am. Commissioner Ogle said I didn't have that hat on." Commissioner D'Onofrio replied well it was superimposed, it was not meant to be derogatory, it was not meant to be mean spirited. Deb Tobin interrupted with " it came off that way", Commissioner D'Onofrio started with ," I agree with you", Deb Tobin again interrupted with," the person who took the photo of you or the video that's going around, (Commissioner Ogle interjected "yeah, who took the video?") they should be, they should be ashamed of themselves too. Commissioner D'Onofrio stated "At the time again, It was not meant to be mean-spirited, if it was, I wouldn't have shown the people I showed. It was meant to be joyous and funny and there was by no means any ill will towards anybody with that entire thing. Deb Tobin responded again with "It didn't come off that way, alot of people reached out to me going what in the world is wrong with him. And a lot of people told me you will not get re-elected because you have shown your true colors to the Hocking County, First off I think you need to apologize to Sandy in public. Commissioner D'Onofrio stated he has already had a conversation with Sandy. Deb Tobin Interrupted again saying, "You need to apologize to her in public so everybody knows, Commissioner D'Onofrio started with the 15 or so, Again interrupted by Ms. Tobin with you need to apologize to the County, Commissioner D'Onofrio interjected " May I speak ?, you've asked your question, please let me answer. The 15 or so people that actually saw it, everybody thought it was cute, it was funny, it was festive, and again it was not meant to be anything derogatory. A handful of people turned it into something it was never meant to be. Sandy, I do apologize for hurting your feelings, that was not my intent, by any stretch of the imagination. You have been a mentor to me, you have been nothing but a mentor to me. I appreciate our friendship, and you have told me many times, politics stops at the door, we are here for the County and we are. I don't always agree with you on policy or politics but we work together good. And again there was no ill intent on my part, I thought you would find it absolutely hilarious and that was the intent behind it.

Commissioner Ogle replied; Well, to be honest with you, when you showed me, I did, I laughed, I said it made my day, But I learned a long time ago Jason, that if somebody hurts my feelings, they are never going to know it, Commissioner D'Onofrio replied, again I do apologize for hurting your feelings.that was never my, Commissioner Ogle continued,After I got over that part, then I got mad, i mean I was even at a bank, the teller was talking about it. So I think it began to spread like wildfire. Commissioner D'Onofrio added, It did. Commissioner Ogle said, I think that the problem you are having with some of the things that we've talked about here today, that you have done, I think is because, if you remember I told you a long time ago, and I told Miss Dicken when she came in here, Is anytime you can stop a rumor, you need to stop it, don't do anything to start a rumor. Because it backfires on you. The Second thing I've always said is, there is a difference in the private sector and the government sector. And sometimes people like yourself, they have a

hard time adjusting to the government sector, Or the government. It's bad. I will accept your apology, we need to work together, I'm not the kind to carry a grudge, I can work with you, and I think in the past anytime you have ever asked questions, I have always been willing to help you, But I think that you are getting information from people that is giving you bad information, And it's making you look bad. Commissioner D'Onofrio stated that he appreciates her concern.

And I see that the sheriff's department walked in, they don't need to walk in, no one is going to get in a fist fight.

The clerk informs the Commissioners that the Sheriff's department is requesting an executive session on Security.

Deb Tobin states that she has another question, Jessica hasn't been here for I think is her 5th meeting, Why??

Commissioner D'Onofrio answered that we were advised by council that until we get some sort of official notification that we are to have no comment. And we have not been advised officially of anything in any direction.

Ms. Tobin asked if she is being paid? Commissioner D'Onofrio answered that he did not know.

Ms Tobin asked So, do you know if she is coming back? Commissioner D"Onofrio said again we have no comment until we receive something official.

Commissioner Ogle stated that she would have to do a public records request.

Commissioner Ogle asked , So you say the Sheriff wants to have an executive session? What if i don't want to have one?

Sue Morgan asked about the sick bank, stating that she where she worked you could give your sick /benefit time to the person you chose to, and that was honored. Instead of first come, first get. She would to like that to be considered.

Commissioner D'Onorio asked if we were going into executive session, is there a security issue?

Clerk answered that she didn't know.

Commissioner Ogle said that if Sheriff North came over to just to raise cane with her, she doesn't want to hear it.

Commissioner D'Onofrio said we don't know what its about, we should take it, we can always end it.

Sheriff North informed the board they were here.

Commissioner Ogle asked what he wanted to talk about.

Sheriff North stated security.

Commissioner Ogle asked if it has to do with closing the courthouse on Friday?

Sheriff North stated, Yes it does.

Commissioner Ogle answered , I don't want to hear about it, I mean it's your responsibility. This Courthouse needs to stay open.

Sheriff North stated there are some facts you need to be aware of.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

12:17 - Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to go into Executive Session with Sheriff North, Chief Leif Bickel, and Chief Pennie Stack regarding security.

Roll Call Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

## Exit

12:42 - Exit with no action taken and no decisions made.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Sheriff North - Stated that the Courthouse will be open tomorrow and there will be security as well.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Jason D'Onofrio and seconded by Sandra Ogle to adjourn.

And wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Vote: Ogle, yea, D'Onofrio, yea.

Christy Lindinger, Clerk

Board of Hocking County Commissioners

This is to certify that the above is the true action taken by this Board of Hocking County Commissioners at a regular meeting of the Board held on December 21, 2023.

Christy Lindinger, Clerk

Sandra Ogle, President